Chapter - 6

Spiritual and Moral Values: A Moral Judgement
Rabindranath Tagore declares that spiritual and moral values build the character of a man. He gives maximum importance to man and says that man has the entire strength to become God. His perception is that God is spiritually and morally perfect. It is important to note that the *Gitanjali* of Rabindranath Tagore is nothing but a record of devotional offerings to God. His other works entitled *The Religion of Man*, *Sadhana* and *Personality* also deal with God and His morality. Commenting on Rabindranath Tagore’s Philosophy of God and spirituality, Prof. S.C Sen Gupta remarks: “Some of his important works are devoted entirely to religious discourse. Of the transcendental entities, God has been treated more fully than any other.” (S.C. Sen Gupta, *Some Reflections on Rabindranath Tagore’s Approach to God*, 82.)

This remark appears to be both true and significant. It is significant, because a belief in the reality of God (of his own conception) appears to permeate the entire work of Rabindranath Tagore. Of course, his views are not categorized or systematized strictly from the point of view of academic philosophy, but it is not difficult to put them in that mould. Any attempt to give an academic exposition of Rabindranath Tagore’s philosophy of God, will inevitably raise the question- How does Rabindranath Tagore derive faith in God? Therefore, the first problem to be taken up under this head is rather epistemological and concerns the sources on which Rabindranath Tagore’s belief in God is based.

(a) **Sources of the Belief in God**:

There are three sources of this belief: Reasoning, Experience and Authority. Before dealing with any of these, it is important to make a general comment. For Rabindranath Tagore, it is not essential to try to demonstrate the existence of God. His existence, according to him, can
be felt within, inwardly realized. But then reasoning or proofs do serve the function of generating initial conviction.

(b) **Proofs for God’s Existence:**

Prof. V.S. Narayana says: “There are many passages in Rabindranath Tagore’s works in which we have suggestions and hints reminiscent of the traditional ‘proofs’ of God’s existence—the Moral, the Causal, the Teleological and the Ontological arguments”. *(V.S. Narayana, *Modern Indian Thought*, 125)*

(1) The Causal Argument finds mention at various places. He says, “Those who pursue knowledge of finite for its own sake cannot find truth. For it is a dead wall obstructing the beyond. This knowledge merely accumulates but does not illuminate. It is like a lamp without its light, a violin without its music.” *(Sisir Kumar Das, *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, Vol-II, 369)* Rabindranath Tagore here infers the existence of God as Infinite from the insufficiency of the finite as finite.

(2) The most important proof for the existence of God which finds repeated reference in the writings of Rabindranath Tagore is Teleological proof. A reference to this argument is given in the book Personality, where Rabindranath Tagore says: “These world movements are not merely blind movements; they are related to the will of a Supreme Person”. *(371)* Yet another reference to the Teleological proof or an Argument from Design is made in Creative Unity. Rabindranath Tagore avers that one feel that this world is a creation; that in its centre there is a
living idea which reveals itself in an eternal symphony, played on innumerable instruments, all keeping perfect time.

(3) Rabindranath Tagore finds a different type of evidence, for God’s existence in the face of knowledge. He is emphatic in asserting the necessity of a world Mind to explain the fact of knowledge. When Einstein asked Rabindranath Tagore ‘Does the table exist in some one’s mind when there is no one in the room?’ Rabindranath Tagore replied in the affirmative “Yes, it remains outside the individual mind, but not outside the universal mind. The table which I perceive is perceptible by the same kind of consciousness which I possess”. (Sisir Kumar Das, The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore, Vol-III, 912). But, Rabindranath Tagore does not attach to conventional proofs of God’s existence that importance which is given to them by rational theology. In fact, he feels that the secured evidence of God’s reality is personal realization and feeling of Him - and also to some extent dependable authority.

(c) **Authority**

He attaches great value to authority in so far as it has always played an important role in generating faith in God. Rabindranath Tagore’s own case is clear illustration of this fact. Rabindranath Tagore was brought up in the religious environment of his family. This contributed a great deal in his cultivating a reverential attitude towards God and other religious notions. But, he is not a blind worshipper of authority. He feels that authority can be accepted only when it is able to create an inner conviction. Rabindranath
Tagore gives tremendous importance to, his own ‘Sense for the Sacred’, and uses it almost as a touchstone for testing every authority that presents itself to him.

(d) Nature of God

It is significant to note that the word ‘Absolute’ or ‘God’ is not very frequently used in the writings of Rabindranath Tagore. The words which have been most frequently used are the ‘Universal Man’, ‘The Supreme Man’, ‘The Supreme Spirit’, and ‘The Infinite Personality’.

All these expressions clearly indicate that Rabindranath Tagore’s conception of God tries to strike a balance between the Absolutistic demands of the supreme, and the humanistic needs of such a concept. In order to do this, he first deals with the distinction between ‘Absolute’ and ‘God’. This distinction, according to him, does but has any objective basis, but is rooted in the varying attitudes of different men. Secondly, he asserts that the Supreme has to be a person. He tries his best to show that this would, in no way, imply any limitation or imperfection on the part of God.

In order to substantiate his viewpoint, he quotes from the Upanishads and the Vedas, which according to him, give due credence to the personality of God. He says that Reality can be regarded as “personality acting upon personalities through incessant manifestations.” (Saris Kumar Das, the English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore, Vole-II, 374.) He also says: “Reality is the expression of personality, like a poem. Like a work of art. (374).
This does not mean that according to Rabindranath Tagore Divine personality is exactly similar to human personality. He asserts the similarity between the two and yet feels that there is a difference.

Divine personality stands for the highest and the best that humanity strives for but does not attain. A student of western philosophy will find it difficult to appreciate this point. Western idealists, like Bradley, have tried to bring to the surface the inconsistencies involved in attributing personality to the Supreme. They have clearly shown that personality is necessarily a limitation. But Rabindranath Tagore believes that personality does not necessarily imply finitude. Personality is a limitation only, if it is by conception a limited personality. If personality itself is thought of as the supreme—as infinite the question of its limitation does not arise. Rabindranath Tagore clearly says that it is not in his own individual personality that reality is contained but in infinite personality.

The notion of God as an Impersonal entity does not appeal to him. A Brahman who “stares at us with frozen eyes, regardless of our selfless devotion and silent suffering” does not appeal to our religious instinct. Rabindranath Tagore explicitly says that the physiology of man beloved is not his beloved, so this Impersonal law is not his God. He feels that God has to be brought nearer to man. “Man can take interest in the Absolute only when it is humanized.” (P.T. Raja, *Idealism of Rabindranath Tagore*, 96).

Although maintaining that the distinction between ‘Sauna’ and ‘Ningana’ God is unnecessary, Rabindranath Tagore emphasized the importance of the ‘Sauna’ notion of God. God, according to him is
'Satyam’, ‘Amanda’ ‘Siam’ and ‘Sandarac’. It is on account of this conviction that Rabindranath Tagore comes to talk about the characters of God.

(e) **God is Love**

One of the most frequent and clearest expressions used for describing God’s nature is that, God is love.

Although, this assertion appears to be similar to the Christian assertion of God and love, the fact remains, that for Rabindranath Tagore this statement is not so much Christian as Vaisnava. The emphasis here is not so much on service or compassion as on ‘devotion’ and ‘surrender’. Metaphysically speaking, both the Christian and the Vaisnava thinkers may ultimately come to mean the same thing by the statement ‘God is love’. But Rabindranath Tagore speaks about an emotional realization of oneness which will lead to an extension of consciousness beyond the narrow limits of the self. His emphasis thus brings him closer to the supporters of the Bhakti cult. Therefore, the statement ‘God is love’ means that God is the ultimate hope and source of strength to man. God becomes a being with whom an emotional relationship can be established and through whom life can derive sustenance and solace.

It is on account of this emphasis again that the world itself is viewed as ‘creation out of joy’. If God is love, participation in His creation is participation in His loving act. That is how, creation itself becomes an act of joy and the feeling of the ‘burden of existence’ is reduced to a very great extent.
(f) Jivan-Devata

A very unique and distinctive feature of Rabindranath Tagore’s conception of God is that God in his philosophy has in some way or the other mean humanized. Rabindranath Tagore does this without being anthropomorphic in the undesirable sense. Humanisation of God does not merely mean that God is God of humanity, it also means, that it is the God in man. Describing God in this vein, Rabindranath Tagore calls God his ‘Jivan-Devata’.

‘Jivan-Devata is God as immanent in man. This character of ‘Jivan-Devta’ is described in such a way that a new interpretation of the Vedantic dictum ‘Tat TvamAsi’ comes to light. As Jivan-Devata present in man, in this sense God and man are identical. Thus ‘Jivan-Devata’ is identical with that as God. And yet, this relation is not one of complete and unqualified identity, because ‘Jivan-Devata’ is God in man. There is no inconsistency, according to Rabindranath Tagore, in this relation of identity-in-difference, because it is possible to comprehend such a relation even in ordinary experience as for example, in the experience of love.

In love, the lover with a distinct entity identifies himself with the object of his love. The lover and the loved one are distinct at one loves the other and yet the lover loses himself as it were in the beloved and thus becomes one with him. Rabindranath Tagore says: “In love, at one of its poles you find the personal, and at the other the impersonal. At one you have the positive assertion -Here I am; at the other the equally strong denial - I am not. Without this ego, what is love? And again, with only this ego how can love be possible?” (Sisir

He also says: “In love all the contradictions of existence merge themselves and are lost. Only in love are unity and duality not at variance. Love must be one and two at the same time.” (324).

Therefore, it is safe to say that although ‘Jivan-Devata’ is God in man, God cannot be called merely ‘Jivan-Devata’. According to Rabindranath Tagore, the Infinite Being seeks expression through the human ideal. He says: “I felt sure that some Being who comprehended me and my world was seeking his best expression in all my experiences.” (Sisir Kumar Das, *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, Vol-III, 96). This Being establishes in the human person a centre of his inner being.

Rabindranath Tagore says that road, for example, may be looked upon from two different points of view. It can be regarded as dividing man from the object of his attainment. It can also be looked upon as one which leads man to his goal. Likewise, there are two ways of viewing at Nature also, and Rabindranath Tagore is for the latter point of view. He says that for nature, the great fact is that one is in harmony with it, that man can think because his thoughts are in harmony with things; that he can use the forces of nature for his own purpose only because his power is in harmony with the power which is universal and that in the long run his purpose never can knock against the purpose which works through nature. This not merely explains Rabindranath Tagore’s extreme emphasis on ‘love of Nature’ but also gives a clue to Rabindranath Tagore’s philosophy of the world.
In his philosophy of the world, ‘World’ and ‘Nature’ are used almost synonymously. In fact, the expressions that find favour with Rabindranath Tagore for designating the world are ‘World’ ‘Nature’ ‘Prakriti’ ‘Jagat’ etc. At times, he also uses the term ‘Prithvi’.

Rabindranath Tagore, in a sense, asserts the reality of the world. He believes that the world has both a justification and significance; hence it has to be accepted as real. It is the only field of action, which provides to the created being an opportunity to work for his own redemption. Moreover, it is through a realization of kinship with the world that redemption is possible. That justifies ‘Rabindranath Tagore’s attempt to develop a philosophy of the world.

**Its Nature:**

It is on account of this again that Rabindranath Tagore conceives the world as spiritual in character. He says that the man, whose acquaintance with the world does not lead him deeper than science leads him, will never understand what it is that the man with the spiritual vision finds in these natural phenomena. The water does not merely clean his limbs, but it purifies his heart; for it touches his soul. The earth does not merely hold his body, but it gladdens his mind; for its contact is more than a physical contact - it is a living presence. When a man does not realize his kinship with the world, he lives in a prison house whose walls are alien to him. When he meets the eternal spirit in all objects then is he emancipated, for then he discovers the fullest significance of the world into which he is born; then he finds himself in perfect truth, and his harmony with the all is established.

Radhakrishnan while elucidating Rabindranath Tagore’s conception of world speaks of the spiritual character of the world thus: “The whole universe is
penetrated and vitalized by the living spirit and so responds to the call of spirit.” (S. Radhakrishnan, *The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore*, 45).

Another evidence of the spirituality of the world, according to Rabindranath Tagore, is the tremendous harmony revealed in it. The world is an ordered universe. The apparent examples of disharmony and disorder are only apparent and they do not disturb the harmony of the world. Rabindranath Tagore says: “There is a bond of harmony between our two eyes, which makes them act in unison. Likewise, there is an unbreakable continuity of relation in the physical world between heat and cold, light and darkness, motion and rest, as between the bass and treble notes of a piano. That is why these opposites do not bring confusion in the universe, but harmony.” (Sisir Kumar Das, *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, Vol-II, 316).

Rabindranath Tagore compares the world with a perfect work of art. He often describes the world as a ‘song’, and calls it an ‘expression of beauty’. The world can very well be understood in the analogy of a symphony, with different musical instruments playing their separate tunes and yet producing a harmonious music. Likewise, the different objects of the world produce a unity of the world. He says: “We find that the endless rhythms of the world are not merely constructive; they strike our own heart-strings and produce music”. (507). The universe is, thus a marvelous piece of art produced by the ‘Eternal master artist’.

One unique feature of Rabindranath Tagore’s spiritual philosophy is that his creation, instead of contradicting evolutionism, incorporates it. According to him, the higher forms of life develop from lower ones, without any ‘sudden unaccountable break’. The Religion of Man opens with the theory of evolution, which unfolds the potentialities of life. In the description of evolution, Rabindranath Tagore makes one see how ‘light’ as the radiant energy of creation
started its ring dance in ‘atoms’ and how ‘Then came a time when life was brought into the arena in the tiniest little monocycle of a cell’ and with its gifts of growth and power of adaptation contradicted the meaninglessness of their bulk. ‘It was made conscious not of the volume but of the value of existence’. With the emergence of man the course of evolution changes ‘from an indefinite march of physical aggrandizement to a freedom of a more subtle perfection.’

But, Rabindranath Tagore is aware of the limitations of Evolutionism. Evolutionism works well only after it is given a start, that is to say, it cannot explain the origin of the universe. Even Darwin, who claimed to give a very thoroughgoing explanation of the living beings, could not account for the first appearance of life. That is why; Rabindranath Tagore also adheres to the theory of creation.

According to him, God has created the world out of joy. Rabindranath Tagore says that His manifestation in creation is out of his fullness of Joy. It is the nature of this abounding Joy to realize itself in form which is law. The Joy, which is without form, must create, must translate itself into forms. “But he can be known by joy, by love. For joy is knowledge in its completeness, it is knowing by our whole being.” (343)

God, according to Rabindranath Tagore, is pouring out the joy of his heart in all beautiful forms that we see around us on the earth and the sky. Upanishad also says: “Form joy does spring all this creation: by joy is it maintained towards joy does it progress and into joy does it enter…who would have breathed or moved if the sky were not filled with joy”. (Taittriya Upanisad, P.104)
**Maya:**

Rabindranath Tagore is also aware of the difficulty which every theistic account of the universe is bound to come across. If God is conceived as the Ultimate one, there raises the question ‘why’ with respect to creation. Rabindranath Tagore, in his attempt to meet this problem, leans heavily on ancient Indian Thought and introduces, more or less in the manner of the Vedantic philosophy, the concept of Maya in his philosophy of the world. Rabindranath Tagore, according to Rabindranath Tagore, stands for unity whereas Maya stands for separateness. He explains the nature of Maya with the help of an analogy. A savage gets some bank notes, but they are completely useless for him as for him they are nothing but decorated pieces of paper.

On the other hand, for a wise man, who considers the bank notes in relation to the bank, they have a value. Similiarity, if the creation is viewed as the creation of the creator, then there appears a value in creation. If on the other hand, the world is viewed independently and apart from Him, then the Universe will not appear to have any significance for us.

Maya is nothing but a name for tendency to treat the universe as an independent unit. But Maya cannot be so treated as it neither exists itself nor can limit God’s infinity. Rabindranath Tagore explains this point with the analogy of the chess player. The chess player puts certain restrictions with regard to movement of chessman. These restrictions are self-imposed; otherwise there would not be any play. These restrictions again are put for the sake of Joy-for making the game, a game of joy. Likewise, God also has to put certain limits to his will in order to make creation, a creation of joy. Rabindranath Tagore says that if God assumes his role of omnipotence, then His creation is at an end and His power loses all its meaning. For power to be a power must act within limits.
This self-imposed limitation is Maya. It is like a father’s settling upon his son some allowance with the limit of which he is free to do what he likes.

At times, Rabindranath Tagore tends to use the expression Maya as denoting appearance. The expression ‘appearance’ is carefully distinguished from the expression ‘unreality’. It is reality that appears, and therefore appearance is appearance of the reality. That is what; Rabindranath Tagore treats an appearance as an aspect of truth. He says when one deprives truth of its appearances it loses the best part of its reality. For appearance is a personal relationship; it is for one.

Distinguishing Rabindranath Tagore’s conception of Maya from that of Sankara, P.T. Raju says that according to Sankara, Maya neither is nor is not, while according to Rabindranath Tagore, it both is and is not. (P.T. Raju, *Idealistic Thought of India*, 328) It is because it is a fact of experience—an appearance, it is not because for the ultimate apprehension of reality it has to be transcended.

**Degrees of Reality:**

Rabindranath Tagore also appears to believe in what is known in western metaphysics as, the degrees of reality. Although it is not safe to suggest that his ideas are exactly similar to those of the British Idealists, but more or less like them, he also speaks of ‘degrees’ in the realm of creation. The created world clearly expresses the forms of gradation. Some of the aspects of creation are inferior in comparison to others. In his poetic fashion, Rabindranath Tagore compares the different aspects of creation with the various strings of a musical instrument, and says that some strings are of inferior tone and some of superior tone. He invariably describes man as the golden string of the Divine instrument, that is, creation. Such descriptions rightly create the impression that the universe
contains in it forms that are graded according to their resemblance to reality. An account of Tagore’s religion would not be complete without making a mention of his humanistic beliefs. His humanistic attitude pervades all aspects of his thoughts, and yet, he does not allow it to descent to the status of narrow anthropomorphism.

There is a sense in which Tagore humanises not only nature and objects, but also God. In the book *The Religion of Man*, while describing the purpose of the book, he says, “The idea of the humanity of our God, or the divinity of Man, the Eternal, is the main subject of this book.” (Sisir Kumar Das, *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, Vol-III, 88). This appears to represent the basic idea which Tagore tries to develop in so many ways. At times, human being is raised higher to the status of God, at other times, God is brought down to human being in so far as divinity is said to be discernible in the heart of human being. Tagore’s God is somehow God and human being at the same time and he asserts that if this faith is blamed for being anthropomorphic, then human being should also be blamed for being human.

In fact, the humanism of Tagore is just the application of the belief that feeling anything as human—in the human way is a source of joy. It is the human mind that reveals the meaning and significance of things. He says that it is almost a truism to say that the world is what one perceives it to be. One imagines that one’s mind is a mirror, which it is more or less accurately reflecting what is happening outside one. The one effort of our personality is to transform everything with which we have any true concern into the human. For example, the description of the beauty of sunrise has its eternal interest in us because, in fact, it is not the sunrise that catches our interest, but the fact of sunrise in relation to our interest or aesthetic sense.
This is why we always find a human touch in the writings and poems of Tagore. If a river is described, a ferry at once appears, if a scene or a landscape is painted, a human form must remain there; when a flower is presented, it is presented as bringing a message for the human soul; when the beauty of the rainy night is being described, the rains have to fall on ‘the spire of the temple rising above the undefined mass of blackness grouped around the village huts’; and if the quietness of solitude is pictured, its peace has to be intensified with joy by the rising notes of a faint song. The outer world, according to Tagore, is nothing but ‘a cradle for the human spirit’. That is why in Tagore’s thought the notions of life, rhythm, beauty, harmony, order, love, delight, music, etc., have become important. All these are human concepts; they become meaningful when they are related to human values. In fact, most of the analogies that Tagore uses to describe nature are related to human’s disposition and urges and feelings. Such similies and analogies are not rare, and they all are indicative of the intensely human disposition of the poet-philosopher.

Although Tagore’s religious vision of human being has some elements common with humanism, it cannot be called humanistic in the sense in which contemporary thinking understands it. Firstly, Tagore’s religion of human being is theistic. It believes in a personal God. God is intimately related to human beings, so much so that He longs for their company. This Infinite wants to be manifested in and through the finite. Such a relationship is unthinkable by modern precursors of humanism.

Secondly, humanism insists on social service as the ideal of religion. One is required to worship not God, but human being or some human attributes. Although social service is insisted upon in Tagore’s religion also, but it is not in the sense in which a humanist interprets it. Tagore insists on
social service not in a materialistic sense. He wishes that human beings should seek God or the Infinite in social service. It is in this sense that Tagore asks us to find God not in the temple or acts or meditation, but in places where the farmer is tilling the land.

To worship the human beings or some human attribute is also not recommended at any stage in Tagore’s religion. Tagore, however, speaks of love as a way of realisation of the Infinite. But this is not due to the fact that it is demanded by his religion. For Tagore the Supreme Being or God has created the universe out of love and so it is imperative for human beings to love every object in nature because they speak of the love of God.

Thirdly, reverence for nature is nowhere to be found in humanism. But Tagore believes in human being’s kinship with nature, and feels a sort of exhilaration in the contemplation of beauty and sublimity of nature as showing human being’s fundamental unity with the rest of creation.

Lastly, Tagore’s religion is based on the divinisation of human being and humanisation of God. Divinisation of human being is not the essence of humanism. It considers human being and human virtues to be the ideal for which human being should aspire. Supernatural terms like divine or divinisation are not to be found in the dictionary of humanism.

But the fact that Tagore has been the foremost thinker dwell on the importance of human being in his religion cannot be denied. His work, *The Religion of Man*, and *Personality*, testify to the fact that Tagore has given importance to human beings and human values in religion. He also says that the Infinite is ever expressing itself in and through human beings, that He longs to manifest Himself through human beings, are arguments which can
be construed to take his religion to be humanistic. But his religion gives due importance to God and so his humanism can be said to be a form of religious humanism.

**SELF-REALISATION IN RABINDRANATH TAGORE’S PHILOSOPHY:**

At the very outset a caution has to be exercised. Although Rabindranath Tagore makes ‘self-realisation’ the most central concept of his religious philosophy, he takes care to suggest that it is not self-consciousness. In fact, self-realisation, according to him, is soul-consciousness. Thus, in order to appreciate the nature of self-realisation, it is essential to make a distinction between Rabindranath Tagore’s concepts of ‘self-consciousness’ and ‘soul-consciousness’.

The ordinary embodied individual, embedded in the life of physical existence and hankering after material achievement can be called ‘the self’. But such an individual cannot be described as the ‘soul’. The self is the narrow egoistic existence of the individual whereas soul is the existence of the individual as an aspect of the universal.

The distinction, in fact, is based on the two ways in which the individual may choose to exist. He may choose to lead a purely individualistic life, in which everything is determined by ego-centric and ego-propelled tendencies. This will be a life being lived as a ‘self’. But it is possible for the individual to break the shackles of the ego, and to realize that ego-centricity is bondage. Such a life would mean living in awareness of a bond of love and kinship with others. This can be described as living as a soul.

In accordance with this distinction between ‘self’ and ‘soul’, it can be said that self-consciousness is consciousness of the individual as a separate unit, as an
ego, whereas soul-consciousness is rising above this ego-sense. There can be soul-consciousness only when the consciousness is extended beyond ego. Soul-consciousness, thus is the awareness that redemption (and for that matter happiness) does not consist in remaining caged in the individual ego, but in loving others in realizing the universality of our true nature.

When the soul is freed from the burden of the self the consciousness is widened and the soul marches forward. This idea can be clarified with the help of an analogy. The shell of the egg is in a sense in a cage which imprisons the life of the chick. The chick knows the world only when the shell is broken. So knowledge of the vastness of the outside world dawns upon the chick only when it breaks through its limited and closed existence. Likewise so long as the individual is confined to his egoistic existence, he cannot have a glimpse of the nature of reality. Once this limitation is transcended, he is able to realize the worth of existence. That is what Rabindranath Tagore means when he says that the self has to make room for the soul-consciousness.

Rabindranath Tagore remarks: “…man is marching from epoch to epoch towards the fullest realization of his soul—the soul which is greater than the things man accumulates, the deeds he accomplishes, the theories he builds: the soul whose onward course is never checked by death or dissolution.” (Sisir Kumar Das, The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore, Vol-II, 293). Man’s history is the history of his journey in search of his immortal soul. Thus, complete soul-consciousness is true self-realization.

Now several questions at once arise: what is the nature of self-realization? It is merely a negative state? Is it that in self-realization the illusoriness of the world is also realized? These are some of the questions that constantly engaged the attention of the ancient Indian philosophies. Moreover, these questions enable
Rabindranath Tagore not merely to clarify the nature of self-realization but also flash before man ‘an ideal’ in no uncertain manner.

But deliberations on these questions lead Rabindranath Tagore into thinking about the various metaphysical problems connected with the problems of the self. If what Rabindranath Tagore recommends is ‘extension of consciousness’ to its most universal form, it implies that this process may involve various births, because it is not always possible to have the realization in the short span of one life. But this possibility raises the problem of ‘rebirth’ and ‘immortality’. The question of rebirth does not appear to be consistent with our positive attitude towards the phenomenon of ‘death’, which is a fact of experience. Rabindranath Tagore naturally develops a very powerful philosophy of death, which almost provides a support to his final philosophy of self-realisation.

Positivistic analysis of one’s life shows that death puts an end to all one’s activities. One does not know as to what happens after death. That is why materialists and positivists suggest that one should live as if there is no life after death. Rabindranath Tagore, however, does not regard death as the end of life. It is not the negation of life. On the other hand, it gives significance and value to life. Death may be regarded as a way in the process of life growth to fuller life.

Death, figuratively speaking, may be described, as the crown life, as a bridge to immortality. Man is afraid of death because he is not able to perceive the real significance of death. He ignorantly treats death as alien to his nature, as a challenge to his existence, as that which puts an end to his life. If death is understood in its proper perspective one will find it to be a stage that gives to life an onward direction.
Death, according to Rabindranath Tagore may be regarded as an illustration of supreme human and spiritual sacrifice, as it is the highest possible exercise in giving away one’s individuality. Life can achieve its proper function only when it gives up its narrow and egoistic outlook. Death gives away life itself and puts an end to all that man considers as his own. This is why; death seems to play an important role in the extension of consciousness and thus helps man in his spiritual attainment. Thus, death is only a phase in man’s existence. It is in the background of such a conception that Rabindranath Tagore develops his philosophy of rebirth.

The soul, according to Rabindranath Tagore, survives death and passes through the cycle of births and rebirths till the self-realisation is achieved. From what has been said above, it follows that rebirth is also not the destiny of man. It also is a mechanism through which the soul has to move in order to realize his ultimate destiny. The ultimate destiny is the attainment of complete freedom. It is the realization of immortality and hence it is freedom even from rebirth.

The embodied state of man is the state of bondage. Until freedom is achieved the density of man is not realized. This is why; the spiritual progress of man is from bondage to freedom. Self-realization, therefore, is the realization of the most perfect nature of the self; it is the realization of the complete freedom. Let one try to determine its characters.

Rabindranath Tagore is aware that it is not possible to give an exact or precise description of self-realization in terms completely intelligible to ordinary understanding. But he also feels that it is possible to have an idea of what such a state would be like in the light of the evidences that serve as ‘pointers’ towards the realization of this state.
Normally, its nature is understood more in terms of a negative description than in terms of its positive content. That is to say, Rabindranath Tagore more or less like other believers in the possibility of self-realization describes this state as what it is not, or as the state which emerges as the result of the negation and subjugation of the impediments standing in its way. Such negative description abounds in writings. But unlike many others of his kind, he also tries to outline the positive contents of this state.

According to him, it is a state in which all the fervor and fret of one’s embodied existence come to an end. In self-realization, the discords, conflicts and contradictions of life are quitted. Knowledge, love and action are harmonized into a unity. Rabindranath Tagore gives a vivid and yet a poetic description of this state when he says that it is like a morning of spring, varied in its life and beauty, yet one and entire. When a man’s life rescued from distractions he finds its unity in the soul, then the consciousness of the infinite becomes at once direct and natural to it as the light is to the flame. It is the state of complete freedom, which means that in this state man rises over his egoistic life and feels one with everything. This is a state of realization of the essential unity of everything. It is a state in which man rises even above the distinctions between pleasure and pain, good and bad. This becomes possible because man comes to realize the meaninglessness of the very root-distinctions from which all these distinctions emerge. That is the distinction between ‘me’ and ‘thou’ or between ‘mine’ and ‘thine’.

Rabindranath Tagore feels that it is not essential to assert that self-realization which leads to a destruction of individuality. The individual may have to perform activities even after the attainment of freedom. Therefore, it is rather futile to waste one’s energy in trying to speculate about the forms of individuality after self-realization. Consistently speaking, it has to be left to the
freedom of the individual and/or of the One to see whether forms of individuality are to be retained or not. That cannot be predetermined by one.

Rabindranath Tagore points out that in liberation God and man become partners in the game of joy. Both would play the game in whatever manner they would like to play it. If it would be necessary for the souls to reappear so that the game of joy may be pursued they would assume births again. Rabindranath Tagore suggests that realization of complete freedom is the ultimate human destiny. With the attainment of the state of realization one performs all activities with complete freedom and in fullness of joy.

a. Ways of Realization

But how can the self be realized? - That is the problem for Rabindranath Tagore. Rabindranath Tagore is aware that this will not involve merely knowledge of the real, but an active involvement of the whole personality of man. It is not mere knowing the self, it is realizing the self, and therefore it must involve an inner participation in the process of knowing itself. That is why Rabindranath Tagore asserts that self-realization cannot be achieved by mere intellectual knowledge. Not that he does not attach any value to logic or intellectual knowledge, but what he means is that it cannot give an insight into the nature of the reality.

Intellect can count the petals, classify the scent and describe the colour of the rose, but thereby it cannot know the rose. Just as grammar is not literature, knowledge of the theory of music is not music, so also intellectual knowledge is not real knowledge.

Rabindranath Tagore says that the self can be realized through a ‘vision’. Vision is defined by Rabindranath Tagore as a sudden spiritual outburst from
within. “The spiritual universe of Man is also ever claiming self-renunciation from the individual units.” (The Religion of Man, P. 90) It is concerned with the grasping of the object as a whole. As soon as the vision of reality is achieved one has a realization of unity within one and also of a unity that comprehends the whole universe. But how can that vision be attained? Rabindranath Tagore says that it can be achieved through ‘love’. It is only through love that one’s consciousness can be enlarged.

Love is a form of experience that unites or unifies. Intellect, on the other hand, cannot do away with the distinction between the subject and the object, that is, it cannot rise above this duality, and as such it fails to comprehend the unity. Love, succeeds in overcoming this duality by identifying the ‘lover’ with the ‘object of his love’. In Love all opposites unite. In the field of metaphysical speculation Monism and Dualism contradict each other. But love explains them both. Bondage and liberation are not antagonistic in love. For love is most free and at the same time most bound.

Love should be distinguished from attachment. Attachment centers round the ego and as such it has motive behind it. True love, on the other hand is free from the satisfaction of any egoistic motive. From what has been said above it follows that Rabindranath Tagore defines love as comprehension. Comprehension comprehends all in all.

Rabindranath Tagore is emphatic in asserting that love is identifying oneself with the object of one’s love. He says that the meaning of this is, that who so ever one loves, in him one finds his own soul in the highest sense. Because in them one has grown larger, in them one has touched that great truth which comprehends the whole universe.
Love, according to Rabindranath Tagore presupposes sacrifice. Love and sacrifice move together, without the one the other loses its meaning. This sacrifice is the sacrifice of one’s egoistic impulses. Rabindranath Tagore explains this idea by the image of the lamp and the oil. The lamp contains its oil, which it holds securely in its close grasp and guards from the least loss. Thus is it separate from all other objects around it and is miserly. But when lighted it finds its meaning at once; its relation with all things far and near is established, and it freely sacrifices its fund of oil to feed the flame.

Rabindranath Tagore means to say that just as the lamp sacrifices its fund of oil to feed the flames, so also the self has to sacrifice itself for the attainment of the soul. Just as the bud loses itself for the blooming of the flower so also the self has to deny itself for the attainment of self-realization.

Love, thus, demands a going beyond the egoistic impulse and such a discovery of oneself outside oneself is a constant source of joy. Therefore, love is also described as joy. For love, the questions ’how’, ‘why’, ‘what for’ etc. do not exist. Love is its own reason, its own goal and is its own responsibility.

Now a question arises- how is love to be practiced? There are two sides of love namely: the theoretical and the practical. The theoretical side consists in feeling for one and others, and the practical side consists in discharging certain corresponding actions. Rabindranath Tagore has repeatedly said that in love one has to do something for him and for others. Love demands certain actions towards the object of one’s love.

One should not merely feel for the loved object but also do something for it. One’s acts of love and sacrifices should be expressed in suitable actions, performed for the good of others. It is interesting to point out that to work for all
would mean according to Rabindranath Tagore the recognition of the metaphysical unity of all. This would not believe in the finite but it would be living in the Infinite. This is why the soul finds its freedom in action.

Action, for others, gives him freedom in the outside world. In the realm of action the soul discovers itself. Rabindranath Tagore says that likewise it is because the soul cannot find freedom within itself that it wants external action. The soul of man is ever freeing itself from its own folds by its activity; had it been otherwise it could not have done any voluntary work. It meant crossing the limiting barriers of the individual, to become more than man, to become one with all. The more man acts and makes actual what was latent in him, the nearer does he bring the distant yet-to-be. This is what Rabindranath Tagore describes as ‘Realization in Action’.

As a matter of fact, there is no bondage as fearful as that of obscurity. The seed struggles to sprout, the bud to blossom in order to escape from the obscurity. The soul, in order to realize itself plunges into activities. In the same way our soul, in order to realize itself from the mist of indistinctness and come out into the open, is continually creating for itself fresh fields of action, and is busy contriving new forms of activity, even such as are not needful for the purposes of its earthly life.

Rabindranath Tagore asserts that action performed in the proper way is a constant source of joy, and as such can become the source of permanent and eternal joy also. Just as the joy of the poet in his poem, of the artist in his art, of the brave man in the output of his courage, of the wise man in his discernment of truths, ever seeks expression in their several activities, so the joy of the knower of Brahma, in the whole of his every work, little and big, in truth, in beauty, in orderliness and in beneficence, seeks to give expression to the infinite.
The ‘Realization in Action’, however, does not lay emphasis so much on what is called ‘realization of the unity within’. Rabindranath Tagore speaks about the ways that explicitly refer to inner discipline and inner realization. One distinctive emphasis in this regard is on what Rabindranath Tagore calls: “The Realization of Beauty”. Aesthetic sensibility appears to him as enabling man to quieten all inner discord and to realize inner unity. An object becomes a burden if it is not capable of yielding joy for one. One generally attaches importance to an object so long as it serves some purpose. As soon as it ceases to serve any purpose, it ceases to interest one. But if one develops the capacity of seeing the object not from the point of view of utility, but from the point of view of beauty, one will take a positive step in the realization of the Infinite. This is why; ‘Realization of Beauty’ is regarded as a way to the realization of Infinite. The capacity to appreciate beauty is inherent in everyone and that has to be developed.

Rabindranath Tagore is emphatic in asserting that beauty is everywhere. He believes in the omnipresence of beauty. This does not mean that ugliness should be abolished from one’s language. Rabindranath Tagore says that there is ugliness in the distorted expression of beauty in man’s life and in his art which comes from his imperfect realization of truth. Rabindranath Tagore recommends that man should lead a life of Nature, tending trees, feeding birds and animals, learning to feel the immense mystery of the soil and water and air.

Rabindranath Tagore regards music as the purest form of art. It is the direct expression of beauty. Rabindranath Tagore has reason to believe that the manifestation of the Infinite in the finite is itself music. He says that man seems to feel that the manifestation of the Infinite in the finite forms of creation is music itself, silent and visible.
Although Rabindranath Tagore talks about the different ways of self-realization, namely: Realization in love, Realization in Action and Realization in Beauty etc. They should not be treated as separate ways of realization. Rabindranath Tagore feels that any process that helps the extension of consciousness is a way of realization. This may be possible through love, action and beauty and hence they become the ways of realization. All the different ways of realization lead to the same goal namely the ‘Realization of the Infinite’ Tagore gives maximum importance to morality in human beings and emphatically says that moral values are to be concerned if a man wants to become perfect.

Tagore sees the world or nature is an inseparable aspect of God. The creative loaf God is the source of the universe, which is destined to express the fullness of divine perfection. This world is the living image of God. Tagore adds that the entire world is given to man, and all his powers have their final meaning in the faith that by their help he is to take position of our patrimony. One wonders why there is evil in the world if this universe is destined to reflect the fullness of divine perfection! Is evil a necessary aspect of creation? Tagore believes that the reality of evils cannot be doubted in so far as they are experienced by us. It is a part and parcel of conscious beings to feel and experience contradictions, pain and conflicts. This implies that, in Tagorean philosophy, the problem of evils is not related to the existence of evil so much as to the way in which the experience of evil arises.

Tagore’s credence to the experience of evil must not create the impression that according to him; evil is a necessary aspect of existence. Clarifying this point he says, “If existence were an evil, it would wait for no philosopher to prove it. It is like convicting a man of suicide, while all the time he stands before you in the flesh. Existence itself is here to prove that it cannot
be an evil.” (Sisir Kumar Das, The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore, Vol-II, 300).

One must remember that Tagore has an optimistic picture of life, he believes in the ultimate goodness of the world process. He is fully convinced that what appears as evil will ultimately be transformed into good. Therefore he says, “Evil cannot altogether arrest the course of life on the highway and rob it of its possessions. For the evil has to pass on, it has to grow into good; it cannot stand and give battle to the All.” (300). That is why; Tagore asserts that although evils are facts, they are not ultimate facts of existence.

If we look at death from the point of view of evil, it is generally considered as the greatest evil. However, this seems to be an evil only because it is viewed in isolation from life. If we take death as one single phenomenon affecting one individual it will definitely mean “the loss” of that individual. Similarly, if we regard death only in relation to the life that is being lived will mean end of this life. But there is much more comprehensive view—a whole-view is possible. If we view death in the universal context, it will appear to be a very necessary and useful aspect of the benign creation. Tagore clarifies this by saying, “only when we detach one individual fact or death we see its blankness and become dismayed. We lose sight of the wholeness of a life of which death is par.” (Sisir KumarDas, The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore, Vol-II, 299).

Tagore says that the theists find the problem of evil a puzzling one because of their inability to take a balanced view of the presence of evil in the universe. They go either to one extreme, and are not prepared to accept that the creation of an omnipotent God can be imperfect, or they go to the other extreme and feel that once the reality of evil is accepted, it becomes a
necessary factor of existence. Tagore adds that both of these views regarding evil present intellectual as well as existential problems that the theists are unable to solve.

Therefore, Tagore states firstly that evils are experienced in the world because they are aspects of the world—aspects of the created world. He sees no logical inconsistency in believing that creation has to be imperfect. The very fact that it has been created implies that it cannot have the perfection that the creator possesses; to be created means imperfection. All the same, one should not mean that imperfections are permanent aspects of existence. Evils are not ultimate facts; they have to be transcended. If we accept this, the problem of reconciling the presence of evil with the power and goodness of God will not arise.

Good is the positive element in human nature. The sense of goodness arises out of a truer view of our life, which is the connected view of the wholeness of life, and which concerns not only what is present before us, but also what is not and perhaps never humanly can be. He says that when one begins to have an extended vision of one’s true self, when one realizes that man is much more than at present one seems to be, one begins to get conscious of one’s moral nature. Then one grows aware of that which one is yet to be, and the state not yet experienced by him becomes more real than that under our direct experience. Necessarily, one’s perspective of life changes, and one will take the place of one’s wishes. For will is the supreme wish of the larger life, the life whose greater portion is out of our present reach, whose objects are not for the most part before our sight. Then comes the conflict of one’s lesser self with greater self, of one’s wishes with one’s will, of the desire for things affecting one’s senses with the purpose that is within one’s heart. Then one begins to distinguish between what one immediately
desires and what is good. For good is that which is desirable for one’s greatest self.

He seems to be aware of the fact that certain limitations and imperfections are inherent in human beings because of their embodied existence. They go along with finitude. Though this is an evil, it is not permanent. One can accept it as only a phase that paves the way for its transcendence. Evil, thus, is an occasion for the disciplining of life, for the ‘surplus’ in man to assert and display itself.

Tagore views life as a perpetual struggle between good and evil. At this point Tagore tries to clear up a possible source of misunderstanding. The usual opposition between good and evil that is experienced in life may create the impression that evil and good are essentially antithetical to each other. A caution has to be exercised at this juncture. The concepts of finiteness and imperfection, for example, are opposed to the concepts of infinity and perfection. But the human existence, which is apparently an imperfect and finite does not negate the possibility of perfection or infinity. In this sense evils are not opposed to the good. Tagore says that the in fact, imperfection is not a negation of perfectness; finitude is not contradictory to infinity: they are but completeness manifested in parts, infinity revealed within bounds.

Ultimately, in all his prose works Rabindranath Tagore gives utmost importance to the morality in human beings and says that moral values are to be deeply concern if a man wants to be perfect and ideal as God. Rabindranath Tagore emerged on the historical and literary scene at a time when science and technology was beginning to shrink geographical distances between nations. Secular ideologies lured Man to the worship of wealth, comfort and power to
satisfy his physical wants, but deprived him of his humanity and concern for higher moral values. Tagore was disillusioned by the cultivation of intense race egotism and the epidemic of moral perversity of his times. He saw universal churning up of jealousy, greed, hatred and mutual suspicion of both the weak and strong nations because political passion had taken the place of creative passion.

Looking through the prism of reality Tagore sees Man as an exploited entity, the desecrated victim of a hopeless man-made socio-economic structure. Man’s commercial existence is the very negation of the divine rhythm of life. It transforms him into an ugly child of industrialization with no hope of true freedom. This existence encourages man to indulge in a senseless, intemperate accumulation of wealth through domination, colonization and exploitation. The Yaksha town in Red Oleanders, where people lament that the sky has dropped out of their lives, is visible everywhere. Such towns become of self – exhausting civilizations that create soul-less society. The lack of spirituality perpetuated by the mad pursuit of material pelf in the name of progress, and the consequent dehumanization and de-individualization of Man, becomes Tagore’s constant concern.

The prose writer, Tagore finds a moral, physical and spiritual lethargy in the nation. The country is crippled by all kinds of social inhibitions, religious beliefs and superstitions. The privileged use religion to instill fear in the less privileged, and thus exploited the masses in the name of God, theocracy and parochial laws.

A male-dominated socio-economic system degrades and deprives them of their basic rights as human beings. They are forced into loveless marriages based on money, caste and orthodox beliefs, and denied all rights of compatibility.
Tagore feels that a greater misfortune cannot befall a nation, and is determined to rouse his countrymen from their slumber and indifference to a rigid social orthodoxy and an alien political rule. As an optimistic philosopher, Tagore steers clear of despair and nihilism, and shows in his writing, the promise of a new and richer apprehension of reality. His works reverberates with the theme found in the world’s great literatures that of the common destiny of mankind. Tagore perceives the universe as an organic web, pulsating with a cosmic energy that links all elements in existence, in a relationship, which is interpenetrative and indivisible. He emphasises that if the world is to endure, it must find a “psychological unity and spiritual coherence.” (S. RadhaKrishnan, *Religion and Culture*. 8).

World solidarity or ‘lokasamgraha’ is an urgent necessity. If the fragile life of Man has to be saved, a humanistic religion of spiritual fellowship must evolve. Thus Tagore propagates one of the earliest messages of our sages — that society is a web and the whole world is one family — ‘Vasudhaiv Kutumbakam’. In this noble mission, He is basically optimistic inspite of his awareness of the evils and sufferings around him because the poet believes that Man’s life is a proactive expression of a dynamic forward thrust. Tagore sees life as an endless process of ‘becoming’, and Emphasises that each individual has the latent ability to actualize his potentialities. A spirit of affirmation surges through his writings manifesting itself in a glad acceptance of life in all its baffling variety, with the faith that Men may be cruel, but Man is kind. In his book, Thoughts of Gandhi, Nehru and Tagore, Goyal quotes Tagore’s fervent declaration. “Let this be my last word that I trust in love. Man’s history is waiting in patience for the triumph of the insulted man.” (Brij Kishore Goyal, *Thought of Gandhi, Nehru and Tagore*, 112)
As a spiritual humanist, Tagore constantly underlines the need to recognize the dignity and divinity of Man. He expresses great faith in the essential goodness of Man and so is an active crusader against the unhappiness and servitude meted to his brethren in the form of social, political and religious exploitation. Tagore is impatient with any closed and rigid system of thought, creed and sham religion which destroys the fragile sensibilities of Man. He raises this voice against the subservient role of women, declaring that society will change only if woman or ‘Sakti’ is restored to her right place in the home and society.

Tagore also feels the need to reach out to the common man whose life is a perpetual struggle of mute suffering under unjustifiable practices. He reiterates that earthly laws may differentiate between one human being and another, but God’s laws see all men as equals. It is the selfishness of the greedy, the injustice of the powerful, the brutality of the rich and the iniquity of the strong that creates disparity among mankind. Tagore’s intrinsic creed seeks a universal religion of brotherhood which expresses love for all beings and things, as they are emanations of God.

Tagore constantly reminds us of the integral nature of this Universe, and the concept of One in all and all in One. Therefore his poems are not just hymns of humanity but of sustainability as well. He recognizes the Earth who is our Mother, with reverence. The poet stresses on the need to live in harmony with Nature and not mutilate her with our unbridled materialism because Nature too is part of the Cosmic web. His intrinsic faith recognizes the Supreme Reality in Man and Nature and conceives a Religion of Man, the basis of which is the humanization of God and the divinization of Man. The poet declares, I felt I had found my religion of last, the religion of Man in which the infinite becomes
defined in humanity and comes close to me so as to need my love and co-operation.

This religion of Man which is the basis of ‘Sanatana Dharma’, one of the ancient of all living religions existing today declares that “Truth is one it is perceived and spoken of in different names and forms.” (Swami Chinmayananda, *Kindle Life*, 8) Therefore Man needs to transcend the world of plurality which is the manifestation of the Creator. He has to journey from the Outward to the Inward, from a Multiplicity to Unity, and this supreme doctrine of Unity is called the Religion of Love. Once Man reaches “this union at the centre where all radii meet,” (Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Living Sufism*.133) he denounces caste, creed and narrow divisions. He begins to love humanity and all creation. He affirms his faith in the humanistic values of compassion, selflessness and the oneness of Man.

Tagore seeks to establish a classless society, using a brand of socialism, which follows from his conception of God. Tagore establishes the fact that there is only one race – the human race, because all are equal as manifestations of God. The truth of this Religion of Man does not run counter to any established religion. Tagore’s outlook, which is thoroughly humanistic and also inherently spiritual, includes in its sweep the full account of the depth of Man’s life, and relationship with the ontological reality, along with the vital concerns of his empirical life. Tagore tells of common life in rapturous lyrics extolling domestic life, the value of life and work, condemning at the same time those who renounce a world pervaded by love, joy and beauty – which is the proper stage for Man’s quest of that one Reality. That Man should find solace in work is also the accent of Tagore and for this Man should be free from bondage. Work or ‘Karma’ is Man’s birthright and so there is no harm if one’s clothes become tattered and
stained in service. True service lies in working with ‘the tiller and the path maker’ and standing by them ‘in toil and in sweat’.

For Tagore, the way to deliverance is not through renunciation, chanting or telling of beads, but in service to humanity. The only way to find God, ‘who walkest in the clothes of the humble among the poorest and lowliest and lost’, is by participating in life selflessly, serving humanity. Those who fear to give up their lives in service do not ‘plunge into the great waters of life’. It is Tagore’s conviction that Men’s union with God, whose dynamism is all pervading, cannot be a passive one.

Thus unlike traditional humanism, which insists upon service to society in a materialistic sense, Tagore’s spiritual humanism seeks God in the service of humanity. For the poet, the love of fellow human beings expressed through egoless service, is the way to realize the Infinite in Man.

Since Tagore visualizes the world as one family, he expresses great faith in the regenerative value of love. Love, which merges all contradictions and gives itself in endless gifts emanates from God, Tagore further says that the great lover who constantly gives Himself up to gain Himself in love Man who is God’s unique modelization has to learn that only in giving, one finds oneself. Tagore, ‘the Prophet of the law of Love’ as Helen Keller once called him, places great trust in “the dynamic force of love which is hidden in humanity,” (Mohit Chakrabarti, Philosophy of Education of Rabindranath Tagore, 70) points out Mohit Chakrabarti, quoting Tagore. This Primal Love is Gift Love – a liberating passion that transcends all bonds and limitations. This force, if understood by Man, can transform his life of self-destruction into a life of creative work and peace, is Tagore’s perpetual emphasis.
Bhattacharjee says about Tagore that ovation to the spirit of humanism transcends a narrow national feeling. Quite often Tagore is pained to see the politics of nationalism drive out man’s essential humanity throughout the world. It is this ‘world consciousness’ that made Tagore’s heart bleed for Africa whose virginity was ravaged by European conquest. Thus ‘nationalism’ is not the worship of the nation as an embodiment of power, but of truth, for Tagore. He visualizes an India whose essence is freedom and fearlessness where thoughts and actions flow from ‘the clear stream of reason.’ The poet despises all kinds of fanaticism that destroy the societal web. He drives home forcefully the lesson of religious tolerance, as he conceives all religions as spiritually valid roads to God.

Thus the voice of Tagore the activist, who speaks the language of the conscience, reverberates with his concern for the whole of humanity, which is one family. The societal web he conceives is one that is built painstakingly with inviolable filaments of love, brotherhood, enlightenment, values, freedom and the recognition of human rights, so as to be proof against the unholy winds of exploitation, hypocrisy, narrow nationalism, fanaticism and inhumanity. While Man is his pivotal concern, Tagore shows that Man is not sufficient unto himself. The poet’s broad humanism, intertwined with a profound spirituality, which recognizes the divine attribute of Man, form the weft and warp of his poetry. Through the contemporary anguish and despondency, Tagore’s voice leads us to an enlightening awareness which is momentarily hidden from our vision — that the whole world is one family; a lofty wisdom that can be attained if Man restores the God of humanity to His altar.