Chapter-3

Where the World Meets in One Nest

Poetry is an integral part of daily life in India. The newly born baby is welcomed to this world with blessings embedded in verse. The growing child learns lessons of life and education through little poems. The grown-ups are initiated to morals and religion through the scriptures which obviously are in verse. All great minds like Plato, Aristotle, Vyas, Valmiki and Chanakya have preferred poetry as a medium of expression to disperse their wisdom. The vast reservoir of ancient knowledge of diverse branches like the rules of grammar, the aphorisms of metaphysics and logic, the sciences of botany and medicine, astronomy, chemistry, and physics are all in verse. The Ramayana, the most widely read book in India, is in verse. At marriage the young couple is united by Sanskrit hymns; and at last when one leaves this mortal body the last rites are incomplete without the last words by Hindu Muse of poetry.

Like Poetry, Tagore has entered into the life of Indian people and has become an integral part of their cultural pride. In the galaxy of the great sons and daughters of renascent India, he shone out as a man apart because of his abundant gifts and all-embracing Humanism. His patriotic poems are sung everywhere. In the morning when the rising sun darts its rays of liquid gold we hear his songs being sung in the bathing ghats and in devotional groups that go about in the street to wake people up from sleep to join in the service of God and Motherland. In the scorching afternoon, under the shade of the spreading banyan trees, the shepherds sing the same songs to themselves, to the birds on the trees and the cattle
in the fields. When the Indian landscape is bathed in the vermilion rays of
the setting sun, and as the boatmen go down the river or as the village
peasants’ flock homeward they all sing the patriotic songs of
Rabindranath. They are sung in national congresses and conferences, they
are sung by the athletes in gymnasiums, students in their academies,
beggars in their begging excursions, and washermen in the *dhobi khanas*,
they are also sung at weddings and in religious ceremonies.

Among the many festivals in India some are traditionally
associated with poets, musicians or saints. *Panchishe Baishakh*, or the
twenty-fifth of the first month of the Bengali calendar is Tagore’s
birthday celebrated as one such festival which is born out of the people’s
love and admiration for a poet. It is probably for the first time in the
history of modern India that the birthday of a contemporary poet has
assumed the proportion of a ritual celebrated by people, cutting across
religious and ideological boundaries. Rabindranath Tagore with
unparalleled universal literary genius was not only a great poet but the
‘guru of the poets’ (*Kavi-Guru*) and ‘the poet of the universe’ (*Vishwa-
Kavi*). He was considered a literary Titan in his times, a supreme symbol
of India’s culture and spirit. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan has rightly summed up
his contribution thus:

He gave to his people in one lifetime what other peoples have
taken centuries to evolve---a language capable of expressing the
finest modulations of thought and feeling, a literature worthy to be
taught in any university in the world.

(“Tagore: The Philosopher” 359)
In the history of mankind, perhaps, Rabindranath Tagore (7 May 1861-7 Aug 1941) is the only myriad-minded man who contributed to every branch within the literary world. He was poet, philosopher, playwright, painter, novelist, musician, mystic, humorist, critic, autobiographer, thinker, educationist, and author of short stories, dance dramas, essays, diaries and a great number of letters. He composed poems of almost every type imaginable---long narrative and descriptive poems, short lyrics, sonnets, odes, poetic dialogues, etc. Rabindranath Tagore was the pioneer of the new mode of schooling and learning (Chattopadhyay 63)

By pioneering colloquial diction and inventing new verse forms and metres, Tagore revolutionized Bengali poetry. He has almost single-handedly created what is now Bengali literature; and his poetry evokes the flavour of the real Indian countryside, not the Anglicized India of the colonial period. As the author of *Gitanjali* he gave to the world a new style of English poetry, rich in its singular simplicity, but superb in its rhythmic effect. He excels in “drawing from the wisdom of the ancient past and giving it a practical garb and a meaning in the present. Thus he gave India's own message in a new language in keeping with the spirit of the times.” (Nehru: xiii-xvi.) As a philosopher and mystic, he was perhaps the first to develop a synthesis of Eastern and Western approaches, and he developed political ideas of great depth and humanity. The sheer volume and diversity of his writings is awe-inspiring. Over six decades Tagore gave the world some 2,500 songs, more than 2,000 paintings and drawings, 60 volumes of poems (including a few for children). He was also a genius in choreography, architecture, social service and statesmanship. Nobody has excelled in so many fields or dominated his culture to the extent that Tagore has.
Rabindranath published his first poem, “Abhilas” (Desire) anonymously in the magazine called the Tattvabodhini Patrika in (1874), although some believe that the first poem that he was able to publish was “Bharatbhumi” in the Bangadarshan in 1874. He assumed the pen-name Bhanushingho (Sun Lion) to publish his first collection of poetry in 1877. He was sixteen when he first wrote short-stories and plays. Rabindranath's first book of poems, Kabi Kahini (tale of a poet) was published in 1878. Traditionally, Rabindranath is supposed to have entered the world of serious poetry at the age of twenty when Prabhat Sangit (Morning songs) and Sandhya Sangit (Evening Songs) published in 1881, attracted the attention of literary connoisseurs including the great Bankim Chandra Chatterji. Tagore wrote eight volumes of poetry, which included Manasi (1890) (The Ideal One), Sonar Tari (1894) (The Golden Boat), Kori-o-Kamal (Sharp and Flats) (1886) and Kshanika between 1890 and 1900. His chief works include Gitanjali (1910) (Song Offerings), The Crescent Moon (1913), The Gardener (1913), Gitimalya (1914) (Wreath of Songs), Songs of Kabir (1915), Fruit Gathering (1916), Balaka (1916) (The Flight of Cranes), Lover’s Gift (1918), Crossing (1918) and, The Fugitive and Other Poems (1921).

Tagore composed Smaran (In Memoriam), a collection of poems, dedicated to his wife. He himself has classified his songs based on themes. The devotional songs are classified under ‘Puja’ or worship, love songs under ‘Prem’, nature-related songs under ‘Prakriti’, patriotic songs under ‘Swadesh’, and then there are many other ballads and other sub categories. Very interestingly most of Tagore’s devotional songs can be treated as intense love songs and vice versa. The subject of love is a recurring motif throughout his literature, and he often wrote about patriotism. His poetry and songs, apart from their deep spirituality and
devotion, often express a celebration of nature and life. For him, life’s multifarious variety is ever a source of pleasure without outward reason. In his poetry, he tried to harmonise the spiritualism of ancient India with the humane spirit of the West and thus ‘brought East and West into receptive emotional and intellectual contact’. Radhakrishnan calls him ‘most dear to all the muses’ because,

An artist of genius he broke with previous tradition in poetry, music and painting. Tradition is not only concord with the past but also freedom from the past. He perceived relationships hitherto unnoticed and gave humanity his vision of one world. His great gifts of imagination and art were used for fostering faith in the unity of man and forging bonds of kinship with others. (17)

Tagore is also the only global writer who has the honour of having his two distinctly different songs as the National Anthems of two independent countries of the world, India adopting one of his songs in 1947 after achieving independence from the British rule and then Bangladesh adopting another one in 1972 after separating from Pakistan in 1971. He was also versatile in translating his own writings into English and used several other languages to translate into Bengali for himself. Tagore’s works have been widely translated into almost all European languages including Russian, English, Dutch, German, Spanish, etc.

Tagore’s well-known plays are The Genius of Valmiki (1881), The Fateful Hunt (1882), The Play of Illusions (1888), The King and the Queen (1889), Sacrifice (1890), Chitrangada (1892), The Appeal of Gandhari (1897), The King of the Dark Chamber (1910), Dakghar (1912) (The Post Office), Achalayatan (1912) (The Immovable), Cycle of Spring (1916), Muktadhara (1922) (The Waterfall), Raktakaravi
Oleanders) (1925), and *House Warming* (1925). Tagore also has a number of philosophical works as *Sadhana* (1913), *Nationalism* (1917), *Personality* (1917), *Creative Unity* (1922), *The Religion of Man* (1931), and *Man* (1932) to his credit. He successfully edited four different magazines *Sadhana*, *Bangadarshan*, *Bharati* and *Tattwabodhini*. His Upanishadic ideas are expressed in his book *Sadhana*, where he discusses the individual’s path to divine consciousness. These powerful ideas permeate all his works. Tagore took an interest in science in his last years, writing *Visva-Parichay* (a collection of essays) in 1937.

Tagore’s prose deals with social, political, educational issues and his vision of the universal brotherhood of man. He is the author of several volumes of short stories and a number of novels, among them, *The Young Queen’s Mart* (1883), *The Royal Sage* (1887), *Eye Sore* (1903), *The Wreck* (1906), *Gora* (1909), *Ghare-Baire* (The Home and the World) (1916), *Yogayog* (1929) (Crosscurrents) to his credit. Besides these, he wrote musical dramas, dance dramas, essays of all types, travel diaries, and two autobiographies, one in his middle years and the other shortly before his death in 1941.

In 1912, Tagore went to Europe for the second time. He met William Rothenstein, a noted British painter, in London. Rothenstien was impressed by the poems, made copies and gave them to Yeats and other English poets. Yeats was enthralled. He later wrote the introduction to *Gitanjali* when it was published in September 1912 in a limited edition by the India Society in London. Rabindranath Tagore was awarded Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913 for *Gitanjali* and became the first Nobel laureate from Asia. He was also awarded knighthood by the British King
George V. In 1940 Oxford University arranged a special ceremony in Santiniketan and awarded Rabindranath Tagore Doctorate of Literature.

Tagore’s reputation far exceeded the boundary of the literary-cultural world. Tagore's influence over Gandhi and the founders of modern India was enormous. In many ways Tagore was a precursor of Gandhi; it was Tagore who gave the title “Mahatma” (the great soul) to Gandhi, and in return Gandhi hailed Tagore as “Gurudev” (the venerable teacher or divine mentor) and greeted him as “poet of the world.” Romain Rolland once described a meeting between Tagore and Gandhi as one between “a philosopher and an apostle, a St. Paul and a Plato” (Desai 7). Jawaharlal Nehru confessed that he was the spiritual heir of Tagore much more than of Gandhi. Politically, he said “I am the heir of Gandhi, but, spiritually, I feel much more kinship with Tagore.” (Anand 220-21).

Tagore was a global giant before the era of globalization. He was also in the company of the likes of Russell, Einstein and Mussolini, and they all held him in the highest esteem. Albert Schweitzer called him ‘the Goethe of India’ (Kripalani 295)

Tagore’s masterpiece- Gitanjali brought him in contact with G.B. Shaw, H.G. Wells, Galsworthy, Masefield, Robert Bridges and a number of other celebrities. “The poems of Gitanjali have been compared to the work of almost all the living or dead poets on earth, from Sappho to T. S. Eliot.”(Shahane 66-67). Tagore influenced many poets and literary figures included W.B. Yeats, Wilfred Owen and Romain Rolland. His poetry was also appreciated by Spanish poets such as Nobel Laureates Gabriella Mistral, Pablo Neruda and Octavio Paz. W.B. Yeats was so moved by the ‘simplicity’ and ‘abundance’ of Gitanjali that he
instantaneously hailed Tagore as founder of a ‘new Indian Renaissance,’ and said in an extraordinary tribute to the poet:

[The poems of] Rabindranath Tagore have stirred my blood as nothing has for years … These lyrics … display in their thought a world I have dreamed all my life … Rabindranath Tagore … is so abundant, so spontaneous, so daring in his passion, so full of surprise, because he is doing something which has never seemed strange, unnatural, or in need of defence. These verses will not die in little well-printed books upon ladies’ tables … or be carried about by students at the university to be laid aside when the work of life begins, but as the generations pass, travellers will hum them on the highway and men rowing upon rivers. Lovers, while they await one another, shall find, in murmuring them, this love of God a magic gulf wherein their own more bitter passion may bathe and renew its youth. (Yeats vii-xv)

Tagore was an accomplished musician. He might have been the first person to start a tradition of composing songs with a plethora of elements like folk, traditional, classical ranging from the puritan ‘dhrupad’ to lighter styles, western music etc. His Rabindrasangeet is a new form of Indian musical composition, which deals with spirituality and transcendental love, is immensely popular with speakers of the Bengali language and forms the foundation for Bengali song literature. Rabindrasangeet has influenced the styles of such musicians as sitar maestro Vilayat Khan and sarod players Buddhadev Dasgupta and Amjad Ali Khan. At the age of sixty, Tagore took up drawing and painting; as a visual artist, introduced modern and abstract painting to his people. He
painted in a style characterised by peculiarities in aesthetics and colouring schemes.

Rabindranath Tagore was born in a family in which affluence was combined with artistic talent and cultural and literary tradition. He was the youngest of the fourteen children of Debendranath Tagore, leader of Brahmo Samaj. Rabindranath Tagore describes his family as the product of “confluence of three cultures: Hindu, Mohammedan, and British.” (Tagore, RM 105) Rabindranath’s progressive views and ideals can be attributed to his family’s belief in the synthesis of old and new influences. He has had before him the example of his father, who lived his long life in the closest communion with God, while not neglecting his duties to the world, or allowing his keen interest in all human affairs to suffer any abatement. Rabindranath from his very childhood because of both heredity and environment imbibed these values and inculcated them through his lifelong creations.

The Tagore family had close links with the world outside and Jorasanko Thakurbari (Tagore’s House) was the hub of a cultural rejuvenation that fostered the basic values of Rationalism, Nationalism and Humanism. Among the Tagores are counted men like Prosonno Koomar Tagore, a landowner, a lawyer of great reputation, an editor, a writer on legal and educational subjects, founder and president of the British Indian Association; Raja Sir Sourindra Mohun Tagore, undoubtedly one of the highest musical authorities in India, the founder of the Bengal Music School and the Bengal Academy of Music, and author of many volumes on Hindu music and musical instruments; Abanindranath Tagore, a distinguished painter, and an undisputed leader in Hindu art revival; Maharaja Ramanath Tagore, brother of
Rabindranath’s grandfather, a political leader and writer; Prince Dwarakanath Tagore, the grandfather of Rabindranath, a landlord, a founder of the Landholders’ Society, a philanthropist, and a social reformer, preeminently an agitator against custom of Sati (A cruel practice in which a widow is burnt alive with her husband’s deadbody).

Tagore’s family used to organise literary conferences where they invited prominent writers, journalists, and thinkers which they had titled ‘Bidvajjan Samagam’ [Discourse with scholars]. Rabindranath’s oldest brother Dwijendranath Tagore was a philosopher and a poet. Another brother, Satyendranath Tagore was the first Indian member of the ICS. Another brother, Jyotindranath Tagore was a composer and a playwright. Among his sisters, Swarnakumari Devi earned fame as a novelist. Thus the Tagore family home resounded with an atmosphere of religion and arts, principally literature, music and painting which became the inspiration for Rabindranath at the onset of his literary career.

After undergoing his upanayan (sacred thread ceremony) rite at the age of eleven, Tagore and his father left Calcutta in 1873 to tour India for several months, visiting his father’s Santiniketan estate and Amritsar before reaching the Himalayan hill station of Dalhousie. In his isolated lodging in the Himalayas, Debendranath taught him Sanskrit. There, Tagore read biographies, studied history, astronomy, modern science, and Sanskrit, and examined the classical poetry of Kalidasa. Tagore’s mother Sarada Devi expired in 1875. In 1878 Tagore sailed to England with his elder brother Satyandranath to study law. But he returned to India in 1880 and started his career as poet and writer.

In 1883, Rabindranath Tagore married Mrinalini Devi Raichaudhuri, and had two sons and three daughters. In 1890,
Rabindranath Tagore moved to Shilaidaha (now in Bangladesh) to look after the family estate. He established Bolpur Bramhacharyaashram at Shantiniketan, a school based on the pattern of ancient Indian education system. In 1902, his wife Mrinalini died. In 1905, Lord Curzon decided to divide Bengal into two parts. Rabindranath Tagore strongly protested against this decision. Tagore wrote a number of national songs and attended protest meetings. He introduced the Rakhibandhan ceremony, symbolizing the underlying unity of undivided Bengal. Owing to his notable wanderlust, between 1878 and 1932, Tagore travelled widely and visited more than thirty countries on five continents. The poet himself has said, “I am restless. I am athirst for faraway things.” (Tagore, EWRT 84)

The spirit of Indian Renaissance moulded Rabindranath Tagore’s life and literature. Nineteenth century India was a meeting ground of many ideologies and forces to witness an intellectual & cultural revival called Renaissance. The commonly used expression for the Indian Renaissance is ‘Punarjagaran-Kal’ (The age of Re-awakening) or ‘Navjagaran-Kal,’ (The Age of New Awakening). It witnessed a complete revolutionary change not only in Indian intellectual and creative pursuits but in very aspect of Indian life. It was to search and cultivate new ideas, new thoughts and new approaches touching almost every aspect that makes human life beautiful and worth living.

The new education system, the establishment of the printing industry, the railway network, the post and telegraphs department threw rays of western life and culture on the Indian soil. Western critical & historical thinking, European knowledge (esp. philosophy, history, science & literature), British empiricism, rationalism & education in
English language affected an important segment of Indian society & under the impact of British rule the Indian intellectual learned to raise questions about life & beliefs. The traditional ideas of the East clashed with the new Western thought. The awakening and modernization of society was not in agreement with the old religious traditions, human values and classes. Therefore a necessity for synthesis was highly felt. And this hastened the arrival of the Indian Renaissance. Social revolutions, cultural changes, and religious and political movements sweeping different parts of the country marked the Indian Renaissance. The purpose of all these movements was to seek social reformation and the independence of India.

At this juncture a small but lively group of Indian thinkers and reformers was extremely conscious of external cultural, religious, economic and political exploitation. Ram Mohan Roy, Tagore, Aurobindo, Vivekananda, Gandhi, Nehru, Lal-Bal-Pal and other patriots tried to awaken the people of India. They attempted a synthesis of Eastern ideals and Western ideas. While they did not submit to the domination of Western culture, they were alive to the defects in Indian society. They were the builders of the New India. These thinkers, writers and founders of the different societies i.e., Brahmo Samaj, Prarthana Samaj, Theosophy Society, Vedanta Darshan and Ramkrishna Mission, were the most important and most effective instruments ushering in the Indian Renaissance. They protested against superstitions, idol worship, ritualism, orthodoxy, and scepticism, attacked various social evils (e.g. caste system, the Sati-system, untouchability, child marriage and female infanticide) and voiced the need for widow-marriages, inter-caste marriages, women education and equal rights of men and women. It
initiated active momentum to ideas pertaining to political freedom and self-determination.

Swami Sahjanand founded the Swaminarayan sect and reformed the Gujarati society infested with religious orthodoxy and ignorance, poverty and the harmful living style of the backward classes of the society. Dayanand Saraswati, established the Arya Samaj and made a distinctive contribution to carry forward national ideology. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi’s philosophy was based on the Bhagavad Geeta’s ‘Anasakti Yoga.’ Satya (Truth) and Ahimsa (Non-violence) were the strong weapons with the help of which he changed his dreams into reality. Vivekananda was an ascetic with a scientific bent of mind. With full reverence to original thoughts of the predecessors, he did not look the role of the west in the Indian Renaissance. He voiced his anger against prevailing orthodoxy in Indian society. ‘Deshbandhu’ Chittaranjan, described Aurobindo as the poet of patriotism, the prophet of Nationalism and the lover of humanity. He believed that the country was the Mother and declared with disarming frankness that complete independence was the goal of India's national awakening. For him the Indian Renaissance was a thing of mental development, which was concerned with spiritual integration and self-realization.

In Gujarat Narmad who has been regarded as the Father of Gujarati prose became the forerunner of social awakening and reformative activities. Dalpatram, Durgaram Mehtaji, Karsandas Moolji, Govardhanram Tripathi, Mansukhram Tripathi, Manilal Dwivedi and Navalram pandya also attempted to promote reformative activities to bring social awareness and reformation. The Hindi poets of the Indian Renaissance like Bhartendu, Premdhan, Pratapnarayan Mishra and
Radhakrishnadas and Tamil poets like Subramania Bharati also threw light on the conditions responsible for upliftment or degradation of their motherland and thereby sowed the seeds of nationality and nationalism in the Indian mind.

Contrary to the extreme individualism of the West, society (religion, culture and country) was in the centre of concerns for all leaders of the Indian Renaissance. When India was under the British rule, she was exploited in the field of politics and economics but on the other hand, new life can be observed in the social, religious and cultural conditions of the time. All these movements, institutions and reformers helped in the irradiation of wrong conceptions, traditions and superstitions and tried to uplift the downtrodden, the exploited ones and women. In short, the age was remarkable for its Humanism and Spiritualism.

The Indian Renaissance provided new vision and new direction to the literature of the age. The literature of the Indian Renaissance was the literature of cultural reawakening manifesting human emotions such as patriotism, love, national consciousness, unity and brotherhood. It centralized human life and focused on the social evils, political dependence, its consequent-agony and yearning for independence and Humanism. On the one hand, it brought political, social, economical and religious awareness, and on the other, equally assimilated the profound impact of world literature with its diversities. It spoke of the common men’s feelings of happiness and sorrow. Indian Poetry in English commenced in Bengal and then progressively it moved to cities such as Madras and Bombay.
The first among Indo-English poets was Henry Louis Vivian Derozio. He was Indian not only by birth but also by self-definition. His love for India is revealed in several of his poems. He was strongly influenced by the English Romantics and he influenced Bengali poets. Another pioneering Indo-English poet was Kashiprasad Ghose who was the first Hindu to write original English verse. Michael Madhusudan Dutt was a passionate admirer of Byron and sent poems to Blackwood's Magazine dedicating them to Wordsworth. Romesh Chander Dutt translated the Ramayana and Mahabharata into felicitous English verse. Aru Dutt wrote a few pieces including *Morning Serenade*, which filled Edmund Gosse with surprise and rapture. Toru Dutt contributed a volume entitled, *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields*. She also wrote short lyrics, odes and sonnets. Toru Dutt's *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan* proved her proficiency and power of poetic utterance in a foreign medium. Manmohan Ghose’s poetry is entirely Western in taste and allusion.

Aurobindo Ghose wrote in almost every available genre---lyrics, sonnets, long narrative poems, dramatic poetry and epic. As a translator and narrative poet, as a daring experimenter and explorer, and above all, as a futurist poet, Aurobindo had a record of poetic achievement without a parallel in his time. Later, Sarojini Naidu’s genius was essentially lyrical and her poetry full of music. Her *The Golden Threshold* (1905), *The Bird of Time* (1912) and *The Broken Wing* (1917) are full of heartfelt feeling and picturesque Indian imagery.

Tagore was born at a time when nationalist movement in India against the British Raj was gaining ground and momentum. K. M. Munshi observes that,
He was needed in India as Dante was needed in Italy, Shakespeare in England and Goethe in Germany...Tagore was one of the pioneers of the Indian Renaissance and used his creativity and talent for half a century to give a direction to the political and spiritual revival of India. (Munshi 4)

Rabindranath's humanistic viewpoint had been profoundly influenced by Ramkrishna Paramahansa, Vivekananda, Annie Beasant and Raja Ram Mohan Roy. Raja Rammohan Roy has been acclaimed as Tagore's “spiritual progenitor”. Tagore is much influenced by Rammohan’s idea of religious synthesis, Humanism, Nationalism and Universal brotherhood. For Tagore, the real problem of India was not political but social. He wanted our civilization to take a firm stand upon its basis of social co-operation and not upon that of economic exploitation and conflict. The second movement to affect Tagore was the literary movement spearheaded by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. Bankim Chandra breathed new life into literature. He also focussed attention on the glory of our ancient culture. The third influence was the national movement, which found expression in the voice of freedom and the spirit of revolt.

The *Upanishads* cast a spell on Tagore and formed his spiritual nourishment. He himself wrote in preface to *Sadhana*, “The writer has been brought up in a family where texts of the Upanishads are used in daily worship.” (Tagore VII). In the *Bhagwadgita* Sri Krishna is described as personal God who has come to the world for helping mankind so, God in *Bhagwadgita* is not a remote God, but He is very close to human beings who works for the well-being of humanity. Tagore is influenced by this conception of a personal God and the ideal of ‘Niskama Karma’. The Vaishnava poets Vidyapathi and Chandidas
taught him that God and man belong to each other. The appeal of the classical Sanskrit poets Vyasa, Valmiki and Kalidasa was inescapable. Tagore is definitely influenced by the personality and life of Buddha himself, his ethical and moral preaching. That is why in ‘Katha O Kahini’ he has composed many poems based on the life and preaching of Buddha. ‘To me,’ he says,

the verses of the *Upanishads* and the teachings of the Buddha have ever been things of the spirit, and therefore endowed with boundless vital growth; and I have used them, both in my own life and in my preaching, as being instinct with individual meaning for me, as for others, and awaiting for their confirmation, my own special testimony, which must have its value because of its individuality. (*Sadhana* viii)

He was aware that the true religion taught by them, is calm and strong. Without intolerance or vanity it appeals to all. The life for Buddha is full of sufferings but his approach to life is not negative or pessimistic as he never neglected virtues to be practiced in this life. Tagore accepts this positive aspect of Buddhism and neglects the negative, pessimistic and world-denying attitude. The friendship, pity, and universal love preached by Buddha have destroyed the barrier which separate man from man. The spirit of compassion enshrined in the Buddha fascinated him.

What appealed most to our poet was Buddha’s rejection of all sacred authority and his insistence on personal experience and impersonal reason as the final guarantee of all truth. The second source of appeal was the central position of the principle of *maitri* and, *karuna* - love and sympathy for all men and even animals.
Tagore preserved an unflinching loyalty to Bengali and employed it as his medium to communicate his vision, thoughts and the ideas which sustained him. Tagore’s poetry became most innovative and mature after his exposure to rural Bengal’s folk music, which included ballads sung by Baul folk singers — especially the bard Lalan Sah. In the words of Mr. N. K. Gupta, “Tagore is in direct line with those bards who have sung of the Spirit, who always soared high, above the falsehoods and ugliness of a merely mundane life and lived in the undecaying delights and beauties of a diviner consciousness.”

Tagore is much influenced by the cult of Bauls who emphasize inward divinity and rebellion against religious and social orthodoxy. Next to Bauls mystic saints like Kabir, Nanak, Dadu, Rajjab, Rabidas etc. also have influenced Tagore and the underlying philosophy of their songs have helped to mould the humanistic outlook of Tagore. Through the eyes of a humanist, Tagore perceived a symbolic relationship between different world religions and tried to project their quintessential meaning through his writings. Tagore was a great lover of sanskrit poets like Kalidasa etc. Though he was much influenced by devotional lyrics of the Bengal Vaishnavas, he also deeply impressed by nineteenth-century English poets, perhaps above all by the English romantics like John Keats and Percey Bysshe Shelley, whose reverence for nature and ideal of the creative artist can be seen throughout Tagore’s work.

In this chapter the effort is made to trace Humanism in the selected poems of Tagore. The earlier chapter defined Humanism as the type of thought that is centred on man himself, that raises crucial questions concerning his ultimate nature, and that tries to answer them without tran-
scending the limits of what is human. Thus humanistic thinking is the cultivation of man, his self-cultivation and self-unfolding into full enlightened personality. It stands for right relations between man, nature and God. Tagore’s Humanism which is spiritualistic in form is no doubt influenced by Upanishads but his Humanism is his own. But ‘It will not be wrong to say that little account was taken of his pure poetic imagination and solid Humanism.’ (K. Das 06)

Man has occupied the position in Rabindranath’s thinking. Even the Supreme Person has to come down to man for making himself real and actual. Nature also, as has been seen, contributes to the make-up of human personality, and it is a relation of harmony between man and nature, between man and man, and between man and the Jivan-Devata that makes the world of man all to the poet. In his Article “Rabindranath Tagore: The Whole Man” Mulk Raj Anand observes, “Certainly, after the Buddha, the greatest Humanism of Asia was founded by Tagore.” (222)

‘The Religion of Man’, as enunciated by Tagore, is an appeal for faith in man’s sublimity, for nothing is greater than the Divine in man. Baūls, a group of wandering spiritual ‘madmen’ who reject the outward trappings of institutional religion and instead seek the indwelling---‘man of the heart’---the elusive presence of the divine that dwells within every human body. The Baūls’ iconoclastic---‘religion of man’---had a lasting influence on Tagore’s spiritual ideals. Tagore appeals to his countrymen to replace the orthodox religion of blind faith with the religion of man and conscience, and blind worship of inanimate idols by love for living fellow-beings. The religion of man is the religion of Love which brings down heaven to earth and lifts the earth to heaven. This is the main idea of religion of man presented by Tagore throughout his life.
According to Tagore, whatever man derived from the higher consciousness he did by the exercise of his creative energy or the creative surplus; this alone liberated him and helped him to transcend himself. “He [Tagore] considered that man could be truly human only through his own creativeness.” (Anand 8) As man is free, his freedom is expressed in his creative acts where he becomes a partner of the Supreme Soul. It is this freedom that transforms man from a receptive to a creative being. He becomes an innovator, an artist. Man’s true nature is not revealed in his acts of necessities, but in the acts which he does joyfully. In ‘Creative unity’

Tagore finds Human society for the best expression of man which leads him to a full realisation of the divine in humanity. Man gives to God offering of his songs, art and literature to whom the last meaning of all his creative works is directed. Tagore says, “God stands himself at his door and asks for his offerings.” (RM152) All songs of the poet find their meaning when they reach the feet of God. God also likes his songs. Therefore the poet says, “I know thou takest pleasure in my singing. I know that only as a singer / I come before thy presence.” (Tagore, EWRT 43) And “Drunk with the joy of singing I forget myself and call thee friend who / art my Lord.” (Tagore, EWRT 43) Through songs both man and God unite as friends.

Mans personality, with the surplus within it, continually tries to exceed itself in the world of creativity which is human and personal. Bliss that is sought after and achieved is within this personal world of expression and interpersonal relationship in which nature forms the background. Even Jivan-Devata or the Supreme Person has to find his reality in this world of interpersonal relationship. This attitude of the poet
clearly shows that man’s living in the material, social, historical world within limitations and bondage is not only taken by him to be real, but also as a prerequisite for his forward march to union with the Supreme Being. This preference for actual living exhibits that Tagore never thought of negating the reality of the world nor its finiteness. For him every finite human being contains within his bosom the seed of the infinite which lies in wait for blossoming. This is what is meant by the surplus in man, and the manifestation of this inexhaustible surplus through creation of art, poetry, philosophy, literature, sculpture, music, dance, craftsmanship, etc. raises man from a mere being to a personality.

Despite his faith in the human spirit and commitment to Humanism, Tagore was aware of man’s limitations. So he works hard on the themes of human greatness and human smallness. Before his death, however, Rabindranath, truly a poet with an international perspective, witnessed the grave crisis of values in the world manifested in the Second World War. Nevertheless, Rabindranath continued to believe in the greatness of mankind. His faith in humanity is reflected in the volume Kalantar (1937) and SabhyatarSankat (1941). Man is divine and infinite by his nature. He is earth’s child but heaven’s heir. That is why he wants to get infinite beauty and perfect goodness. Tagore asserts the importance of man above all pseudo-religious traditions and narrow-minded sectarianism and Nationalism. He protests vehemently against all kinds of barriers of the family, caste, rituals, sects, groups, the party, the nation, administration etc. that divide men and dwarf their personalities.

The central theme of Tagore’s enquiries is man. He has reflected extensively and deeply on the meaning of man in distinctive dimensions and the disclosure of the meaning in relation (a) to nature and (b) to
modes of social relationship. His varied contributions to man include songs, poems and prose writings. Among his books are *The Religion of Man, Personality, Sadhana and, Creative Unity*. The reason for an extensive treatment of the theme of man is his greatness and unique place in the evolutionary process. Man is the supreme creature and the citadel of the Infinite Being. The dynamics of man consists in the graded emergence from darkness to light, from necessity to freedom, and from imperfection to perfection. The poet-philosopher relies on the Vedas and the Upanishads in his emphasis on the greatness and the perfectibility of man. Tagore sees man’s superiority not so much in power as in freedom, creativity, and ability to find pleasure in sheer abundance, sheer immensity. He seeks the vast, the glorious. The aspect of Tagore’s Humanism, glorifying man as the crown of creation, can be best summed up by quoting the beautiful poem from *Fruit-Gathering*:

To the birds you gave songs, the birds give you songs in return. / You gave me only voice, yet you asked for more; and I sing. / You made your winds light, and they are fleet in their service. You burdened / my hands that I myself may lighten them, and at last, gain unburdened / freedom in your service. / You created your Earth filling its shadows with fragments of light. / There you paused; you left me empty-handed in the dust to create / your heaven. / To all things else you give; from me you ask. / The harvest of my life ripens in the sun and the shower till I reap / more than you sowed, gladdening your heart, O Master of the golden / granary.” (EWRT 187)

The great masters in ancient India realized the role of man as something very great indeed. Man’s distinctive role, according to Tagore,
is not so much to command the elements, or tame those representatives of life which are physically stronger than him. According to Dr. Radhakrishnan the innate divinity seeks freedom for the soul:

The divine image is given to man. It is the inescapable foundation of his own existence. It is natural for him to strive to elevate himself above earthly things, to go out from the world of sense, to free his soul from the burdens of selfish existence and gross materialism, to break through from the outer darkness to the enlightening world of spirit. ("Most Dear to all the Muses" xviii)

Tagore’s love of man unconsciously merges with his love for God. Love is a psychological necessity both for man and God. In this Leela (Play) of love, both man and God are co-partners. Love in human heart, is the endless play of the joy of God. It is God’s will: “Thou hast taken me as thy partner of all this wealth. In my heart is / the endless play of thy delight. In my life thy will is ever taking shape.” (EWRT 62) The deep desire for God-vision as the sweetest thing in life and as the glory of the soul is expressed in many lines in Gitanjali. Tagore says:

Away from the sight of thy face my heart knows no rest no respite, / and my work becomes an endless toil in a shoreless sea of toil /…. / Now it is time to sit quiet, face to face with thee, and to sing dedication / of life in this silent and overflowing leisure.”

(EWRT 44)

Rabindranath looks upon human life as a continuous search for the infinite. This search is symbolically expressed in many of his poems through the image of the ‘Golden deer’. V.S. Naravane refers to one such poem from Kheya: I hunt for the Golden deer. / I wander over hills and
valleys, / I travel through nameless lands / Because I am trying to track down the Golden deer. (36) The beauty and contemplative intensity of Rabindranath's nature poetry can be traced to his innate, personal experience. The poet expresses his mystical communion with God. He writes:

Have you not heard his silent steps? He comes, comes, ever comes. / Every moment and every age, every day and every night he comes, / comes, ever comes. / Many a song have I sung in a many a mood of mind, but all their notes / have always proclaimed, ‘He comes, comes, ever comes.’ (EWRT 56)

On the surface, the *Kshanika* poems are light-hearted, almost casual. But underneath, there is a deep longing to come face to face with the Infinite. Longing for an encounter with the real is also expressed unambiguously in ‘Naivedya’. Tagore believes there is no need for any formal learning to come to the master, but the guidance of conscience: “I was not schooled enough to be afraid of you in the dark, therefore / I came upon your doorstep unaware.” (EWRT 162)

The perpetual presence of God constitutes a profound theme of divine romance, an earnest mysticism of intense joy and realization above any intellectual pursuit or bookish philosophy. Tagore’s divine romance is grounded in the reality of life but never in any sense in the negation of life. He felt the embrace of freedom in innumerable bonds of delight and so he did not want deliverance through renunciation of joyful engagement with life. The ascetic is really the escapist, though he gives his escapism the high-sounding name of deliverance. Tagore attempts reconciliation between his faith and his sensory apprehension of reality in *Gitanjali*: “No, I will never shut the doors of my senses. The delights of sight / and
hearing and touch will bear thy delight. / Yes, all my illusions will burn into illumination of joy, and all my / desires ripen into fruits of love.” (EWRT 68)

One of the persistent themes in Tagore’s poetry is his longing ‘to return again and again to the shore of humanity, laying the world of idle imaginings.’ This world-affirming pantheism of Tagore, however, does not make him oblivious to the domain of infinitude where “there is no day nor night, nor form / nor colour, and never, never a word.”(EWRT 66)

The child becomes a source of inspiration and life force in Tagore’s poetry. The child’s purity, trustfulness, innocence, and love for all-in fact the whole paradise of the child’s miniature is beautifully revealed to us in his poems. The child’s love of adventure and high achievement is beautifully described in his poems. He desires to “cross the seven seas and the thirteen rivers of fairyland”, to ‘ride abroad redressing human wrongs, and to bring relief to those in distress.’ (EWRT 141) The divine elements of life-pity, self-sacrifice, eagerness to serve, joy---are kept alive, in us by child’s regenerative influence. Tagore says:

Bless this little heart, this white soul that has won the kiss of heaven for / our earth. / He loves the light of the sun, he loves the sight of his mother's face. / He has not learned to despise the dust, and to hanker after gold. / Clasp him to your heart and bless him. (EWRT 152)

Long before the advent of the modern feminist movement Tagore was a staunch feminist. Rabindranath, with his keen insight into sociological problems, wielded his pen and his tongue for social, religious and political reform and supported the empowerment of women. In a
number of poems, Rabindranath celebrates the beauty and beatitude of femininity in nature. He finds man and woman as complementary to each other in work, virtue and worship. They are co-creators of civilization and culture. He gave his attention to the elevation of the status of the women of India by education. He never believed in the inferiority of woman. Tagore shows how a portion of the radiance that surrounds a woman in the eyes of a man is the light of his own soul, and how the sex-division is divine dispensation for better realizing heaven’s love.

“O woman, you are not merely the handiwork God, but also of men; / these are ever endowing you with beauty from their hearts. / … / The desire of men’s hearts has shed its glory over your youth. You are one half woman and one half dream.” (EWRT 111)

Tagore wrote against narrow orthodoxy and the subordination of woman in the domestic life incessantly in satire in earlier poems and in mellow tone in the later. Such institutions harm not merely those who suffer but those also who cause the suffering. In a poem in the Gitanjali a prisoner who is held in an unbreakable chain is asked to say who it was that wrought his chain. “It was I,” says the prisoner, “who forged this chain very carefully. I thought to hold the world captive and worked at the chain. When the work was done and the links were complete and unbreakable, I found that it held me in its grip.” (EWRT 31)

Love to Shelley was the means to personal liberation, while to Rabindranath it is the cord of individual, social, national and international binding. Perhaps the most thrilling and pulsating theme of Tagore’s songs is love. Love is the chief principle of his Humanism because it lights the inner world of human feelings and sensibilities and draws man nearer to man. It enriches man to be worthy of his serene vision of unison with the
‘All Beautiful’. It comes alone or in silence but opens up a flood of light enkindling the vision of the man of the heart—‘manermanush’. Rabindranath, the worshiper of Jibandebata had declared in a lecture in the United States in 1917: “With the growth of man's spiritual life, our worship has become worship of love.” (Tagore, Personality 159)

Expression of love is so natural to him because of the fact that he has passed through all the phases of love and life. Like the prose-poet Tolstoy, he has travelled from the worship of the senses to the quietness of sainthood. He understands the thrills of love, romantic passion, the gloom of disappointment, the depth of despair, the profundity of quiet, and the ecstatic realisation of ‘being,’ ‘intelligence’ and ‘bliss’ (sat, chit, anandam). He is truly the poet of love. Love flows from his heart, mind and soul in a continuous stream, assuming different forms in its windings from the gross to the spiritual, from the known to the unknown, from the finite to the infinite. He loves God because he loves the world He interprets love in all its multiform expressions—the love of mother, of son, husband, wife, lover, beloved, patriot, the Dionysian, the nature-drunk, and the God-frenzied. Tagore combines in his poetry the idealistic flights of Shelley, the luxuriant imagery of Keats, the exalted beauty of Tennyson and Chandidas, and the spiritual fervour of Thomas a Kempis and Chaitanya Dev, strikes the dominant note of his life and work, both of which have been tremendously influenced by the sublime philosophy and the eloquent natural beauties of India:

I have ever loved thee in a hundred forms and times, / Age after age, in birth following birth. / The chain of songs that my fond heart did weave / Thou graciously didst take around thy neck, / Age after age, in birth following birth. / When I listen to the tales
of the primitive past, / The love-pangs of the far distant times, / The meetings and partings of the ancient ages, / I see thy form gathering light / Through the dark dimness of Eternity / And appearing as a star ever fixed in the memory of All. (EWRT 328)

*The Gardener* shows the human soul with the morning radiance of human love and rejoicing in its new-born sensations of keen delight in beauty of form and beauty of soul. In *Gitanjali* we have the calm starlight of the deep midnight sky through which moves in full-orbed maiden radiance the full moon of the love of God---that blessed love in which all the fragmentary radiances of human love, love of art, and love of nature have been gathered up in to a full and divine radiance that includes and transcends them in sweetness and in light:

My song has put off her adornments. She has no pride of dress and / decoration. Ornaments would mar our union; they would come between / thee and me ; their jingling would drown thy whispers. / My poet's vanity dies in shame before thy sight. O master poet, I have / sat down at feet. Only let me make my life simple and straight, like / a flute of reed for thee to fill with music. (EWRT 44-45)

Tagore teaches us also that we have to rise to the heaven of His love by loving and serving His creatures. Tagore teaches that love is really a spiritual attraction and that a man can never know it by merely seeking the enjoyment of physical beauty.

I hold her hands and press her to my breast. / I try to fill my arms with her loveliness, to plunder her sweet smile / with kisses, to drink her dark glances with my eyes. / Ah, but, where is it? Who
can strain the blue from the sky? / I try to grasp the beauty; it eludes me, leaving the body in my / hands. / Baffled and weary I come back. / How can the body touch the flower which only the spirit may touch? (EWRT 107)

Tagore shows that true love always favours true manhood and its duties in life. It illumines life and makes it pure and divine by self-sacrifice: “For love is the ultimate meaning of everything around us. It is not a mere sentiment; it is truth; it is joy that is at the root of all creation.” (Tagore, Sadhana 107)

Tagore is deeply influenced by the philosophy of the Bauls - a religious sect of Bengal who developed a ‘philosophy of the body’. According to this philosophy the body itself is a temple, ‘in whose inner mystic shrine the Divine appears before the soul.’ Niharranjan Ray astutely observes that for Tagore “love cannot deny or bypass the reality of the body's desire; but a love which never learns to go beyond the body knows no real fulfillment, no peace, and is, therefore, unreal.” (Ray 119) Tagore does not look upon the human body as a tomb or prison of the soul from which it has to be liberated. For him the human spirit is wedded to material organism as man is bound up with nature. Body or nature as such is not evil. In An Introduction to Rabindranath Tagore V.S. Naravane discusses how Tagore presents beautiful feminine form in Yauvan-swapna (Dream of Youth):

His youthful ardour for the delights of life. / My youthful dream is filled with the vastness of the sky. / Flowers thrill my body like the touch of a lovely maiden. / Oh, why does the south wind make my breath expand / Like the accumulated sighs of a thousand lovelorn women? (63)
Some of the poems in *Kari O Komal* contain frank, often daring, descriptions. The titles themselves are eloquent: *Tanu* (Body), *Bahu* (Arms), *Chumban* (The kiss), *Vivasana* (Undraped Beauty), *Stan* (Breasts), *Dehermilan* (Physical Union). However these poems do not suggest any obsession with sensuality. Here the poet simply glorifies woman’s body as a perfect manifestation of the principle in the Universe and with his humanistic outlook he teaches the art of enjoying life without vulgarizing it. There are other poems which point to a disenchantment with the physical basis of love.

The concepts of death & immortality in Tagore’s philosophy are not distinct from his Humanism but related to it. Like most of the systems of Indian philosophy Tagore believes that soul which is indestructible is not perished with death of the body. As a whole, his philosophy reveals us his conviction in immortality of human soul. Man’s body is destroyed in death, but his life again passes on to another. Like birth death too is inevitable. He says, “Death belongs to life, as birth does. / The walk is in the raising of the foot as in the lying of it down.” *(EWRT 428)*

Tagore belongs to the tradition of Upanishadic sages and seers who gave equal importance to life as well as death. His approach to death is quite different and more convincing as he speculates on death not pessimistically but as a new beginning of a life afresh and the end of all earthly limitations. Tagore is a spiritual Humanist who does not have a pessimistic view of life. His harmonious approach towards life has helped him to give a solution to the baffling problems of life and death. He has an invincible faith in the essential goodness of man. Tagore not merely tells us the meaning and crown and fruition of life, but throws light of his
pure soul on the mystery of death and shows us the true meaning of death.

He never wants to run away from it; its face to him is never ugly or fearsome. It is, on the contrary, beautiful, a fascinating maya (Illusion) perhaps. Death is not only inevitable, but it is necessary. Life is ‘sweet as there is death’. Again, he believes that man cannot attain perfection in one life; he attains perfection gradually through many births. Moreover, death enables us to have a better perspective of life. Standing at the threshold of death a man can perceive the world with all its beauty and glamour. The world looks entrancing ‘against the background of Death.’

Death is, therefore, never an expression of emptiness but a perennial promise of fullness. God's love sends death to us, so that when our senses and faculties become incapacitated and unfit to bring home to our souls divine messages to train them, we may be gently divested of the worn-out garment of the body and reclothed in a better and fitter frame. The poet says: On the day when death will knock at thy door what wilt thou offer to him? / Oh, I will set before my guest the full vessel of my Life---I will never / let him go with empty hands. (EWRT 74) Death is not destruction forever. We cry in vain at the approach of death like the child who “cries out when from the right breast the mother takes / it away, in the very next moment to find in the left one its consolation.” (EWRT 75)

Death is a messenger of God. It must be welcomed and worshipped like long-awaited guest. Tagore tells the death: “Day after day have I kept watch for thee; for thee have I borne / the joys and pangs of life.” (EWRT 74) What appears to be death is but a momentary disappearance to be revived again in a new life. It is merely a game of hide and seek which death plays with life. Death has no terrors for
Tagore, and therefore he says, “because I love this life, I know I shall love death as well.” (EWRT 75) It appears as a dreadful thing only when it is separated from the wholeness of life. The truth is that death is not the ultimate reality. It looks black, as the sky looks blue; but it does not blacken existence just as the sky does not leave its stain upon the wings of the bird. Death is not painted as dark, grey, or fearsome, but as white-skinned, puffed and powdered by the poetic touches of Tagore.

The poet has given considerable thought to death as a theme. Like Shelley, Tagore too affirms: “But there, where spreads the infinite sky for the soul to take her flight / in, reigns the stainless white radiance. There is no day nor night, nor form / nor colour, and never, never a word.” (EWRT 66) All along this prolonged interface with death, Tagore develops a very personal attitude towards it. It is romanticized, personified and allegorized in various ways, but no fear psychosis lies behind such treatments of death by the poet. He never wants to run away from it; its face to him is never ugly or fearsome. It is, on the contrary, beautiful, a fascinating maya (Illusion) perhaps. Only to ordinary mortals it has a terrifying countenance.

Tagore’s harmonious approach towards life has helped him to give a solution to the baffling problems of evil and death. He has got an invincible faith in the essential goodness of man. Tagore does not merely tell us the meaning and crown and fruition of life, but throws the light of his pure soul on the mystery of death and shows us the true meaning of death. The poems on death in Gitanjali are various and variously beautiful. He says:

If the day is done, if birds sing no more, if wind has flagged tired, / then draw the veil of darkness thick upon me, even as thou hast
wrupt / the earth with the coverlet of sleep and tenderly closed the petals of the / drooping lotus at dusk. (EWRT 50)

Life is like a garland which the soul has been weaving for the bridegroom of death. Tagore asks, “On the day when death will knock at thy door what will thou offer to him?” and replies, “Oh, I will set before my guest the full vessel of my life---I will never / let him go with empty hands.” (EWRT 74) Tagore describes death in terms of marriage: “O Thou the last fulfilment of life, death, my death, come and whisper / to me! / The flowers have been woven and the Garland is ready for the bride- / groom. After the wedding the bride shall leave her home and meet her / lord alone in the solitude of night.” (EWRT 74) The poet does believe that if life and death are not two convertible realities, they must have some harmonious relation between them. He says, “life and death united in me in a marriage / bond.” (EWRT 210)

For a true comradeship with death, the poet wants to wipe off all barriers. Let the meeting between Death and him be as endearing and joyful as he ardently desires. At the time of bidding farewell to life, he, therefore, heartily welcomes Death to take him away to the land of eternal joy. Admittedly, the moment of death for Tagore is a moment quite known and as such when his play is over in this world he believes that the All Beautiful is there who beckons him to be in unison with Him to sing the glory of His greatness as a creator and emancipator. To respond to His beckoning is to highlight death in its worthiness, and, as such, it is nothing but trekking from light to light, from life to newer life. Therefore, farewell to earth is a journey to the All Beautiful who will adore his life and accept him like a flower:
The night is dark and my heart is fearful—yet I will take up the lamp, / open my gates and bow to him my welcome. It is thy messenger who stands / at my door. I will worship him with folded hands, and with tears. I will worship / him placing at his feet the treasure of my heart. I will go back with his errand done, leaving a dark shadow on my / morning; and in my desolate home only my forlorn self will remain as / my last offering to thee. (EWRT 72)

Death is the ‘last freedom’. “Death belongs to life as birth does.” (EWRT 428) When the full term of life has been served, there is a call for it from the beyond and it has to go. Death is thus the ‘perfection’, the ‘last fulfilment’, the ‘crown’. “Life sits in the chariot crowned by Death.” (EWRT 224) and the ‘consummation’ of life. It gives us consolation that a fresh life is near at hand. It is an opening to heaven. Death in Tagore’s poems is not annihilation: it is a gateway to new life. He believes that “The infinite life will never remain chained in unchanging shackles of / immortality but will speed through death to death to countless new / shrines of light in its eternal pilgrimage of love.” (EWRT 337) To Tagore, “Life's current flows without cease.” (EWRT 339) Waves rise and fall, flowers blossom and fade. The drama of creation goes on eternally. And birth and death, joy and sorrow, smiles and tears etc. are experienced in the rhythmic movement of life. Farewell to earth is welcome to earth again, and this belief has strengthened the poet to welcome death wholeheartedly. The pain of death promises the pleasure of a happy return.

Death is merely the preparation for a higher and fuller life, if this life has been lived in love of man and God and has been full of high purpose and achievement: “It is thou who drawest the veil of night upon
tired eyes of the / day to renew its sight in a fresher gladness of awakening.” (EWRT 50)

Though life and death have been treated as twins by Tagore, there is a strong case to prove that the latter holds a sway over his thoughts. There are rarely some traces of fear of death: “In Pleasure and pain I stand not by the side of men, and thus stand / by thee. I shrink to give up my life, and thus do not plunge into the great / waters of life.” (EWRT 69) It is a very natural expression. “Death, thy servant, is at my door. He has crossed the unknown sea and / brought thy call to my home.” (EWRT 72) To wait for the beautiful dawn of farewell to earth is to be assured of the ever loving guidance of the All Beautiful who remains with a living conscience. The life in death that Tagore discovers and celebrates is a wonderful testimony to farewell to earth. All of Tagore’s celebrations of life, therefore, can be easily translated into the celebration of death, as he looks at it, entwined with and inseparable from life. What Tagore means by life is not the existence of human body but that of the human soul. Death lends a helping hand. It helps the human soul to regain its freedom and then to rush towards its love tryst with the one who is beyond joy and suffering. Death, like Rahu, only throws shadows, it cannot swallow life’s immortality in the hold of matter.

Life and death and the world itself were manifested to him as one. The poet gives us very true and vivid and consoling pictures and ideas as to the true significance of the mysterious phenomena of life and death. Tagore sings in one of the most beautiful poems:

When in the morning I looked upon the light I felt in a moment / that I was no stranger in this world, that the inscrutable without name / and form had taken me in its arms in the form of my own
mother. Even so, in death the same unknown will appear as ever known to me. And because I love this life, I know I shall love death as well. The child cries out when from the right breast the mother takes it away, in the very next moment find in the left one its consolation.” (Tagore, EWRT 75)

Every aspect of human life and activity---social, political, religious---has been described in Tagore’s poetry. Even more remarkable is the variety of relationships between man and nature, and between man and God. Man has an inner power within him which enables him to realise his unity with the whole of mankind, with Nature, and also with God. Tagore conceives this inner power as the divinity latent in man which is characterised by him as the universal Man. Tagore’s ideals of religion and nationality, education and society, progress and culture spring forth from his Humanism---a deep faith in man and in an ideal of wholeness. In poems like ‘Sonar Tari’ and ‘Vasundhara’ we find the realization of the poet in revealing the individual man through gradual extension of his limits, ‘approaching the Universal’. He mutters to himself:

I have kissed this world with my eyes and my limbs; I have wrapt it within / my heart in numberless folds; I have flooded its days and nights with / thoughts till the world and my life have grown one,--- and I love my life / because I love the light of the sky so enwoven with me. (Tagore, EWRT 178)

Tagore’s Humanism finds perfect expression in the following song of Gitanjali:
He is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground and where the
/ path-maker is breaking stones. He is with them in sun and in
shower, and / his garment is covered with dust. Put off thy holy
mantle and even like / him come down on the dusty soil! (Tagore,
*EWRT* 46)

The view of Tagore was that the best way to seek complete union with
god is to seek contact through man. He found his god in man. Through
man alone god is accessible simultaneously by the path of knowledge,
devotion and service. Man is the centre of interests because he manifests
god in the most effective form. The man of piety should meet his god in
toil and sweat. Mankind in general should be the object of love and
service. This insight gives him a sense; of ubiquity, of existing outside
time space, which adds an all-inclusiveness to his vision, to his emotional
realizations. The poet's sense of oneness and openness with the universe
and also, with the Eternal is so sure and so complete that he himself
becomes a part of the Eternal. Sections I & II of song 83 in *Fruit-
Gathering* enables Tagore to declare:

I feel that all the stars shine in me. / The world breaks into my life
like a flood / The flowers blossom in my body. / All the
youthfulness of land and water Smokes like an incense in my /
heart; and the breath of all things plays on my thoughts as on a
flute. (Tagore, *EWRT* 189)

This merging of man with the universe and of the condensation of
universe in man is a peculiar Hindu thought and a noteworthy
Contribution to the idea of the Eternal. In the *Vedanta*, God is regarded as
an Absolute Impersonal. The Bhagvad Gita advocates a special type of
Monism. But Tagore, whose art is born of his spiritual experience, never
hypothesizes any theory which can argue against the existence of the Eternal.

Tagore is the poet of the *Vishva Manava*, not merely the universal man but the man-in-the-universe. The devotee surrenders his all to the deity; but this does not affect his dignity, his pride as a human being. The true man is a social, sensitive and imaginative being and not a mechanical entity or political animal. Tagore is an enthusiast of the common man. He is interested in concrete human beings not in abstract man. Man’s anxieties dealt with in Tagore’s poetry are earthly, not transcendental and spiritual. Even the Nation exists in the mind and heart of workers. Tagore celebrates the ordinary and becomes one with them. He has unfathomable Love and Sympathy for commoners. Defeated and downtrodden are lovable in his poetry. His poetry is filled with deep interest in peasant’s welfare. He wants to sing of the poor and deserted. God is found in his poetry in the company of suffering and downtrodden. The attempt at establishing a kinship with man in all his efforts and strivings, his hopes and failures, his aspirations and his daily work is a unique feature in Tagore’s poetry.

Tagore expresses his intense yearning for complete identification with God. The poet is unaware of the eternal, despite the invisible links with the Center i.e. God. He, naturally, pines to become one with Him. These feelings are expressed from song fourteen to thirty six of *Gitanjali*. The poet laments:
There are times when I languidly linger and times when I awaken and hurry in search of my goal; but cruelly thou hidest thyself from be-/fore me. (Tagore, *EWRT* 47)

The poet attributes his failure to the want of self-purification and spiritual wisdom. Many a time he thinks God to be cruel as He hides Himself from His devotees, like most of the saints he also comes to the conclusion that the wall separating him from God can be demolished only by subjugating his worldly desires and ambition.

Day by day thou art making me worthy of the simple, great gifts that thou gavest to me unasked—this sky and the light, this body and the life and the mind—saving me from perils of overmuch desire. / .... / Day by day thou art making me working of thy full acceptance by / refusing me ever and anon, saving me from perils of weak, uncertain / desire. (Tagore, *EWRT* 47)

Complete dedication to God has made the poet one with and inseparable from Him. It has rendered him musical and effusive: “When all the strings of my life will be tuned, my Master, then at every / touch of thine will come out the music of love.” (Tagore, *EWRT* 434) This meeting of God and man in the temple of the heart has a dual movement as its cause. On the one hand the human soul moves towards God yearningly and gladly. The poet says:

At the end of the stony path, in the country of virgin solitude my / friend is sitting all alone. Deceive him not. Wake, oh awaken! /.... / Is there no joy in the deep of your heart? At every footfall of yours, / will not the harp of the road break out in sweet music of pain? (Tagore, *EWRT* 61)
God himself suffers pain with man. Therefore, man can ‘meet his eternal Lover after crossing endless suffering. The play between man and God is not always sweet. But this play of suffering between man and God is not less fascinating than the sweet play of love. When man’s life is rescued from destruction it finds its unity in the soul and man gets at once direct consciousness of the Infinite. The gulf between the finite and the Infinite is filled with love for one another, when both of them meet each other, to celebrate the ground communion; the sky becomes flooded with celestial light.

Tagore believes that the real treasure of the soul is God and that the highest joy of life is relished through the divine union with God. The soul is the bride that awaits the consummation of her existence by meeting and loving the Eternal Bridegroom.

“She who ever had remained in the depth of my being, in the twilight of / gleams and of glimpses; she who never opened her veils in the morning / light, will be my last gift to thee, my God, folded in my final song. /.... / There was none in the world who ever saw her face to face, and she / remained in her loneliness waiting for thy recognition.” (Tagore, EWRT 66)

In other words, Tagore does not allow the world and man to be torn away from the Absolute, as well as the Absolute to be torn away from the world and man. He sings in Gitanjali:

When in the morning I looked upon the light I felt in a moment / that I was no stranger in this world, that the inscrutable without name / and form had taken me in its arms in the form of my own mother. (Tagore, EWRT 75)
But Tagore’s idea of liberation differs from the Kathopanishad Upanishad, as according to Kathopanishad in liberation the finite soul becomes Brahman and surrenders to Parabrahman, but being a humanist he talks of such a union of the finite and the Infinite where the finite never loses its individuality and merges into Parabrahman. Man’s ideal is not to be Brahman but to live in the world amongst fellowmen.

Tagore’s archetypal Humanism can be understood through his two major concepts of \textit{dharma} and \textit{debata}. For him \textit{dharma}, loosely translated as religion, is \textit{Manuser Dharma} (Religion of Man) and \textit{debata} (God) is \textit{Jibandebata} (God of Life). Baul interpretes \textit{Jibandebata} as vision of Divinity in Life. ‘As God governs all aspects of this varied universe, so Tagore’s \textit{Jibandebata} penetrates with a harmonizing mission in all walks of life.’ (Baul 6) \textit{Jibandebata} is \textit{manermanus} (the man or woman of the heart). It is creative energy which is unifying as well as signifying all the pleasures and pain of life and ever changing self through cycles of births. Tagore’s \textit{Jibandebata} is ‘no sectarian God, but the divine element in all human experience.’ (Anand 69)This \textit{Jibandebata} presides over His created world.

In Tagore's Humanism it is found that he gives more importance to theistic, personal aspect of God than to the absolutistic aspect of God or Brahman. Though deeply influenced by the devotional creed of Vaishnavism, Tagore was not a believer in incarnations of Godhead. He conceived a humanised God. Krishna Kriplani rightly comments “Whether man is made in the image of God or not, God certainly has been conceived in the image of man.” (Kriplani 170) Tagore paves a path for attaining God which is “humanistic” in method and hence ideal. God for Rabindranath Tagore is a human being of flesh and blood, and
not the impersonal Absolute of the Vedanta whom one meets in mere imagination. In the spirit of the *Upanishads*, Rabindranath makes out that the Supreme dwells in each man. (Radhakrishnan xix)

He seems to identify man with the eternal in his poetry. There are no fences between men and the Divine. God is found in man, in his own heart and he tries to realize the infinite through love. Tagore describes God as love. Like the Vaishnava poets Tagore describes God as the divine lover who plays hide and seek with us. He is not merely the deity who wants our devotion and worship. But he craves for our love as He himself loves us. Tagore says in *Creative Unity*,

> In India God with us is not a distant God, He belongs to our homes as well as to our temple. We feel His nearness to us in all the human relationship of love and affection, and in our festivities. He is the chief guest whom we honour. (25)

Tagore gives us the concept of a loving God; it is not so important that He has infinite strength, wealth, but it is more important that He has found himself with finite beings. He also craves for getting love from them whom He loves. Love, by bestowing divinity on man and by making God assumes human form, brings man and God at par. In Tagore’s poems, the Absolute becomes ‘Supreme Person’, ‘God’, ‘My Lord’ (*Jibandevata*), who is again addressed lovingly as ‘thee’, ‘mother’, ‘friend’, ‘my lover’, etc. Nihranjan Ray sums up the concept of Tagorean ‘humanised God’:

> Tagore’s God is not thus a cosmic God, nor an object of scientific investigation. He is a human God, the embodiment of man’s inner
nature; He is to be sensed, perceived and experienced through unity and harmony, through love and sacrifice. (Ray 342)

According to Tagore, the human being is the best among all creations of God and his greatness lies in ‘love’. Among all creatures man alone can love the Supreme, so the Lord comes down in this world to find perfectness, and to realize himself in the love of the human being. He says, “You came down from your throne and stood at my cottage door.” (Tagore, EWRT 58) Man is eternally in search of his Lord, and God also forever bound to come down for the love of his creation.

Tagore insists that God should be conceived as a person. His God is a person, poet and singer. God is not confined to the altar of adoration but He is his personal God (God in person). Tagore brings this personal God from the sanctum sanctorum and presents Him in vivid human images. This view of a divine presence in the human individual forms the basis of universal unity. The poet approaches God as a son approaches his father, as a subject his king, as a lover his beloved, as a woman her beloved. He chooses images of daily life such as the queen: “You know not the limits of this kingdom, still you are its queen.” (Tagore, EWRT 97) the Singer: “I know not how thou singest, my master!” (Tagore, EWRT 43), the prince: “O mother, the young Prince is to pass by our door, --- how can I attend to my work this morning?” (Tagore, EWRT 86), a friend: “Ah no, my friend, your words are dark, I cannot understand them.” (Tagore, EWRT 97) “Drunk with the joy of singing I forget myself and call thee friend who art my lord.” (Tagore, EWRT 43) a homely wife and her child: “With a baby asleep at her breast lay his wife, peacefully sleeping on one side of the bed. The man said, ‘Who are ye that have fooled me so long?’ The voice said again, ‘They are God,’
(Tagore, *EWRT* 121), a young traveler: “I run as a musk-deer runs in the shadow of the forest,” (Tagore, *EWRT* 91) etc. He addresses God as a passer-by: “In the deep shadows of the rainy July, with secret steps, thou walkest, silent / as night, eluding all watchers.” (Tagore, *EWRT* 49)

God becomes Tagore’s friend and beloved: “Oh my / only friend, my best beloved, the gates are open in my house---do not / pass by like a dream.” (Tagore, *EWRT* 49) Worthy relationship is realized by the brother, father, mother and by such relationships by the poet. “Where dost thou stand behind them all, my lover, hidings thyself in the / shadows?” (Tagore, *EWRT* 55) “Yes, I know, this is nothing but thy love, O beloved of my heart---this / golden light that dances upon the leaves.” (Tagore, *EWRT* 62) “Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening thought / and action--- / Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my Country awake.” (Tagore, *EWRT* 53) “Thou art the Brother amongst my brothers, but I heed them not, I / divide, not my earnings with them, thus sharing my all with thee.” (Tagore, *EWRT* 69) “Mother, I shall weave a chain of pearls for thy neck with my tears of / sorrow.” (Tagore, *EWRT* 71) God is the eternal Guru and the original poet and bard. He is the master creator and singer before whom all other songs and creations pale into insignificance. The master or teacher-pupil relationship is one of Mutual confidence and love. Boundless admiration for the Master's skill in music overwhelms the disciple: “I know not how thou singest, my master! I ever listen in silent amazement”. (Tagore, *EWRT* 43) The relations of Lover and Beloved are obvious in the following lines: “Clouds heap upon clouds and it darkens. Ah, love, why dost thou let me / wait outside at the door all alone?” (Tagore, *EWRT* 48)
God is everywhere, and His omnipresence is asserted in: “The King cried in anger, ‘Leave my land.’ / Calmly said the saint (Narottam), ‘Yes, banish me where you have banished my / God.’” (Tagore, *EWRT* 169) The vanity of the poet is reduced to nought by the thought that God is present near him and that He is the superb poet and Musician. The poet feels that he is fit only to sit at His feet: “My poet's vanity dies in shame before thy sight. O master poet, I have / sat down at thy feet. Only let me make my life simple and straight, like / a flute of reed for thee to fill with music.” (Tagore, *EWRT* 45) God is not only Lord and King of our souls, but is our friend and lover and brother. He is to be reached by loving our human brothers. The Poet says: “In pleasure and in pain I stand not by the side of men, and thus stand / by thee. I shrink not to give up my life, and thus do not plunge into the great / waters of life.” (Tagore, *EWRT* 69) God also comes and accompanies as a comrade, a co-traveller: “Early in the day it was whispered that we should sail in a boat, only thou / and I, and never a soul in the world would know of this our pilgrimage / to no country and to no end.” (Tagore, *EWRT* 55)

Rabindranath describes God as *sivam, santam, advaitam*—perfection, peace and non-duality. God is both personal and super-personal. He is immanent and transcendent.

To me religion is too concrete a thing, though I have no right to speak about it. But if ever I have somehow come to realize God, or if the vision of God has ever been granted to me, I must have received the vision through this world, through men, through trees and birds and beasts, the dust and the soil. (Visva-Bharati Quarterly, August-October 1949, p.88)
For Tagore, the only significant infinite is the infinite in its human aspect. In the *Religion of Man* he soundly rejects any idea of what he calls the ‘Indian ideal of the utter extinction of the individual separateness’. (200) He seeks “a Being who comprehends in himself all things that are human in knowledge, will and action.” (*Religion of Man* 204)

Tagore’s conception of the relationship between man and God is more humanistic than even that of the traditional votaries of monistic Vedanta. Traditional Vedanta is preoccupied mainly with Atman viewed in its disembodied essence; Tagore’s concern is for humanity in her actual, concrete existence. In humanizing religion, he says that he indicates their subject-matter in the following words: ‘The idea of the humanity of god, or the divinity of man’ is his chief concern (*The Religion of Man* 15). He also speaks of God who is ‘God and man at the same time’ (*The Religion of Man* 112).

God is love that drives out all evil passions from the heart of the poet and God is the source of power that enables the poet to act:

Life of my life, I shall ever try to keep my body pure, knowing that thy / living touch is upon all my limbs. / I shall ever try to keep all untruths out from my thoughts, knowing / that thou art that truth which has kindled the light of reason in my mind. / I shall ever try to drive all evils away from my heart and keep my love / in flower, knowing that thou hast thy seat in the inmost shrine of my heart. (Tagore, *EWRT* 44)

The peculiar glory of *Gitanjali* is that in it the vision of God and hunger for the infinite are in touch with human life. With a poetic feeling,
Tagore pronounced a belief in God; but that God is not apart from Man. The Supreme Being does not live in temples and golden homes. It lives in those, who till the soil, build the road, write books and compose poems, and therefore, the courage to fight for the vindication of freedom of these human spirits is a true homage to the Supreme Man.

Humanism reflected in the Tagore’s poetry is a view in which man is the dominant and ultimate reality, the criterion of value, truth, and reality and God interpreted in human ways. This is a phase of Humanism where the divinity turns to Humanity.

In Tagore the human and divine are not in conflict. The divine has stepped down from its height and become human and the human has to rise from the smallness of the self and become divine. (Iyengar 39)

Man finds in himself the Divine which made him infinite, even though he is caged in finitude. Man finds his God, not one who transcends the reality, nature and the human world, but one who is as much human as he is divine. The universe is the interplay of the finite and the infinite, and the reality of the Supreme Person is as much dependent on human personality as the latter is dependent on the former…. And the ideal form of relationship between man and man, between man and woman, between man and nature and between man and the Supreme Being, is love.

He needs Man as much as Man needs, him. He needs him for fuller, richer realization of Himself. For the cosmic lila of the Lord, both the terms—the finite and the infinite—are necessary: if man seeks Him, He seeks man too — as the Beggar asking for alms: “Ah, what a kingly
To describe God as a playmate or a debtor—even a beggar—is merely a fanciful way of exalting humanity's status in the scheme of things.

Although Tagore does not deny the traditional Hindu doctrine that everything in the world including man is a manifestation of the Absolute, he also asserts that God's love yearns for us and moves towards us: “Thus it is that the joy in me is so full. Thus it is that thou hast come down / to me. O Thou Lord of all heavens, where would be thy love if I were not?” (Tagore, EWRT 62) Here man is equal to God that is not in power but in love. God has also to wait for man to make Him smile, so if there were no finite beings, then the play of love of God would ever remain incomplete.

The poem PurnerAbhav (‘Limitation of Perfection’, Balaka No. 31) conveys the same humanistic philosophy. Man’s life is the result of the overflow of God’s joy. Now God receives from humanity his own wealth made all the more precious—‘you purchase from my eyes the light of your sunrise.’ Emancipation from the little I in communion with the king of kings by means of love is the only avenue of perfection of life. Life illuminated with this conscious approach to mutual love between the Lord of all heavens and man washes away all dirt and dualities, ambiguities and vicissitudes of human thoughts and sensibilities. The affluence of life in the form of accumulated wealth of love—pure and serene—also ensures the will of the king of kings because life then merges in the will of the Endless. Tagore crystallizes this aspect of the fusion of love in man and the king of kings very adroitly:

Thou hast taken me as thy partner of all this wealth. In my heart is / the endless play of thy delight. In my life thy will is ever taking shape. / And for this, thou who art the king of kings hast decked
thyself / in beauty to captivate my heart. And for this thy love loses itself in the / love of thy lover, and there art thou seen in the perfect union of two. (Tagore, EWRT 62)

He shows how God yearns to lead the human soul for the heaven of his love from eternal time God is coming nearer to man for “meeting him. Man also, through his different births, is marching forward to meet his Divine Lover. God waits patiently for man’s coming, for getting his love. Tagore says. “If I call not thee in my prayer, if I keep not thee in my heart, thy / love for me still waits for my love.” (Tagore, EWRT 52)

And in song no.56 he states: “Thus it is that thy joy in me is so full. Thus it is that thou hast come down / to me. O thou lord of all heavens, Where would be thy love if I were not?” (Tagore, EWRT 62)

Similarly in Fruit Gathering he says:“Yet I know the endless thirst in your heart for sight of me, the thirst that / cries at my door in the repeated knockings of sunrise.” (Tagore, EWRT 188) The love of God for man is both a gift and a need. For love God comes down to the level of the finite man. God becomes a person. God realises himself in the perfect union with man:

Therefore, this duality between Man and man, person and person, the infinite and the finite, never means their eternal separation with their backs turned to each other, but the two faces of the oneness which long for union and are in love with each other. This eternal ‘lila’ between God and man, the Infinite and the finite, is also the very interesting theme of Tagore as a Vaishnava poet.

(Morimoto 293)
Like the Vaishnavas he conceives that not only human beings crave for God's love but God also waits for getting man's willing surrender to Him which is possible if both love each other. Tagore wrote in his Reminiscences: “I guess my work has only one theme--reconciling the finite with the infinite.” *(Jibansmriti 133)* Sometimes God and man are described as playmates, meeting and eluding each other for sport, singing and celebrating together: “With the tune of thee and me all the air is vibrant, and all the ages pass with the hiding / and seeking of thee and me.” *(Tagore, EWRT 67)*

The Divine does not remain aloof, self-sufficient, transcendent. He sets out to meet the human. Hence in *Gitanjali* there is a constant feeling not only of the presence of God but also of his coming, his eager journey towards the finite centres of his own manifestation. “You come to me in myriad forms. You come in the form of colour, of song, of perfume. You come and my entire being thrills to your touch. You come as delight, you come as silence. Endless are the forms which you assume when you come to me.” *(Tagore, EWRT 75)*

This ‘coming’ is not the result of any functional need. The poet is not thinking of the avataras, the incarnations of the divine on earth for the protection of the righteous and the destruction of evil. It is through sheer joy that the infinite sets out to seek the finite’s companionship. Rabindranath poetically describes God himself as being joyfully bound by his own creation: “Our master himself / has joyfully taken upon him the bonds of creation; he is bound with us / all for ever.” *(Tagore, EWRT 46)*

But through nature, through the finite beings He has expressed Himself. Out of the abundance and fullness of His own love and affection
he comes from eternity to meet the finite and the message of His coming is written in the flowers, leaves of trees, waves of seas. He is constantly coming down from His high altar in heaven to reveal Himself to His own creation. Those who know how to listen can hear his silent footsteps. Tagore says: “Have you not heard his silent steps? He comes, comes, ever comes. / Every moment and every day and every night He comes, / comes, ever comes.’ (Tagore, EWRT 56)

The central idea of dedication pervades the sixty-fourth poem of Gitanjali. The poet says that love of God leads us to live a dedicated life. It is then that the soul rises on the wings of its surrendered will to that close union with God wherein it becomes divine itself. The Poet knows that God also like a lover drinks the joy of his creation from the cup of his life. In his love, man becomes blessed. The poet sings in exultant rapture:

“What divine drink wouldst thou have, my God, from this overflowing cup / of my life? My poet, is it thy delight to see thy creation through my eyes / and to stand at the portals of my ears silently to listen to thine own eternal / harmony? / Thy world is weaving words in my mind and thy joy is adding music / to them. Thou givest thyself to me in love and then feelest thine own entire sweetness in me.” (Tagore, EWRT 65)

In God’s love there is the blow of pain, and suffering. But the blow of suffering helps him to know his real self. When God gives us pain, His love is hidden there. Man knows that “....there are blows of pain in your love, never the cold apathy of death.” (Tagore, EWRT 65) God himself suffers pain with man. Therefore, man can meet his eternal Lover after
crossing endless suffering. The play between man and God is not always sweet. But this play of suffering between man and God is not less fascinating than the sweet play of love. When man’s life is rescued from destruction it finds its unity in the soul and man gets at once direct “consciousness of the Infinite. The gulf between the finite and the Infinite is filled with love for each other, when both of them meet each other, to celebrate the ground communion, the sky becomes flooded with celestial light.” (Basak 79)

Through the love of God we attain the love of all, because the two loves are inseparable. The poet says:

 Thou hast made me known to friends whom I knew not. Thou hast given / me seats in homes not my own. Thou has brought the distant near and / made a brother of the stranger. /.... / when one knows thee, then alien there is none, then no door is shut. (Tagore, EWRT 64)

To Tagore the down-trodden and the despised, who are habituated to bearing insults and are oblivious of their rights, are objects of love. Tagore's poetry shows that the poet is less interested in the cult of organised patriotism or an unfocussed cosmopolitanism, and more interested in universal humanity, which transcends all barriers of time and place. The humanist idea of love takes the form of sympathy for the weak. The poet sees the world burning in the fire of hatred and exploitatations, and he hears the wails of weeping women. He asks the visionary in him to wake up to the call of the real. His poetic heart is touched by the sufferings of the poor. He has tried to identify himself with the masses. He feels that God is living there where the poor are dwelling.
Here is thy footstool and there rest thy feet where live the poorest, and lowliest and the lost. When I try to bow to thee, my obeisance can not, reach down to the depth where thy feet rest among the poorest, and lowliest, and lost. Pride can never approach to where thou walkest in the clothes of the humble amongst the poorest, the lowliest, and lost. My heart can never find its way to where thou keepest company with the companionless among the poorest, and the lowliest, and the lost.” (Tagore, *EWRT* 45)

Where the masses are poor, God, who is expected to be of the people, has to live amongst them. God lives with the toiling poor, and the human body is the, true temple of God. There is no point in looking for god in the temples and offering flowers and burning incense there. Tagore is giving a call to those who are worshipping luxuriously in temples without any regard for the utter poverty of the people. One should seek god among common men. To see God in oneself and in all things in life is the essence of a wise and spiritually enlightened persona. He tells the spiritual aspirant desirous of worshipping God, to leave the temple and to learn to recognize God in the faces of his fellow-beings including the manual worker, the tiller of the hard ground and the path-maker breaking stones. Tagore’s fervent love of his country and people is well expressed in song No. 11 of *Gitanjali*. As for those who imagine that they shall discover the Supreme Being by running away from the world of objects and persons. Tagore’s realization of freedom in bondage is:

Leave this chanting, and singing and telling thy beads! Whom dost thou / worship in this lonely dark corner of a temple with doors all shut? Open / thine eyes and see thy God is not before thee! / He is
there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground and where the path-maker is breaking stones. He is with them in sun and in shower, and his garment is covered with dust. Put off thy holy mantle and even like him come down on the dusty soil! Deliverance? Where is this deliverance to be found? Our master himself has joyfully taken upon him the bonds of creation; he is bound with us all for ever. Come out of thy meditations and leave aside thy flowers and incense! What harm is there if thy clothes become tattered and stained? Meet him and stand by him in toil and in sweat of thy brow. (Tagore, EWRT 46)

Here Tagore’s conception of God becomes humanistic, God is most dearly felt in human beings. Tagore says, ‘My God is nowhere outside humanity.’ (Chithipatra 4). The poet broods over the ways and means to realise God. He feels that God can be realized through love for mankind. Receding away from the focal-point, the poet says:

Here is thy footstool and there rest thy feet Where live the poorest, and lowliest, and lost. When I try to bow to thee, my obeisance cannot reach down to the depth where thy feet rest among the poorest, lowliest and lost.

Pride can never approach to where thou walkest in the clothes of the humble among the poorest, and lowliest, and the lost, my heart can never find its way to where thou keepest company with the companionless among the poorest, the lowliest, and lost.

(Gitanjali 10)

In every man rich or poor, low or high, one gets the glimpse of God. Tagore pines for a chance to mix with the suffering humanity in
order to feel the presence of God. In *Gitanjali* this is fortified by Tagore with deep acceptance of life. The soul of the poet, sets out in quest of the Creator. He rejects alienation from common humanity. He believes that an ascetic life in an ivory tower cannot help man realize God. Thus Tagore drifts from his earlier thought of seeking emancipation in isolation. His vision broadens and he seeks God outside himself in the midst of the poor. The poet finds God in the company of the downtrodden and himself far removed from them. He feels that the true worship of God consists in total identification with ordinary, suffering men, irrespective of self and power. The rich and the proud will never be in a position to understand God because they have no empathy with the poor and hence incapable of any feeling for the sorrows and sufferings of the poor.

Tagore uses the style of a hymn to point out the importance of living and working together with the workers and peasants. He condemns those who only wish to put on white robes and worship God with flowers in the lonely dark temples but refuse to toil together with the poorest and lowliest masses of the people in the dusty places.

Rabindranath maintained that it was his Humanism, his, that had raised him high above the wreck and ruin of a dying civilization. The poet has love for the suffering, exploited and humiliated. He has an ardent wish to listen to the sighs and sobs of the poor and the deserted. These wails and cries, sobs and bemoans are generally unheard. But the poet longs to pay attention to these unheard cries: “Make me thy poet, O Night, Veiled Night! / there are some who have sat speechless for ages in thy shadow; let / me utter their songs.” (Tagore, *EWRT* 163)

Establishment of economic and political justice is central to national reconstruction. In this sphere, one has to be, at times, a rebel to
break the shackles of slavery, superstition and exploitation. Tagore declaimed against these evils in his famous poem 'Questions':

Age after age, time and again hast Thou, O Lord, / sent Thy messengers / to this Pitiless world. / They have left their word: 'Forgive all, love all--- / cleanse your hearts from blood-red stains of hatred.'--- / Adorable they are, ever to be remembered: / Yet from the outer door / did I turn them away today, this evil day, with unmeaning salutation / Have I not seen secret malignance / strike down the helpless / under the cover of hypocritical night?--- / Have I not seen, it might's defiant outrages / the silenced voice of justice weeping in solitude?--- / Did I not-see in what agony reckless youth / running mad, / vainly shattered their lives against insensitive rocks? / Choked is my voice today, mute my songs / darkly my world lies imprisoned in a dismal dream,--- / and I ask Thee, O Lord, in tears: / 'Hast Thou thyself forgiven hast even thou loved / those that are poisoning Thy air, and blotting out Thy light?' / (Modern Review 121)

Tagore, did not sing to any particular God or Goddess. He was a Universalist, not in its creedal sense, but in the significance of the term. He found God everywhere. Tagore criticized strongly those religious customs, full of obscurantism obstructing the growth and fulfilment of human life. He visualized a world where the mind is without fear and the head is held high. But in reality he saw unreason, crude and repulsive elements overpowering the true spirit of Religion..... In his poem, ‘Bharat Tirtha’ (1910) the poet sends a clarion call to peoples of all races to unite irrespective of their religious faiths to merge into one Indian nation. This was his ideal of Universal Brotherhood of Man. Dr. S.Radhakrishnan
notices Tagore’s rejection of the mere traditionalism and ritualism of orthodox Hinduism:

Rabindranath rebelled against the orthodoxies surrounding him and traced India's fall to the clash of castes and creeds, to indifference to the disinheritied of the earth. The truly religious men have intense love for the oppressed and the persecuted, for the misfits,

(“Most Dear to all the Muses” xxi)

He breaks the bonds of all orthodox faiths and wants to liberate himself from every thwarting convention. He yields, in spite of his supposed sophistication, to each mood of nature and beauty. In the Fruit Gathering (poem no. xvi), the poet has taken the image of door which has more than one meaning. The poet wants to reach the goal of spirituality and divinity not through the trodden path of rich rituals and profound philosophy but through simplicity and ignorance: “I was not schooled enough to be afraid of you in the dark, therefore / I came upon your doorstep unaware.” (Tagore, EWRT 67)

God is to be found not in temples or mosques but in humanity itself. The Vedantic concept of divinity in man---Nara Narayana--- was developed in his philosophy of the Religion of Man, rejecting the formal religions with their rituals, superstitions and mythologies. There is a ‘universal man’ in every individual. Realization of the ‘mahamanav’ or ‘superman’ in every individual’ through knowledge or intuition is the essence of religion. It is this feeling which manifests itself in sympathy of the finite and the infinite; so Tagore begins his Gitanjali with an expression of spiritual climax of a sheer rapture:
Thou hast made me endless, such is thy pleasure. This frail vessel thou / emptiest again and again, and fillest it ever with fresh life / .... / At the immortal touch of thy hands my little heart loses its limits in / joy and gives birth to utterance ineffable.

*(Tagore, EWRT 43)*

Tagore’s conviction is to know the Supreme Joy through all earthly love, to perceive the visible form of the Exquisite One through the world of beauty is the realisation of freedom. This is a telling testament of his pronounced earth-credo. Tagore approaches the deepest most spiritual aspects of life with simplicity, grace, and reverence. Using the imagery of nature, he connects the reader to the truth of living, being, experiencing this world in all its myriad of forms. His poems touch depths within the soul of the reader in unexpected and unimaginable ways. They are poems with simple themes, revolving around everyday actions and thoughts, the rainbow of emotions that every human has the capacity to feel. And with all these he connects readers to God, and the poems entwine man and God with its simplicity and truth.

“Nature” someone has said, “is the manuscript of God.” Nature is not the collection of inanimate objects, but it is spiritual in nature, Tagore says about India “The earth, water, and light, fruit and flowers’ to her were not merely physical phenomena to be turned to use and then left aside but she cultivated her consciousness in such a way that everything has a spiritual meaning to her.” *(Sadhana 6)* He says that there is no spiritual world outside this world.

The ‘flower’ image in the sixth song of *Gitanjali* conveys the mysterious principle of creation. The poet prays to God: “It may not find
a place in thy garland, but honour it with a touch of pain from thy hand and pluck it. I fear lest the day.” In the poem “Agamani” of Balaka the poet visions a perpetual drama in Nature’s realm. Love and joy, penance, sacrifice and renunciation — all blend into a spiritual truth embedded in Nature. And whispers of giddy joy, trembling of a beloved's heart, rapturous meetings; quiet sad partings--- such is the perennial drama enacted in Nature’s sanctuary. “Phankhir Bhoj” (A Feast for the Birds) presents “thrill of pleasure” in the animal world. The light image in song no.57 of Gitanjali symbolises not only the spirit of love and freedom but also the triumph of life over death, of knowledge over ignorance. In “Shindhutaranga” (Sea-Waves) nature is presented as merciless, death-dealing and utterly scornful of human feelings. In “Vriksha-Vandana” (Homege to the Tree) [Banabani]. The tree symbolises the liberating role of the vegetative principle. The tree as the ‘Valiant progeny of the dust’, the hero who ‘waged war against the demon of barrenness’ and ‘established verdure firmly on the throne.’ Tagore praises the tree for the generosity with which it has lavished countless gifts upon the earth.

In “Vishvashoka” (Universal sorrow), the poet expresses his faith that once he is able to see his own agony as something which the whole world shares, he can transcend the painfulness of existence. He speaks of ‘Eternal sorrow, not mine but humanity’s.’ Patraput contains one of the most powerful of Tagore’s later poems. The poem is addressed to Earth — ‘Heroic Earth, Protectress of the brave’, strangely self-contradictory, combining the hard and the soft, the harsh and the gentle. It is his wonderful Nirjharer Swapnabhanga, (The Awakening of the Fountain) that takes him for the first time into the realm of intuition. A new life dawns within him, and he looks at creation with a new vision. In “Basundhara”(The world) the earth itself becomes a primordial image of
the mother of everyman. Here Tagore sings of the abounding life of the earth and man’s kinship to the swelling tide of primeval energy.

Tagore approaches the deepest and most spiritual aspects of life with simplicity, grace, and reverence. Using the imagery of nature, he connects the reader to the truth of living, being, experiencing this world in all its myriad forms. He avoids the one-sidedness of naturalism which makes man a mere product of nature and extreme spiritualism which creates a breach between man and nature. Humayun Kabir says: “This identity of nature and man remained one of the most characteristic traits of Tagore’s poetry throughout his life.” (537-38)

*Gitanjali* has some of the finest descriptions of nature that Tagore has written. There are pictures of the spring and the rainy season, of moonlit nights and sunny days, in which God is merely the ‘Occasion’ for the display of nature’s beauty. There are poems in which God stands aside, unobtrusively, leaving the poet free to enjoy nature’s companionship. Tagore never asks men to close the doors of their senses. One may be involved in arguments whether the world is real or illusion, but for him to look at the world and to enjoy the beauties of nature with all his senses is more useful. The world for him is not only spiritual and a mere object for getting sensational joy in his later life he has conceived nature in an anthropomorphic way. He attributes humanity to nature. Therefore, for him the rainy season comes like a youthful maiden, spring comes wearing a yellow robe, summer comes as a wrathful ascetic. The different beauties of nature in different seasons are conceived by him in human forms.

Rabindranath's concept of man, of human personality finding its fruition in creativity through the surplus in man, passed through certain
stages of conceptual and experiential development. The first stage of this march towards realization of Nature by man is through the *feeling of intimacy with Nature*. Tagore’s humanist conception of nature as an object of intimate relationship is antagonistic to Western Humanism which makes nature opposed to self and its aspirations.

In Tagore’s view man and nature are partners in creation and in the make-up of human personality. It is not a relation of antithesis between man and nature---man against nature, but a relation of *man with nature*. Both man and nature are, ontologically, equally important for Tagore in the creation of art. (S. Banerjee 31)

Man includes within his personality not only his fellow beings through love and companionship, but also assimilates nature into him. The relation between Man and Nature in Tagore’s view is that of interdependence and cooperation. Both need each other and are incomplete without each other. He creates art, music, painting, dance and such other expressions out of his personality. All these express the creativity within man and establishes the surplus in man. Tagore’s intimate relationship with nature has been manifested through his innumerable poems, songs and writings.

Tagore’s nature is the primal storehouse of the organic spirit which gives Man a sense of belonging to this earth. Nature forms the background, as it were, of his understanding the intricacies of the universe, man’s relation with man, and his quest for the Universal Man. In the vastness of nature we are not unknown strangers, we are kith and kin. ‘When in the morning I looked upon the light I felt in a moment / I was no stranger in this world, . . .’ (EWRT 75) Through our relationship with nature we realize the unity, the all-pervading unity, of the universe.
Now the self perceives an added significance and reality in all
natural things, and is often convinced that it knows the secret of the
worlds. Tagore exhibits the intuitive insight when he proclaims: “I
understand the voice of your stars and the silence of your trees. /I know
that my heart would open like a flower; that my life has filled / itself at a
hidden fountain.” (EWRT 161) The poet has experienced the opening up
of the self through the fading away of the veil of ignorance, through his
intense love for an intimate relationship with nature. At a comparatively
young age at his elder brother's house at Sudder Street, Calcutta, he sees
the sun rising in all its radiant glory. The veil of ignorance is dispelled
and the poet declares the vision through his, famous poem ‘Nirjarer
Swapnabhanga’ (The Fountain’s Awakening). Nature properly
understood is not the force that binds man down to his basic needs as a
bio-physical organism, but lifts him up in communion with his fellow
beings, with the universe at large and with the Infinite that looms large
through Nature and Man. For him spirit and nature are twin aspects of the
Absolute. In the following poem from The Fugitive Rabindranath speaks
of man’s intimate relationship with Nature and indirectly of its organic
growth:

How often, great Earth, have I felt my being yearn to flow over
you, sharing / in the happiness of each blade that raises its signal
banner in answer / to the beckoning, blue of the sky! I feel as if I
had belonged to you ages before I was born. That is why, / in the
days when the autumn light shimmers on the mellowing ears of
rice, / I seem to remember a past when my mind was everywhere,
and even to / hear voices as of playfellows echoing from the
remote and deeply veiled / past. /When, in the evening, the cattle
return to their folds, raising dust / from the meadow paths, as the
moon rises higher than the smoke ascend- ing from the village huts, I feel sad as for some great separation that happened in the first morning of existence. *(EWRT 287-288)*

Tagore believed in the silent but effective influence and inspiration and instruction of Nature. The first poem of *One Hundred and One Poems of Tagore* is homage to nature. In general “The tree”, which symbolizes the youth in nature, becomes a friend of man. It initiates the poet into the fellowship of tranquillity. The tree has been driving sustenance from the sun to vindicate the victory of life over death. In a way, the tree links the earth with the sky and life with eternity. Man’s consciousness of morality fades in vapours on seeing the tree which is the child of the dust but is also a liberator of the earth from the prison of aridity. The poet finds a kind of Eternity in the life of the tree.

Tagore is a pantheist. To him every object of Nature pulsates with life. Naturally, personification is his most favourite figures of speech. He gives animation to the abstract ideas. It is a poetic anthropomorphism and a variant of metaphors. Tagore attributes a living, conscious and active personality to inanimate objects and forces of Nature, and also to abstract ideas:

The Cloud said to me, ‘I vanish’; the night said, ‘I plunge into the fiery / down.’ / The pain said, ‘I remain in deep silence as his footprint.’ / ‘I die into the fullness,’ said my life to me. / The Earth said, ‘My lights kiss your thoughts every moment.’ / ‘The days pass,’ Love said, ‘but I wait for you.’ / Death said, ‘I ply the boat of your life across the sea.’ *(EWRT 178)*
Tagore communicates with nature: “The flowers in the hedge give me answer and the morning air listens.” *(EWRT 189)* and he invokes the month of *Vaisakh* as “O Great Destroyer: O Vaisakh stern and terrible.” *(OHOP 78-9)* He also views Morning and evening as human beings:

There comes the morning with golden basket in her right hand / bearing the wreath of beauty, silently to crown the earth. / And there comes the evening over the lonely meadows deserted by / herds, through trackless paths, carrying cool draughts of peace in her / golden pitcher from the Western ocean of rest. *(EWRT 66)*

He attributes Santiniketan the personality of a humble and rural girl: “I have for my neighbour the tiny river Kopai, She lacks the distinction / of ancient lineage. The primitive name of hers is mixed up with the / loud-laughing prattle of the Santal women of countless ages. *(EWRT 369)*

Rabindranath’s father, Maharshi Debendranath Tagore, was busy solving the problems of the next world, but the poet Tagore, all through his life of varied experiences, has striven to help evolve this world to the status of heaven to unite heaven and earth. He loves the world as passionately as a miser loves money. He even doubts the ability of heaven to supply the blessings of life which this dear earth provides her children with. In “International Relations,” Tagore delivered a lecture in Japan, in 1923, in which affirms that:

“The Kingdom of Heaven is here on this earth. It is there, where we realize our best relations with our fellow-beings, where there is no mutual suspicion and misunderstanding – there is the Kingdom of Heaven, in the spirit of comradeship and love.”
In spite of his cardinal faith in the cult of the soul, Tagore was not disdainful of the material and practical side of life. He knew that body and spirit, visible and invisible, within and without are interdependent for their mutual realisation – they are one and the same, and one is not without the other.

All the aspects of human life and emotions can be seen in Tagore’s hymns. He is the first among our saints who has not refused to live, but has spoken of Life itself, and that is why we give him our love. His poems are the strengthening stories of Man’s relationship with the phenomenal world. Whether they are composed on religion, patriotism or love, they are all unified by a positive, affirmative approach to life. Tagore accepts the finite world, just as he accepts the finite self, as undeniably real. For Tagore to look upon the world as joyful is not to become a slave of pleasure. There is the way of desire, and there is the way of renunciation. Enjoying and giving away, acquisition and surrender represent two different aspects of life. Self-realization consists in maintaining a fine balance between the two. “Ebar Phirao More” (Call Me Back Again) is a poem from *Chitra* which is a stirring call to dynamic action, a demand for involvement in the practical problems of human life.

In “Svarga” (Heaven) there is a reassertion of the value of man’s life on earth. Here the idea of paradise appears vague and illusory when we conceive it as something ‘Beyond’. It becomes concrete when seen in the context of man’s actual life. “Vanaspati” (Vegetation) is a tribute to the spirit of life which surges upward in its search for perfection. In “Basundhara” the earth itself becomes a primordial image of the mother of everyman. In “Basundhara” (The world) Tagore sings of the
abounding life of the earth and man’s kinship to the swelling tide of primeval energy. Krishna Kriplani sums up Tagore’s Humanism thus:

This luminous assertion of life and to the immortality of life, which Tagore founds on the texts of the Upanishads (Everything has sprung from immortal life and is vibrating with life, for life is immense) by no means comes into contradiction, but is on the contrary in perfect agreement with European Humanism of Greek and Latin origin, which like Tagore asserts that life develops infinitely and is ever perfected. There is no vestige here of a doctrine of final nothingness, of extinction; quite the reverse: there is clear and luminous thought striving after permanence and certitude. (292)

Tagore’s poetry and songs, apart from its deep religious, spiritual and devotional streak, often expressed simply a celebration of nature and life. Life’s multifarious variety was ever a source of Ohoituki Ananda (Pleasure without Outward Reason), for him. His exquisite poem, Swarga Hate Viday (To Bid Adieu to Heaven) brings the message that earthly love and beauty are more intense and delightful than those of Heaven precisely because they are transient. For love and beauty exist in Heaven for good. To him the world is full of joy and love, and an undying bliss dances throughout the universe. Sorrows there are in this world, but they are like the flitting clouds of Indian autumn clouds that intensify the glory of the moon.

Tagore understood that Man may be a sojourner on earth, but even his brief stay is very significant. His life on earth is a reality, that its play with love and friendship, tears and laughter, is beautiful, and hence dear to him. The bold declaration comes in a poem titled “Life” in Sharps and Flats: “This world is beautiful. I do not want to die. I wish to live in
the life of man, and have a place in his living heart, as in a sunbright flowerful garden.” (OHOP 6)

Tagore incorporated the wisdom of the past, reflected in the spiritual and intellectual attainments of the Vedas and the Upanishads in his life and literature. Yet, he was never so immersed in India’s seemingly otherworldly heritage, underlined in the philosophical concept of the world being an illusion (maya), as to negate rationalism. The joy of living, suddenly and unaccountably, surges up in his heart. He views ‘the ceaseless ripple of life on earth’ he feels the happiness of meetings and sadness of partings. He vows to ‘wreathe his songs’ with human joys and griefs and ‘love’ in the deathless life of man.

Svarga Hoite Biday (Farewell to Heaven) is a glorification of life on earth in which Tagore compares the passionless calm of heavenly bliss with the exquisite flow of joy and pain in earthly experience. Tagore leaves us in no doubt where his own preference lies. When he is about to return from heaven to earth instead of feeling sad at the thought that he was about to relinquish the joys of heaven, was delighted at the prospect of returning to the lap of mother earth. Life in this world, compounded of joy and sorrow, was to him much more attractive than the monotonous happiness offered by heaven. It was easier for Tagore to take a farewell from Heaven, but a farewell from Earth is not one to which he can bring himself.

Rabindranath stood for the fullness of life, the development of the different sides of life. As a poet, he takes delight in the world of colours and sounds, smells etc., revealed by the senses. Moksa is not renunciation of the world. It is the proportioned development of body, mind and spirit. Tagore was not a visionary; nor did he believe in living the life of a
recluse. He wanted his 'Religion of Man' to lead to the service of mankind. Rabindranath heard the call and clung to the world more closely than ever, and his attachment for the world ripened into selfless love for the oppressed and suffering millions of famine-stricken India. He sings in *Gitanjali*:

Deliverance is not for me in renunciation. I feel the embrace of freedom / in a thousand bonds of delight. / Thou ever pourest for me the first draught of thy wine of various / colours and fragrance, filling the earthen vessel to the brim. / My world will light its hundred different lamps with thy flame and / place them before the altar of thy temple. / No, I will never shut the doors of my senses. The delights of sight / and hearing and touch will hear thy delight. / Yes, all my illusions will burn into illumination of joy, and all my / desires ripen into fruits of love. (*EWRT*68)

Tagore was no ascetic and deliberately repudiated the ideal which seeks to deny the multitudinous life of the body. He felt that the real glory of life lies in the constant striving for a fuller and richer experience. This yearning for fuller life recurs again and again in his poems. Like a true poet he does not shut the gateway of the senses, but allows the heavenly radiance of spirit to come in a flood through the senses. In *Gitanjali* He firmly rejects asceticism thus:

Deliverance? Where is deliverance to be found? Our master himself / has joyfully taken upon him the bonds of creation; he is bound with us / all for ever. / Come out of thy meditations and leave aside thy flowers and incense! / What harm is there if thy clothes become tattered and stained? Meet him / and stand by him in toil and in sweat of thy brow. (*EWRT* 46)
Tagore’s poetry speaks of joyous acceptance of domestic life. It is a folly to prefer the life of asceticism to the happy life in home. Asceticism is a frame of mind, a spirit of detachment. For the man of detachment, his home is a hermitage. It is not essential to give up home life. The poem “I shall never be an ascetic” embodies the firm resolve of the poet never to turn an ascetic:

No, my friends, I shall never be an ascetic, whatever you may say. / I shall never be an ascetic if she does not take the vow with me. / It is my firm resolve that if I cannot find a shady shelter and a companion for my penance, I shall never turn ascetic. / No, my friends, I shall never leave my hearth and home, and retire into the forest solitude, if rings no merry laughter in its echoing shade and / if the end of no saffron, mantle flutterers in the wind; if its silence is not deepened by soft whispers. / I shall never be an ascetic. (EWRT 104)

Tagore is never in favour of escapism. According to him, God has created the cosmos for men as He is bound in love with men. Tagore is perpetually joyful in his cosmic romance and so is not bothered in the least about liberation. Salvation or moksa is a state of divine life on earth. He wants to attain it through our natural human bondage, through our actual social living in and through which he finds the road to emancipation, the source and repository of infinite joy. Thus Tagore’s attitude and approach to life, the world and his conception of the religion of Man was essentially human and secular.

Rabindranath Tagore was no world-weary self-abnegating ascetic. He was a seeker of the ultimate freedom and beauty in this life on this planet, and not a ‘beyonder’. “Not self-immolation, but self-expression
must be our aim,” the poet proclaimed--and this should serve as his enduring epitaph. (On Art and Aesthetics 1) Tagore repudiates the practice of renouncing the world of men and women and seeking union with God in the solitude of a mountain cave.

Tagore’s God is not a metaphysical abstraction but a human, worldly reality; the God-in-Man or Man-in-God is to be perceived and experienced by the human senses, by man’s inner being, not being, not merely comprehended by knowledge, and is therefore a living entity. Indeed, according to him, there is no God beyond man. Therefore there is no question of renouncing the world of ‘name’ and ‘form’ no consideration of negation of the world of senses. His idea of mukti or deliverance thus seems to be somewhat akin to Shankara’s idea of jivanmukti or deliverance in the midst of the bondage of worldly life.

Tagore being a man of the 19th century is naturally influenced by the European idea of Humanism also and so he gives immense importance to this present life. We can live in active communion with God living in our society through the bonds of love and affection. Tagore’s pantheistic and anthropocentric worldview is exquisitely dramatised, in the following poem, through a series of dialogues between God and His devotee, which he used as an epigraph to his essay “My Religion”:

At midnight the would-be ascetic announced: / ‘This is the time to give up my home and seek for God. Ah, who has / held me so long in delusion here?’ / God whispered, 'I,' but the ears of the man were stopped. / With a baby asleep at her breast lay his wife, peacefully sleeping on / one side of the bed. / The man said, ‘Who are ye that have fooled me so long?’ / The voice said again, 'They are God,' but he heard it not. / The baby cried out in its dream, nestling close
to its mother. / ‘God commanded, 'Stop, fool, leave not thy home,’
but still he heard / not. / God sighed and complained, ‘Why does
my servant wander to seek / me, forsaking me?’ (EWRT 120)

God urges that his devotee need not seek Him outside the daily
realities of life but in the midst of everyday happenings. He should attend
to his crying child and his lonely, affectionate wife in order to realize God
and his own self. Only by attending to the practical affairs of life and
bestowing love upon his family can he pacify his thirst for God.

The main features of Tagore's lyrical poetry are its humanistic
essence combined with spirituality, a love of nature and man and the
expression of the beauty and splendour of the earth. The poet's spiritual
message does not, however, enjoin us to run away from the ‘fret and
fever of life’ and seek shelter in a hermitage, but insists on one’s full
participation in the joys and sorrows of life. He feels that his limbs are
made glorious by the touch of this world of life: “I feel my limbs are
made glorious by the touch of this world of life. / And my pride is from
the life-throb of ages dancing in my blood this / moment.” (EWRT 67)

Tagore could make the entire world his home because he was a
self-styled representative of a nation which exists in the mind and heart of
working communities. “He does not believe in India as a geographical
entity. It is as a spiritual personality that he talks about India.”
(Radhakrishnan 360) By this emphasis on the cultural unity of India
transcending caste, sect and religion, Tagore not only asserts the value of
Humanism in life but also points out the dangers faced by the national
awakening in the country at the beginning of the twentieth century. He
warns his countrymen against the drifting of the national movement
towards a militant Hinduism under the stormy influence of extremist
leaders. His mission is to awaken their dormant spirits and transform them into a revolutionary. In one of his poems *The Conch* he says:

> How can we bear to see you conch lying there in the dirt? The / tragedy of it cuts off air and blocks out light. Warriors rise, / brandish your banners! Singers get up and sing! Doers, Charge into / action! Do not falter! / How can we let you inspiring conch stare up at us from the dirt? (SPRT 77)

The poet's son has recounted how, during a Calcutta session of the Congress, perhaps in 1892, there was an English dinner in honour of Congress leaders where Tagore was persuaded, against his will, to sing to the guests, and he appeared, ‘dressed in dhoti and chaddar’ in the midst of the anglicised diners .... and poured out in the song his pent-up sorrow and resentment (so that) there was an embarrassing hush, after which the party broke up some of the words of this song, which he is said to have composed extempore:

> Do not ask me to sing, I pray you, do not ask me. / Are we here just to make merry, to laugh and play, / to say false and deceptive words? / Who will wake up today, and work, and wipe off our / mother's shame. / And offer at her feet the service of all our yearnings! (Mukherjee 14)

Rabindranath Tagore is India’s greatest singer of national songs. He revived hidden national memories and gave the people pride and dignity. His was the patriotism of a humanist. He couldn't therefore subscribe to the heresy, ‘My country, right or wrong; Human values were more to him than power values, the ‘spirit of man’ more than the power and the glory of the nation. Tagore never placed patriotism above soul,
conscience and love for humanity. In “Nationalism in India,” he explained,

“Even though from childhood I had been taught that idolatry of the nation is almost better than reverence for God and humanity, I believe I have outgrown that teaching, and it is my conviction that my countrymen will truly gain their India by fighting against the education which teaches them that a country is greater than the ideals of humanity” (Chakravarty A 200).

Moreover, his profound love for Bengal and India is manifest in his many immortal songs and poems. His love and intensity for the land transcended the bounds of a narrow, selfish and self-aggrandising Nationalism and carried such depth, generosity and broadness that his compositions were adopted as national anthems in two countries. Despite the fervour, Tagore never allowed his love for his country to stand in the way of his love for truth, justice and humanity – he was not given to a national consciousness but a world-consciousness.

Love, pathos, encouragement, and the spirit of sacrifice inspire his patriotic poems, but in them there is not even a suggestion of anger, jealousy or hatred for anybody in the world. His love for India was in no sense exclusive; that love did not require him to sacrifice or even compromise his noble, humanistic ideal of human unity; nor did it lead him to hate the people or nations hostile to India. His attachment to India was not bound by her geographical frontiers; the attachment was to the ideals and values for which India has stood through the centuries.

The deep Humanism and indeed the religious fervour which coloured his political attitude and belief is best seen in the song
‘Janaganamana Adhinayaka Jaya He’ he wrote for a session of the Indian National Congress and which has today become the Indian National Anthem. His prayer to the Dispenser of India’s destiny is to bring the hearts of all peoples into the harmony of one life. In a sense, it is more a religious hymn for all mankind than a national anthem for any one country. Humayun Kabir notes:

Tagore begins with an invocation to the lord of the hearts of all the peoples of the world and sings the praise of the eternal charioteer who has guided man through the ups and downs of history. He seeks welfare not for India alone but for the entire world. He sings of endeavour and the co-operative reconstruction of human society in which every individual will be guaranteed the dignity and the rights of a civilized man in a civilized world. The Indian National Anthem, which is one of Tagore’s greatest gifts of India, thus, reflects his ideal of a world where there will be friendship and co-operation among all men and mutual regard and respect among all peoples. It sums up in magic words his social and political ideals and expresses his deep concern for the freedom and dignity of the individual in a world whose unity and harmony depend as much on the efforts of man as the dispensations of providence. (Kabir152)

Tagore was a patriotic poet. In his poems his motherland is so dignified, so beautiful and so lovely! In 1905, when he took an active part in the anti-British movement in Bengal, he wrote a number of poems in praise of his country:

Blessed am I that I am born to this land and that I had the luck to love / her. / What care I if queenly treasure is not in her store but precious enough / is for me the living wealth of her love? / The
best gift of fragrance to my heart is from her own flowers and I know / not where else shines the moon that can flood my being with such / loveliness. / The first light revealed to my eyes was from her own sky and let the same / light kiss them before they are closed for ever. (Tagore, EWRT 341)

He also appealed to the broad masses of the Indian people to unite with the words of a prayer. In one of the poems written during the period of the Swaraj movement, he says:

Let the earth and the water, the air and the fruits of my country be sweet, / my God. / Let the homes and marts, the forests and fields of my country be full, / my God. / Let the promises and hopes, the deeds and words of my country be true, / my God. / Let the lives and hearts of the sons and daughters of my country be one, / my God. (Tagore, EWRT 342-43)

No voice was raised more nobly for Indian freedom and freedom of all the world as did that of Rabindranath Tagore. We find the slogan of joyous freedom sung in all his literary pursuits. Satyajit Ray has argued that even in Tagore's paintings, "the mood evoked…is one of a joyous freedom". He recognized the right of each nation to work out its own destiny. But he also proclaimed that national claims must never encroach upon our human obligations. With his humanist attitude the concept of freedom transcends the political realm and turns into the moral and spiritual freedom of man grounded in humanity. He defines politics and culture, Nationalism and Internationalism, tradition and modernity, all in the light of Humanism. Humayun Kabir says,
Tagore’s belief in the freedom and dignity of man was derived from his religious faith and reinforced by his acceptance of the Humanism which was the prevailing intellectual attitude of his younger days. He accepted without hesitation the western idea of democracy but to this he added the Indian conception of the individual's responsibility for social service. (149)

Tagore has a spiritual conception of freedom. The aim of spiritual freedom is the attainment of universality only through love, sympathy and adjustment. Such illumination of human personality is by self-realization. The poet conceives that freedom consists in the realisation of spirit within man and within the whole universe. Man, according to Tagore, can attain spiritual freedom through inner sanctity and not by external ceremonies and sacrifices. Freedom needs a free mind and head. It does not want any kind of fear, but knowledge and fearlessness. Freedom needs an environment of liberal relations, and not the world broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls. Jawaharlal Nehru rightly praises him as, ‘not only a poet of India, but also a poet of humanity and of freedom everywhere.’ (Nehru xvi). Through his paradisiacal imagination he envisioned a world of love, equality, honesty, bravery and spiritual unity of all mankind – of sympathy and fellowship across race, religion and gender – the world of sattva (light), to put it in a phrase from The Bhagavad Gita, rising from its current tamasik (dark) state, that the present humanity, infatuated with greed, wealth and power may not choose to tread, but it is there for them to choose when they rise from their long and horrific moral slumber. Tagore’s vision of a free India—free from the fetters of materialism, Nationalism as well as religious and racial orthodoxy—actively seeking a common destiny with the rest of mankind, constantly evolving towards a global society with
ever-widening thought and action, is most ardently expressed in
Gitanjali. Tagore’s following prayer for India is also his prayer for the
rest of humanity:

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high; / Where
knowledge is free; / Where the world has not been broken up into
fragments by narrow / domestic walls; / Where words come out
from the depth of truth; / Where tireless striving stretches its arms
towards perfection; / Where the clear stream of reason has not lost
its way into the dreary / desert sand of dead habit; / Where mind is
led forward by Thee into ever-widening thought and action---/ Into
that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my Country awake.
(Tagore, EWRT 53)

This is an eloquent declaration of Rabindranath’s humanistic Faith
in which intellect and emotion are splendidly fused. With utmost fervour
and sincerity, the poet consistently appealed to the sons and daughters of
his own country to unite and enter the ‘heaven of freedom.’ Tagore does
not seek merely the salvation of the individual but, like Shelley, also
cherishes the ideal of collective happiness and freedom of the human
race. The prayerfulness of Tagore is wonderful not for its sincerity,
passion, and purity but is further remarkable in that it is in alliance with a
lofty and rational patriotism, and is not merely bent on seeking individual
welfare but seeks to lift his beloved into the heaven of a higher and holier
life. The poem gives us an insight into the poet’s heart where we find an
intense, pure, and lofty patriotism in wonderful combination with a
burning love of humanity and a deep and rapturous love of God. It is well
that in ancient India when India occupied a place in the scale of nations
both materially and spiritually, such a combination existed. The divorce
of two great passions of the human heart has untold unhappiness to brought mankind both in India and the West. Tagore’s message is to bring about the combination once again for the greater happiness of man and the greater glory of God.

He wants India to value freedom and truth, to be tolerant, to strive for perfection with courage and clarity. He tried to free his own countrymen from the contempt for one faith or the other, from discrimination based on caste, dogma, intolerance and rejection of one group by the other. The very genuineness and intensity of his love for India leads him to reject the narrow, irrational side of Nationalism which is built on the (mis)use of power.

Tagore was one of the first to see the dangers of the aggressive Nationalism which has raised the nation to the status of a demi-God. He proclaimed in unequivocal terms that the blind worship of the nation state contained the seed of disaster for man. Two World Wars within the space of thirty years have proved how tragically correct his reading was. (Kabir 216)

Rabindranath asks the downtrodden and the oppressed to cultivate the freedom of the soul, for real salvation is moral and spiritual. In the poem *The Sunset of the Century* he says:

(the hungry self of nation) swells and swells / Till in the midst of its unholy feast descends / The sudden shaft of heaven piercing its heart of grossness... / Be not ashamed, my brothers, to stand before the / Proud and the powerful / With your white robe of simpleness. / Let your crown be of humility, your freedom the freedom / Of the soul. / Build God's throne daily upon the ample bareness of your
poetry / And know that what is huge is not real and pride is Not everlasting? (Nationalism 80)

Tagore’s concept of freedom refers to the very basic and essential quality of creativity in man. Dr. Jatava finds that, “Man has surplus energy which causes creativeness in him. This creativity is the source of freedom and it has spiritual roots. Without freedom, man cannot be liberal and democratic.” (Jatava Page 110) Tagore castigates the narrow type of Nationalism as a source of human diminishment, hatred, war and carnage. As an ‘organisation of politics and commerce’, sacrificing, ‘the moral man, the complete man… to make room for the political and the commercial man, the man of limited purpose’. (Nationalism 9) Tagore dismissed Nationalism as ‘the organised self-interest of a people, where it is least human and least spiritual’ in “The Sunset of the Century,” a poem written on the last day of the nineteenth century. Here are the opening lines of the poem as a preview to the intensity of Tagore’s outrage against Nationalism:

The last sun of the century sets amidst the blood-red clouds of the West and the whirlwind of hatred. The naked passion of the self-love of Nations, in its drunken delirium of greed, is dancing to the clash of steel and howling verses of vengeance. The hungry self of the Nation shall burst in a violence of fury from its own shameless feeding. For it has made the world its food. (Nationalism 80)

Tagore’s was an attempt to synthesize the Western scientific quest with the Eastern spirituality in order to create conditions for the happiness of entire humanity. He felt that science had brought great gifts to the world and with due reverence himself wrote a handbook, Visva-parichay, an introduction to the universe. Tagore brooded anxiously over the
problem of man-machine relationship. Machines, when they help men, are great boon to humanity, but when the supremacy of machine hampers the natural growth of human personality they are a curse for humanity. Machine reduces man's force of life and gets the human soul imprisoned. But by the touch of love and joy this imprisoned soul is freed. To him humanity is rich, and hence he feels pain when human personality is trampled upon.

“Bird-Man” (a poem on the aeroplane) is a powerful poem, with the logic of embittered emotions. The first stanza sets the basic conflict, or contrast, between the birds and the new inauspicious machine-bird (the aeroplane). The birds in their airy passage distil the glad tidings of the joy of life everlasting. But now the vaulting pride of man has spread its mechanic wings across the sky, polluting the very air through which they move, and sanity and sacredness seem lost for-ever:

The banner of arrogance has taken wing, / Proud and overweening.

This thing has not been blessed by the life-divinity. / aeroplane we hear / Incompatibility with sky, / Destruction of atmosphere / High among the clouds, in the heavens, its din / Adds new blasphemous grating laughter awing to a close -/ skies, / From their growing devastation. (Tagore, LPT 90)

It seems the most expressive of our deep-seated fears about the effect of our modern technological civilization on the natural world! Tagore’s theme here is urgent, probing and deeply moral. It takes a great poet to capture such anxieties, and the articulation of them in this way can have a powerfully activist influence: people can be inspired by a poem like this to take action against the dangers it describes.
Like his father, Tagore too felt that the West and the East had much to teach each other. He is a passionate Indian, but his Nationalism transcends into universalism, where one may find out a unique blending of the best of the East and that of the West. The idea of a universal *élan vital* which binds man with the rest of the universe is expressed in *Gitanjali*:

The same stream of life that runs through my veins night and day runs / through the world and dances in rhythmic measures. / It is the same life that shoots in joy through the dust of the earth / in numberless blades of grass and breaks into tumultuous waves of leaves / and flowers. / It is the same life that is rocked in the ocean-cradle of birth and / death, in ebb and in flow. / I feel my limbs are made glorious by the touch of this world of life. / And my pride is from the life-throb of ages dancing in my blood this / moment. *(Tagore, EWRT 66-67)*

Tagore's Humanism led him to take not only all knowledge for his province but the whole world for his stage. He told England that her love of Empire was eating into the vitals of her tradition of freedom; America, that money was not everything; Italy, that her tyranny was degrading her; Russia, that to use force to change men's opinion was not wise; Japan, that she should be herself and not a bad imitation of the west; India that uniting against the foreigner is not the whole of nation-building. He put heart into China and Germany and called to the countries of Asia to come together and build up the composite culture that belonged to all of them and prepare to make their contribution in due time to the world's stock of wisdom.
The boundaries of his own country and his own people were getting dissolved into the contours of a wider world; his Nationalism was merging into international content, the world was opening its doors wide and beckoning him to enter there, which he did with joy and thankfulness, though not without a little trepidation. And then he sang: “Thou hast made me known to friends whom I knew not. Thou hast given / me seats in homes not my own. Thou hast brought the distant near / and made a brother of the stranger.” (EWRT Tagore 64)

Looking at the cosmic scheme of things from this lofty and divine standpoint, Tagore is able to perceive and realise and communicate profound spiritual truths and to see and make us see the divine significance of life and its myriad incidents which to ordinary worldly eyes have no value or purpose. Tracing the eternal human features in Tagore’s poetry Alexandru Peilippide says

Tagore has brought a fresh, a novel flow of poetry, into the stream of world poetry, for it is a great lyrical outflow such as the world had not known for long and which, while bearing the stamp of a national character, also had the features of universality, including human features that are essential in all ages and places—features which we find in the Greek tragical playwrights, in Shakespeare, in the French classics of the 17th century, in Goethe and in Tolstoy. (Peilippide 206)

Passionate Indianism could not confine Tagore into the limited purview of narrow Nationalism. Tagore is more than a mere Indian nationalist; he is a universal nationalist a representative of world-wide humanity. He was an Indian by birth but a world citizen by his perception. His goal is to channelize the streams of Nationalism to the
direction of supra-Nationalism or universalism by freeing human soul from all bondage and pettiness and thereby transcending itself into a search for universal love and brotherhood. India’s motto, Tagore reminds us, is Unity in Diversity. So India, in Tagore’s vision, is the pilgrimage of world humanity as it is the great synthesizer and unifier in the midst of manifold differences through centuries. Tagore always stressed upon universal brotherhood He always tried to synthesize East and West thus: “The sun goes to cross the Western sea, leaving its last salutation to the East.” (Tagore, EWRT 401)

When a foreigner came as his guest, he would build up a kind of kinship. From Norway came professor Konow, he came to be called Kanva (the paternal sage in Sakuntala). A girl from Denmark acquired the name, Haimanti. Somebody else would be called Vasanti and so on. While abroad, he used to say, “When people in foreign countries come to me, give me things in love, do this or that for my comfort, then I realise deeply that I am a human being, blessed is my man's life.”

Tagore’s broad passion for the whole of the human race reaches its acme in that remarkable song “Jangana Man Adinayak Jai He Bhart Bhagya Vidhata”, God is viewed in this song as the ruler of human destinies. Tagore’s universalism is no longer merely the poet’s ardent desire for concord and harmony, but it is ennobled and sanctified by a deep faith in Him who is maker and Lord of the universe. The glorious panorma of an endless humanity is in sight. The pathways of the human race, rendered harsh by the vicissitudes of rise and fall, resound with the Deliverer’s chariot-wheels and forth peals his noble Shankha and dire strife and revolution.
Blend of powerful individuality and of general human interest is an essential feature of Tagore’s poetical creation. Fraternity is a characteristic feature of Tagore's idea of love. The poem “Life” is a bold declaration of it: “I wish to live in the life of man, / and have a place in his living heart, / as in a sunbright flowerful garden / with human joys and griefs / I shall wreathe my song. (Tagore OHOP 6.)

Philosophy or religion, however lofty it might be is meaningless and incomplete without dedication to the service of humanity. Tagore's thoughts on social values, as spelt out in his literary works, are instructive and informative. One has to be a karma-yogi and not a doctrinaire. Tagore, therefore, worked hard to embody his ideals of education in Santiniketan and Sriniketan, which were recognized, after decades, as VisvaBharati University in 1951. Tagore described the Institution, in its invocation, as follows:

This is Visva-Bharati where the world makes a home in a / single nest. Briefly we declare its aim: / We are of the faith that Truth is one and undivided, though / diverse may be the ways which lead us to it. Through separate / paths pilgrims from different lands arrive at the same / shrine of Truth. This we verily know. / Knowledge flows in two streams---from the East and from the / West. In their unity is perceived the oneness of Truth that / pervades and sustains the entire universe. This we avow. / In the realization of this oneness of Truth lies mighty gain, / perfect peace and profound good of Man. This we truly / believe. / So unto this Visva-Bharati we render our homage by / wearing garlands with flowers of learning gathered from / all quarters of the earth. To all devotees of
truth, both from / the West and from the East, we extend our hand with / love. (Visva-Bharati Quarterly i.)

Tagore was an anti-imperialist and intensely patriotic. His poems and songs did inspire the Indians in their struggle against foreign rule and breathed a universal spirits. Always in his life and work---and the two were synonymous---he was on the side of the weak against strong. No other voice in the world of art was raised so unequivocally against Fascism, which between the two world wars mauled and menaced civilization. The Fascist rape of China, Abyssinia, Spain and Czechoslovakia roused his towering rage. In 1937 he wrote a magnificent invocation to “Africa”.

Tagore’s magnificent hymn to Africa is marked by the deepest human sympathy and is one of the earliest recognition of the rights of the African people to Independence and self-realization in every sphere of life. His protest against imperialism is not confined within the boundaries of his motherland. Love and respect for the ideals of one’s own people is a positive virtue, but disrespect for the ideals and traditions of other peoples is a crime against humanity. In “Africa” the continent 'is imaged as 'humiliated woman', the daughter of Mother East, who had been shabbily treated by the white-skinned and civilized 'bandits' of the West. The savage-greed of the civilized people is stripped naked. The poet's anger is directed against the killers of human freedom. His sympathy is decidedly with the aggrieved black Africans. The poet's wrath is visible in the imagery he employs to describe the black deeds of the murderers of humanity. Addressing colonially oppressed Africa, he pronounces in utter pain: “(on you) Civilization’s barbarous greed flaunted its naked
inhumanity... The hobnailed boots of your violators Struck gouts of that stinking mud Forever on your stained history. (Tagore, *SPRT* 102)

He felt himself, he said, the agonies of Czechoslovakia, as he did of China stricken by the militarism-fascism of Japan. He wrote, angrily, on ‘The Worshippers of Buddha’, for when he heard that the Japanese were praying at the shrines of the Buddha for his blessings on the successful massacre of the Chinese he could hardly contain himself. His anti-imperialist attitude finds expression in the following:

When my mind was released / From the black cavern of oblivion / and woke up into an intolerable surprise / it found itself at the crater of a volcanic Hell-fire /That sprouted forth a stifling fume of insult to Man; / It witnessed the long drawn suicidal agony of the time spirit / Passing through convulsions of a monstrous deformity worse than death. (Tagore, *EWRT* 381)

Piercing with his sharp pen through the hypocrisy and ruthlessness of the colonialists the poet denounces the shamelessness and falsehood of the Japanese militarist troops, who went to Buddhist temples and prayed for blessings before embarking on their aggressive expedition. He begged from the Almighty the power to stop the march of imperialism and save humanity from infectious war:

Give me power, O awful Judge, / sitting on the throne of Eternity / Give me a voice of thunder, / That I may hurl imprecation / Upon this cannibal whose gruesome hunger / Spares neither women nor children... (Tagore, *EWRT* 382)

Since Tagore stood for the totality of life, for the physical as well as the spiritual; for the real and the ideal; and for the values of truth, compassion and justice that the world will reckon its own, as soon as it
chooses to break the current hypnotic allure of money and materialism, and rise from the dungeon of illusion. Given the present crisis in the world, in which nations, fiercely locked in a devil-dance of destruction, are perpetuating cycles of retribution and retaliation, and hollow hysteria between fanatics of nation and fanatics of religion is taking its toll on innocent civilians everywhere, Tagore’s alternative vision based on peace, harmony and the spiritual unity of humankind has become more relevant than ever before. What the world needs at this juncture of widespread agitation and unrest is Tagore’s healing message and the restoration of his blissful, paradisiacal imagination, imbued with teachings of simplicity, self-restraint and ahimsa, or nonviolence. Remembering Tagore’s advice in the 1915 lecture, “Nationalism in the West,” which was delivered as the West was engrossed in the savage bloodbath of World War I, may help to instil some sense as our planet grapples afresh with the global ramifications of recent disastrous events that opened the doors to a new pandemonium: “Be more stressed good, more just, more true in your relation to man, control your greed, make your life wholesome in its simplicity and let your consciousness of the divine in humanity be more perfect in its expression.” (Soares 18)

Rabindranath Tagore was one of the greatest humanists that the world has known. The key-note of his life was resistance to tyranny in all forms. Anything that tended to separate man from man and rear up causes of friction and misunderstanding, were strongly disfavoured and disapproved in his life and poetry. He struggled against exploitation, political subjugation, social inertia and injustice and religious intolerance and insensitiveness. With the human spirit afflicted by greed, hatred and violence, the poet’s anguished soul cried out for the healing touch of the Buddha.
“O Serene, O Free / in thine immeasurable mercy and goodness / wipe away all dark stains from the heart of this earth. / Man’s heart is anguished with the fever of unrest, / with the poison of self-seeking, / with a thirst that knows no end. / Countries far and wide flaunt on their foreheads / the blood-red mark of hatred. / Touch them with thy right hand, make them one in spirit, bring harmony into their life, / bring rhythm of beauty. / O Serene, O Free, / in thine immeasurable mercy and goodness / wipe away all dark stains from the heart of this earth’. ... (Tagore, EWRT 365)

Tagore lays much emphasis on social evils of India and he thinks that these social evils are at the root of India's backwardness in the field of politics and economics. No other poet except Tagore has ever written so vehemently about the orthodoxy of his own people. In his social poems he protests against all inequalities and injustice. ‘Manasi’ is full of social abuses, and ironies on Hindu marriage and other social evils like Sati. He satirises on hollow institutions and hollow ritualism of Neo-Hinduism. In his poems he has painted a true picture of victims of injustice and cruelty. Tagore was one of the greatest humanists of our country and the world. He taught whole generations or the country to be humanists through his literary mater-pieces. His Humanism is evident in the courage to inspire and to lead weak peoples through critical periods. Thus his is more than a mere philosophical Humanism.

Tagore was keenly sensitive to the world events of his time and expressed eloquently his pain and despair over war. His yearning for world peace was, however, not of a political nature; he desired it to be based on a true realization of the universal identity of mankind and indeed, of the whole of the entire sentient world. After the outbreak of
World War II he experienced great anxiety as he feared large scale destruction. Even then he did not lose hope in the good nature of man. He knew that man would avoid total destruction. His dislike of war is due to this feeling for humanity. He has, therefore, warned the people by saying that war is no solution to any human problem.

Tagore was a world-citizen not because he became world-famous but because he felt love for the world. There have been many men world-famous who were world-scourges, and many who have failed to see beyond their selfish need. But Tagore made the world's destiny his own and felt deeply the agony if there was suffering or injustice in any part of the world. This world-consciousness which was very real in him exposed him to not a little misunderstanding in his own country. The universality of his interests and the humanity of his spirit make him easily a citizen of the world, feeling absolutely at home all over the world. Umashankar Joshi assessed how Tagore transcends the barriers of Nationalism to make the whole world his home:

Over and above putting self-respect into the hearts of his countrymen, he taught them to keep the window open on the wide world and showed by personal example that to be a true Indian was also to be a true world-citizen. (Joshi 578)

Patriotism, religion, science, machinery, all institutions, all knowledge are susceptible of a right and a wrong use. Which of them shall we choose? The humanist is punctiliously for the right use in every case. With the object of bringing together our inheritance and making it available to the world Tagore established Viswa-bharati. Its motto is यत्र विशेषं भवत्येकनीऽम् | (where the world finds its one nest). India is the
seashore of universal humanity and has always treated its guest as god. He candidly confessed to his commitments to the world at large in his letter to his Argentine hostess and admirer Victoria Ocampo: “My true home is there where from my surroundings comes the call to me to bring out the best that I have, for that inevitably leads me to the touch with the universal.” (Dutta K 179)

Tagore is the poet of the Visva-Manava, not merely the universal man but the man-in-the-universe, or shall we call him the All-Man, the whole man, for he alone who partakes of wholeness becomes whole. Of man Tagore was never tired of singing. His “Farewell to Heaven” is an eloquent homage to life on this earth. His Valmiki aspires to turn men into gods through the rhythm of his song.

It would be a mistake to equate Tagore's love of man with European Renaissance Humanism. Western Humanism is man-intoxicated; it has put man at the centre of the scheme of things. Tagore’s Humanism is not just not man struggling against and conquering nature, man pitted against an unkind universe, or man entrapped in a cruel destiny. Over and over again Tagore hints at a harmony between man and man, man and nature, man and the Universal Spirit. The motto he selected for his University is: यत्र विश्वं भवत्येकक्षोङ्गम् I (where the universe has become a single nest.) The free and unfettered expression of personality, i.e. selfless creativity, is the key to attaining to All-Manhood.
Works-Cited List


