Preface

This dissertation is an attempt to study Rabindranath Tagore’s social conscious, spirituality and particularly humanity as revealed in his enormous prose writings. The study is undertaken because Tagore suggests a practical and realistic solution to the evils existing in the Indian society. He advocated that by cultivating humanistic mind individuals can promote their upward growth and attain perfection, which in turn, will lead to the perfection of the society or journey towards the ethical society.

The investigation was a bit difficult owing to the paucity of both critical and bibliographical sources. But the hardships did not dampen the spirit of the writer. Actually, this dissertation itself is a bold attempt because Tagore is not an ordinary personality. He is a creative genius who generated an ocean of thoughts and ideals. As a child of the Indian Renaissance in the 19th and early 20th centuries, he imbibed new ideas, new thoughts, and new approaches, touching almost every aspect that makes life lofty, beautiful and worth living. A man of many parts, Tagore’s versatility was matched only by his genius. As well as being a Seer Poet, Tagore’s achievements included notable contributions in the fields of prose, music, literature, plays, art and education.

Tagore’s prose pieces, especially which are written in the latter part of his life reflect his philosophy of Humanism by emphatically pointing out the divinity in Man. Humanism also lays special emphasis on men’s appreciation of the beauty and splendor of nature. The Humanists keen responsiveness to every sort of natural beauty evokes him, as in Wordsworth, a feeling of profound kinship with nature and its various forms of life. The present thesis titled “A Study of the Selected Prose Works of Rabindranath Tagore” has been conveniently divided into seven elaborate chapters.
The first chapter forms “Introduction” to the classic select prose of Rabindranath Tagore. A brief piece of information about his personal details has been given considerable room in this chapter. A glimpse of many accomplishments of Tagore is exhibited. His role as a competent educationalist has been described. His amazing achievement of winning the world best Nobel Prize and the comments of the West on the achievement are also given needed space in this chapter. The content in the other chapters of this thesis are also mentioned briefly in this first chapter. Briefly, it is the index in which the essence of this thesis is placed for readers convenience.

The second chapter is titled as “Nationalism”. In this connection one can say that Tagore was preoccupied with the thematic of empire and nation in much of his travel writings. Even in many of the letters he wrote to his family and friends during his trips within India and to Europe, America, China, Indonesia, Russia and Persia, and the frequent speeches or interviews he gave during these visits, he wants to demonstrate that both nation and empire are but egoism and evil ideas.

Tagore teaches that humanity should reach out for a cultural confederation between races and nations. This can be done through a global dialogue or a creative understanding between the East and the West. Tagore believes that inclusive and synergetic meetings between cultures will take the world towards harmony and global fellowship, with the application of Santam, Sivam and Advaitam. These principles he borrows from the Upanishads. This ideal thought of Tagore has been given considerable space in this chapter.

The third chapter is titled as “Humanism in Tagore’s Prose”. Truly speaking, Tagore is very famous for his creative approach and spiritual humanism. A humanist par excellence, Tagore was a prophet of love, harmony and fellowship. Rejecting the narrow domestic walls and concentrating his attention on concrete humanity as an organic whole, Tagore gave to the
organized man the gospel of unity and harmony. His vision of peace, love and humanism was nurtured on spiritual foundations demanding that man be treated in the perspective of the eternal. He stood for spiritual equality and moral equanimity, believing that man is only a unique model of God. This belief of of this great man is clearly assembled in this chapter.

The fourth chapter is named as “Philosophical Thoughts in Tagore’s Prose”. The Philosophical thoughts of Tagore consist in them the concept of Ultimate Reality, the concept of world or nature, the concept of soul, the death and immortality and the concept of liberation. In his philosophical thoughts, humanism also plays an important role along with his concept of God, nature, death, salvation etc. The power of Tagore’s use of proper language has been given importance in this chapter.

Wherever Tagore leads his readers, ultimately they reach to mean who is Godly and great in his possible achievements. Actually, there is a vain debate among the critics of him that whether Tagore is a philosopher or not. One can only say that he is a true philosopher who could tell that man can become God. This confidence of Tagore on Man is explained in this chapter.

The fifth chapter is titled as “Tagore’s Ideas on Man”. Being a wonderful thinker, Tagore gives maximum priority to the existence of human being in this world. He places man above all living things, Nature and sometimes even above God too. Tagore’s philosophy of ‘humanism’ has three aspects. First he mingles humanism with the whole world including God. Second he attributes ‘divinity’ to man and thirdly according to him ‘man’ is finite world being who continuously leads his journey towards infinite. These three aspects have been described in this chapter.

The sixth chapter is coined the title “Spiritual and Moral Values in Tagore’s Prose”. Here are some instances mentioned to stress the freshness and modernity of Tagore’s broad outlook. He was a fearless critic of social practices
and of religious beliefs that had no other sanction than that of continuity over a period of centuries. His nonconformist was more radical and consistent than that of many other leaders of his time. He unconditionally says that cast system in India should be banned.

He did not dilute his criticism by offering philosophical justification for the origin of castes. He rejected the simplistic formulation of ‘western’ materialism versus Indian spiritualism. He considered science as ‘Europe’s greatest gift to mankind’, and dissociated himself from those Indians who looked upon western civilization; in it’s entirely, as immoral and superficial. All such unique ideas of Tagore are mentioned in an orderly manner in this chapter.

The seventh and final chapter is titled as “Summing Up” and it sums up the preceding chapters. Frankly speaking, what all that Tagore wrote, volume after volume, may not be the grade one quality of writing; possibly it cannot be. Unevenness certainly appears in a writer so voluminously and that too for so long. Another defect from which Tagore’s essays and letters suffer is proximity and repeatedness. He has the instinct of explaining things over and over, in the way a traditional teacher does to a class of rather dull students. Many of his essays were in fact addresses delivered on various occasions somewhere.

For all practical purposes, a strong element of didacticism decorates much of his writings. One is told both ‘what to do’ and ‘how to do’. He is a teacher to the core, who can analyze the spiritual malaise and show the remedy also. His prose works truly give a lot of strength to the readers and force them to lead an ethical life facing the challenges and proving their creativity in all aspects of life. The writer of this thesis is really happy to describe Tagore’s great thoughts and ideas so that they will undoubtedly influence the readers to a great extent.