Chapter - 1

The Visionary Activist: An Introduction
The present thesis explores the long-lasting qualities of Rabindranath Tagore’s English prose and puts forward that not merely *the Gitanjali* but also many other of his English writings attained ‘some qualities of permanence’ almost wholly because of his great artistic and writing skills. In addition to the vigour of his ideas and the intensity of his feelings, the main reason why his prose works could find enthusiastic readers for a long time in the east and the west can often be attributed to his dexterous use of the English language in his letters, lectures, essays and speeches and his ability to adjust his style in accordance with the occasion, the audience, the genre and the subject matter. Without the impact of his English prose writings have had, Rabindranath Tagore’s international reputation would not have survived thus far.

What Sisir Kumar Das, the editor of the first three volumes of Rabindranath Tagore’s English works, has to say about his prose is also worth quoting: “there is a large body of original prose writings which is important and as significant as his Bengali prose work.” (Sisir Kumar Das, *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, Vol-II, iii)

So with the idea of recognizing Gurudev’s great gift of prose to the public, the present thesis titled *A Study of the Selected Prose Works of Rabindranath Tagore* has been chosen for this thesis work. Moreover, this thesis work has been done in such a way that each chapter is subtitled epitomizing in it the essence of the chapter. The synopsis of each chapter is has been done to express the versatile personality of Rabindranath Tagore in this chapter. Before that it is appropriate to mention a few statements about the dynamic author and his family.
About the Author and his family:

Rabindranath Tagore was born on 7 May 1861. At some time towards the end of the seventeenth century, his forefathers had migrated from their native lands to Govindpur, one of the three villages which later came to constitute Calcutta. In the course of time, the family came to acquire property and considerable business interests through the pursuit of commercial and banking activities. They had particularly benefited from the growing power of the British East India Company.

Rabindranath Tagore’s grandfather, Dwarkanath Rabindranath Tagore, lived lavishly and broke the Hindu religious ban of those times by travelling to Europe, just like his contemporary, Rammohan Roy, the nineteenth century social and religious reformer. Rammohan Roy started a religious reform movement in 1828 that came to be known as the Brahma Samaj Movement. Rabindranath Tagore’s grandfather supported Roy in his attempts at reforming Hindu society. Dwarkanath’s son, Debindranath Tagore, also became a staunch supporter of the Brahma Samaj Movement. In order to encourage its spread, in 1863 he established a meditation centre and guest house on some land about 100 miles from Calcutta at a place called ‘Shantiniketan’, the Abode of Peace.

Although deeply steeped in Hindu and Islamic traditions, Rabindranath Tagore’s family contributed large sums of money for the introduction of Western education, including colleges for the study of Science and Medicine. This peculiar situation explains the combination of tradition and experiment that came to characterize Rabindranath Tagore’s attitude to life. Rabindranath Tagore’s father was one of the leading figures of the newly awakened phase of Bengali society. He had been educated at one stage in Rammohan Roy’s Anglo-Hindu school and had been greatly influenced by Roy’s character, ideals and religious
devotion. Debendranath Tagore was well versed in European philosophy and, though deeply religious, did not accept all aspects of Hinduism. He did have a profound influence on his son’s mental and practical attitudes.

Rabindranath Tagore was the fourteenth child of his parents. His brothers and sisters were poets, musicians, playwrights and novelists and the Rabindranath Tagore’s home was thus filled with musical, literary and dramatic pursuits. The family was also involved with diverse activities at the national level. Important changes were taking place in Bengal at the time Rabindranath Tagore was born. Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar had been attempting to reform the position of women in society. Schools using English as the language of teaching were being established, alongside the traditional Sanskrit schools. Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar had established Bengali-medium schools at different places in Bengal with little or limited government support. He had also established a centre to train teachers for these schools.

Rabindranath Tagore attended this school and, as he himself says, owed his love of Bengali language and literature to it. He was also sent to a number of English-speaking schools, but he did not like their teaching style and had no wish to be taught in a foreign language. He gradually withdrew from formal schooling when he was around 14 years old. The remainder of his education was carried out at home through his own personal efforts and with the help of tutors in various subjects. Rabindranath Tagore also had lessons from professionals in wrestling, music and drawing. The manner of his early schooling was to leave a deep impression on him.

When Rabindranath Tagore was 12, his father took him to Shantiniketan, the meditation centre established in 1863. During their brief stay there,
Debindranath Tagore gave his son lessons in Sanskrit, astronomy and the scriptures that formed the basis of his reformed religion. After these lessons were over, Rabindranath Tagore was free to roam among the fields and forests. This routine continued when father and son journeyed on and stayed at Dalhousie in the Himalayan foothills. After lessons in Sanskrit, English literature and religion, the would-be poet explored the mountains and forests. Life in close proximity to nature was unknown to him in the urban surroundings of Calcutta.

The close and affectionate rapport between a teacher and a pupil that Rabindranath Tagore had felt when his father used to teach him, was completely absent in Calcutta. It was this childhood experience of the willing pupil enthusiastically following lessons given by his father in the manner of a noble teacher among agreeable surroundings that guided Rabindranath Tagore in establishing a school at Shantiniketan in 1901.

In 1878, when he was 17, he was sent to London by his father to qualify for the Indian Civil Services or as a lawyer. He took his matriculation examination and then joined University College, London. He came to like his lessons in English literature, and became exposed to British social life and Western music, both of which he enjoyed. But he returned home suddenly after some eighteen months without completing his education. However, he did gain the impression that human nature was perhaps the same everywhere.

In India, he continued with his personal education and his creative writing and music. His Sandhya Sangeet [Evening songs], a volume of Bengali verse, came out in 1882. It was at about this time that he had a kind of mystical experience that led him to appreciate the unity of all that exists and himself as an integral part of it. In the same year, he wrote his famous poem Nirjarer Swapna Bhanga [The awakening of the fountain]. He became aware of his unusual talent
as a poet. Between 1884 and 1890, for six years various volumes of his poems appeared, together with a profuse output of prose articles, criticism, plays and novels.

Rabindranath Tagore married when he was 23. At this stage, beyond his literary pursuits, he had begun sharing his father’s religious responsibilities. In 1890 he made a second trip to the United Kingdom, but came back after a month to look after the family estates. This responsibility opened up new vistas of inspiration for him. Whereas his previous literary work had been primarily based on imagination, he now came to acquire a direct and intimate experience of the wretched life led by the poor Bengali peasants.

This new experience led to the composition of *Galpaguccha* [A bunch of stories] (1900), and the many letters he wrote to his niece, subsequently published as *Chhinnapatra* [Torn letters] and *Chhinnapatravali* [A collection of torn letters], considered to be landmarks in the writing of Bengali prose and in describing the countryside of Bengal. Rabindranath Tagore was overwhelmed by the economic, social and political misery in which the peasants lived. He gave a description of them at a later date.

“Our so-called responsible classes live in comfort because the common man has not yet understood his situation. That is why the landlord beats him. The money-lender holds him in his clutches; the foreman abuses him; the policeman fleeces him; the priest exploits him; and the magistrate picks his pocket.” (B.N.Ganguli, *The Human Factor in the Growth of the Rural Economy*, 19).

These conditions, he thought, cannot be changed by appealing to the religious sentiments of the landlord, policeman or money-lender. In human society, necessity is a greater force than charity. The first requirement therefore
is that people should discover the bond that holds them together as a society. If there is one path likely to achieve this, it is education.

Rabindranath Tagore realized from his own experience of the farmers attitudes and their social behaviour that strength can be generated only in a self-reliant village society developing its own locus of power and its own momentum of growth. He turned again and again in various contexts to this theme of local self-reliance, local initiatives, local leadership and local self-government centring on co-operative ways of life.

This could be the basis for reorganizing India’s fragmented rural society, and could serve as an instrument of welfare. Rabindranath Tagore realized that education and village councils or panchayats were the only available instruments of economic and social change, and that the villagers should obtain various forms of expert help from outside to accomplish this change. As he says that poverty springs from disunity and wealth from co-operation. From all points of view this is the fundamental truth of human civilization.

As a young landlord managing his family’s rural estates, Rabindranath Tagore came to realize the possibilities of introducing education and co-operation to transform rural life. Thus he began to turn his thoughts towards the problems of education. He spoke publicly on ‘The Vicissitudes of Education’, in which he made a strong plea for the use of the mother-tongue. Rabindranath Tagore’s first experiments in teaching also date from this period. He started his own school in Eliadah, the headquarters of his estate, to which he sent his own children to be taught by teachers in various subjects, including an Englishman to teach them the English language. He also started organizing co-operatives, schools and hospitals in the villages of his estates and tried to introduce
improved farming methods. All these efforts for rural reconstruction went on while he pursued his creative writing.

Rabindranath Tagore called this the period of his Sadhana - preparation, reflection, austerity and self-education for an active social life. He lived either at Seliadah or on his houseboat on the river Padma, visiting villages, talking to people and listening to their problems. Rabindranath Tagore’s later educational experiments arose from this experience. In 1901 he left Seliadah where he had undertaken these experiments and moved to Shantiniketan where, with his father’s consent, he started a boarding school.

The Brahmacharyashram (or Ashram) School was inaugurated on 22 December 1901 with only a few pupils, his son being one of them, and with an equal number of teachers. It was to be run on the pattern of teachers and pupils living together amidst natural surroundings and willingly accepting an austere standard of living, often working with their own hands. Of the five teachers, three were Christians-two of whom were Catholics and the third was his son’s English teacher from Seliadah.

The orthodox Hindus were offended by this situation and he did not get any assistance from them. No fee was accepted from students, all expenses being borne by Rabindranath Tagore himself. In the course of time, this Ashram School expanded as the poet’s reputation grew. Life at Shantiniketan left its impression on the poet’s literary work. He wrote about India’s past and present, and stories of noble self-sacrifice. He published more realistic novels such as Choker Bali [Eyesore] (1901), Naukadubi [The wreck] (1903) and Gora (1910). He was trying to discover the eternal India that succeeds in achieving unity amidst a bewildering diversity of races, cultures and religions.
In 1912, Rabindranath Tagore left for the United Kingdom once again. Some of his poems and writings had already been translated into English and had attracted the attention of the well-known English painter Sir William Rothenstein and the poet W. B. Yeats. He made such an impression on the British writers and intellectuals that he was at once accepted as a great poet and intellectual. He visited the United States of America, with the intention of delivering there his *Sadhana* lectures (*The Realization of Life, 1913*). In 1916, Rabindranath Tagore went abroad again to Japan and then to the United States of America delivering lectures, published later in two volumes as *Nationalism* (1917) and *Personality* (1917).

This international experience gave him a new idea that he must bring his country into contact with the world at large. He felt that overemphasis on narrow nationalism led men and countries into paths of conflict. There should be an institution that emphasized the unity of the world’s cultures and streams of knowledge. He considered Shantiniketan to be that institution. He was thus already contemplating the foundation of Visva Bharati, an international centre of culture and humanistic studies. The foundation stone of Visva Bharati was laid on 24 December 1918. A separate institution called Sri Niketan was established in 1921.

**INTRODUCTION:**

The inherent power of civilization is rarely discovered extempore with the emergence of specially equipped souls. Some instances in India’s long history prove the above statement beyond doubt. At the times chaos, confusion, ambiguity, tense, and deplorable, unexpected and very special humans had come forward and infused fresh blood into the nation’s veins using their amazing leadership skills and spiritual insights.
The Buddha, Shankaracharya, Swami Vivekananda and Swami Paramahamsa, emerged in crucial periods of Indian history and gave novel direction to the then nation to sustain the indigenous Indian life and culture. All of a sudden people were inspired by them by knowing the technique to be happy physically, spiritually and also socially. In this way becoming socializers, they actively decided to take part in strengthening the nation as a whole.

At the start of the twentieth century, again India was in troubled waters. The nation was politically crushed and economically exploited. People of this noble land were caught in the jaws of poverty and ignorance. They were deprived of many ways. They had become mere shadows of their own glorious past and appeared as if they had lost the hope of survival. Then philanthropists like Raja Rammohan Ray, Tanguturi Prakasam Panthulu, Babasaheb Ambedkar etc., attempted to console them but the impact wasn’t up to the required level as it had been experienced by limited section of people. The spirit generated wasn’t enough. So the country was at cross-roads.

Exactly at that time there emerged two exquisite personalities to alarm the people and to extend solace to them. The two joint souls were none other than the Mahatma and the Gurudev. With the impact of these two greats, once again India could demonstrate her innate vitality. She began to speak out loudly and clearly her domination in the spiritual world.

Mahatma Gandhiji’s influence was obvious and direct. Receiving his vital call, a sea of people participated in the freedom struggle. Rabindranath Tagore’s impact wasn’t seen so clearly on the outward frame but it was unquestionably equal or even more than Gandhiji’s. The great old contrast between the saint and the poet is visible between Rabindranath Tagore, the artist and Gandhi, a more practical man of action. Here the point to be discussed is that Rabindranath
Tagore wasn’t a mere poet and was a thinker and even a director. Now-a-days literary people recognize his strength only after reading his great works. His significance was really far beyond expectations. It’s time one recollected how his fame spread worldwide with his master piece ‘The Gitanjali’.

1913 was a sensational year in world liberations because Rabindranath Tagore, an Indian was awarded Nobel Prize for literature. This in turn reflected a lot of criticism, controversy and shock worldwide. Instantly Rabindranath Tagore, the great, became a cult figure in the Western world. He was the first Asian to receive the Noble Prize for literature. A Gnyuuk-Daniel Chuck says regarding this “…the publication of Rabindranath Tagore’s poem, in poet’s own prose translation from Bengali, by Macmillan & Co. in March, 1913 turned out to be a real sensation in literary history. In this year alone, the collection was reprinted 131 times in London itself, by the same publisher.” (T.R. Sharma, Essays on Rabindranath Tagore, 170.171).

This award populated the great Indian personality and Indian Language among the Westerners. Hiaen Mukerjee, a great critic and admirer of Rabindranath Tagore says, “An unsuspecting world came suddenly to know that in the then empire of Britain in India there were languages which were not just ‘native’ dialects but had literary merit that couldn’t be entirely ignored. Racial arrogance in the west had sternly resisted the recognition and when it came, English newspapers were remarkably silent as regards Rabindranath Tagore’s religious and racial descend; and expression of ‘much chagrin and no little surprise among writers of the Caucasian race’ at the award being bestowed on one who is not white was not untypical of American and Canadian editorial comment.” (Hiaen Mukerjee, Rabindranath Tagore, 1).
After the initial shock and surprise, some of the most perceptive minds of the West, however, received Rabindranath Tagore’s work with genuine acclaim. In this context it is also reasonable to quote the opinion of the famous poet and critic W.B. Yeats on Rabindranath Tagore’s works in his introduction to Rabindranath Tagore, “These prose translations from Rabindranath Tagore have stirred my blood as nothing has, for years. I have carried the manuscript of these translations about with me for days, reading it in railway trains or on the top of Omni busses, and in restaurants and I have often had to close it lest some stranger would see how much it moved me. These lyrics display in their thought a world I have dreamed of all my life long. The work of a supreme culture they yet appear as much the growth of the common soil as the grass and the rushes.”

II. Rabindranath Tagore and Nationalism:

Rabindranath Tagore is often referred to as a ‘nationalist poet’ or a ‘nationalist leader’. This presents problems both historical and historiographical, since by the end of the first decade of the twentieth century Rabindranath Tagore had explicitly rejected nationalism. Even his prior ambivalence towards nationalism is disputed by some of those who knew him most intimately. In a letter sent by Prasanta Mahalanobis to Edward J. Thompson in 1921, Prasanta Mahalanobis claims that Rabindranath Tagore never supported nationalism, not in any form or guise. Even at the height of the swadeshi movement he was protesting against some particular aspects.

Thus the views of some of Rabindranath Tagore’s contemporaries presented a different picture still, but one that lends support to Mahalanobis’ interpretation is mentioned here. Commenting on Rabindranath Tagore’s very public opposition of the philosophy and practice of ‘non-cooperation’, an
editorial in the pages of the Calcutta newspaper *Ananda Bazar Patrika* on 19 August 1925 captures some of the flavour of the vehement criticism Rabindranath Tagore was subjected to. ‘The ludicrous opinions of the Rabindranath Tagore may appeal to those who live in a dream-world’, the paper wrote, ‘but those who are grounded in the soil of this country and know of the realities will no doubt feel that the poet’s useless labours are sad and pitiful’.

An article published in 1928 by a Bengali Gandhian went further still: ‘it will not be unjust to say that he (Rabindranath Tagore) is unfit to be a priest at the sacred sacrificial rites for freedom’. These discomforting judgments indicate why Rabindranath Tagore, the anti-nationalist, anti-non-co-operator and critic of Gandhi is often ignored in favour of the more neutral image of Rabindranath Tagore as Bengali cultural icon, patriotic author of *Amar Shona Bangla* and a representative of Indian cultural genius; universally recognised via his poetry and his Nobel Prize.

The fact is that Rabindranath Tagore is not confined to one nation or race. This is not to say that Rabindranath Tagore’s love or patriotism towards his motherland, India is any thinner. Through his writings he puts forth his concept of patriotism as the basis of his love for his birth land. Elaborating it, he says that when India suffers from injustice, it is a birth-right that one should fight against it.

Strictly speaking, there is hardly any aspect of national life on which Rabindranath Tagore didn’t have something important and fresh to say. At a time when nationalist fervor was dominating the country, he could see the negative side of nationalism and spelled out a note of warning about the dangers of Chauvinism and narrow mindedness. He was rather the first person to rediscover India’s ancient ties with countries of the Far East and of South East Asia, and to
demonstrate that India must turn her gaze from Europe to the other parts of the world.

His travels in Thailand, Cambodia, Indonesia, China and Japan, as described in his letters, emphatically stressed the need to observe the cultural unity of Asia. This magnificent cultural significance of Rabindranath Tagore was not considered at that time. On the contrary many opposed the great man’s thoughts. Even on the economic front, Rabindranath Tagore anticipated many of the ideas which later became base to the national movement. He has firm ideas not only on nationalism but also on many other aspects of life.

For example he was the first reformer to make experiments in co-operative forming on his family estates. His essay on Samayavayanity was probably the earliest attempt to estimate the theory and practice of the co-operative movement in the context of Indian conditions. He was a forerunner to voice the vital role which cottage industries and traditional handicrafts could play in India’s economy. He argued for the honour of people and authentically told that freedom is very important for the people. These letters prove the statement. “The time has come when badges of honour make our shame glaring in their incongruous context of humiliation, and I for my part wish to stand, thorn of all special distinctions, by the side of those of my countrymen, who, for their so-called insignificance, are liable to suffer a degradation not fit for human beings.” (Letters, 142).

III. Rabindranath Tagore’s Modernity:

Here are some instances mentioned to stress the freshness and modernity of Rabindranath Tagore’s broader 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. His denunciation of the cast system was total and unconditional. Therefore he completely eliminated caste system and argue that human beings are one and the same.

Rabindranath Tagore 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.

In this connection, one should know that Rabindranath Tagore loved the traditional culture of India too. This love was based on sound knowledge and deep understanding of these elements in the Indian heritage which have perennial worth. In his interpretation of Indian history, one finds a remarkable grasp of fundamentals. In an essay entitled ‘Bharatavarsha Itihasa Dhara’ (The Stream of Indian History) written in 1912, Rabindranath Tagore tried to explain the two guiding principles unity underlying in diversity, and continually in the midst of change - which have shaped India’s destiny through the ages.

Rabindranath Tagore was fully aware of the strong points in the Indian tradition: a spirit of assimilation; a tolerance for alternative paths leading to a common goal; ability to see the one behind many and serenity behind agitation; and the conviction that there is a point at which all the base values – truth, beauty, goodness, love, freedom and tranquility – somehow converge. He also understood, as few had done before him, the intimate relationship between the philosophical, the religious and the aesthetic sides of Indian cultural tradition.
The negative sides of the tradition he had inherited made him sad, sometimes even angry. He expressed both his sorrow and displeasure in certain terms. The ascetic, world-denying streak that had repeatedly led India into the morals of inaction; the tendency to lose oneself in abstract speculation about the essence of reality without focusing attention on the human condition; the case at which the Indian mind can find high-sounding justifications for customs and practices that are manifestly indefensible; the refusal to strive for greater efficiency and comfort on the ground that ‘contentment is the highest virtue’ - all these weaknesses needed to be brought into a clear light of candid criticism.

Rabindranath Tagore did not shrink from this task. In his tribute to Ram Mohan Roy he writes, “There was a time when, all alone, Ram Mohan Ray took his stand on the common claim of humanity and tried to unite India with the rest of the world. His vision was not dimmed by absolute conventions and customs. Ram Mohan Roy extended India’s consciousness in time and space. He saw that all conquering time doesn’t stop with the present, that it carries its victorious banner in the future, and that all men have to march together under that flag.” (Letters, 42). These words are in praise of Rabindranath Tagore’s distinguished predecessor who may well be employed in recognition of Rabindranath Tagore’s own contribution.

Now-a-days there has been a great deal of discussion on ‘tradition versus modernity’. Though these represent two alternatives of which India has to choose one. The real issue is not whether one should be modern or traditional. Rabindranath Tagore repeatedly pointed out that the man who is genuinely modern is not the one who turns his back upon traditions, but rather the one who reinterprets it creatively, rationally and conversely.
A genuine love of India’s traditional culture should be reflected in open
mindedness and adaptability rather than fear of change. Wisely utilized tradition
can help a person go into the future without being uprooted or alienated from the
past. Even though mechanically accepted, it can be a milestone around the
nation’s neck. Thus truth is expressed by Rabindranath Tagore with great
emphasis in many of his essays and letters.

IV. Rabindranath Tagore’s Humanism:

In the galaxy of the prophets of Humanism of the 20th century,
Rabindranath Tagore, the Nobel laureate, occupies a frontal position.
Rabindranath Tagore was a creative genius who generated an ocean of ideas and
ideals. As a child of the Indian Renaissance in the 19th and early 20th century, he
imbibed new ideas, new thoughts, and new approaches, touching on almost every
aspect that make life lofty, beautiful and worth living.

A man of many parts, Rabindranath Tagore’s versatility was matched only
by his genius. As well as being a Seer Poet Rabindranath Tagore’s achievements
included notable contributions in the field of music, literature, plays, prose, art
and education. His creative fecundity was inexhaustible and the unlimited variety
of his literary output is so extraordinary that the phrases ‘myriad minded’ which
Mathew Arnold used for Shakespeare can appropriately be applied to him. But
the underlying tone of all his artistic creations and social activities is ‘humanism’
in all its variegated aspects. He was deeply influenced by the humanist tradition
of the Buddha.

Truly Rabindranath Tagore’s roles as a serious thinker, his insight on
country’s heritage and his love for unity have to be discussed. Fairly he is
famous for his creative approach and spiritual humanism. The literary activities
of this great man are so dominating that one may overlook his contribution to
music and his experiments on painting.

V. Rabindranath Tagore, the painter:

To speak reality, Rabindranath Tagore is a versatile personality and in his
late stage of life, he was attracted by painting. His first attempts were merely
rhythmic lines, one might say, assuming different shapes. He gradually adopted
fresh methods, using his fingertips even rags to spread the ink. Rabindranath
Tagore graduated in recognizing various forms which are considered expressive
of ideas and thoughts. He didn’t paint from ‘models’ but from imagination. He
probably had an inclination for abstract art as he says that people often ask him
about the meaning of his pictures. He remains silent even as his pictures are. It is
for them to express and not to for him to explain.

As time went by, however, Rabindranath Tagore’s painting grew away
from abstract expressions. It could be said that the fantastic forms of mythical
beasts and prehistoric birds and reptiles that he painted embodied a transactional
phase from the pure abstract to the more recognizable human shapes suggesting
moods and thoughts.

In this context, it is interesting to note that Rabindranath Tagore was not
generally in favour of abstract theories - as his music and dance clearly show.
Joseph Southhall, an art critic, observes that Rabindranath Tagore’s drawings are
the outcome of a ‘powerful imagination’, seeing things in hue and colour as the
best oriental sees them, with that sense of rhythm and pattern that one finds in
Persian or Indian textiles craft work. And behind that colour and form lay a deep
feeling and apprehension of spiritual life and being of men and animals.
A humanist par excellence, Rabindranath 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, Rabindranath 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 must 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. Rabindranath Tagore desired the exaltation of the spirit of man. Stressing on the liberty of the human spirit, he stood for the idealization and perfection of the neglected human spirit. Rabindranath Tagore regarded man as the culmination of the creative process of a superior great power. The inner being of man is organic with the heart of eternity.

He said, “Truth, which is one with the universal being, must essentially be human, otherwise whatever we individuals realize as true can never be called truth.” (Sisir Kumar Das, *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, Vol-III, P.912). In any case, if there be any truth absolutely related to humanity then for us it is absolutely non-existing. My religion is in the reconciliation of the super-personal man, the universal human spirits, in my own individual being. His Religion, which is in the perfection in an endless world of humanity.

Accepting the sanctity of human conscience, he stood for synthesis between philosophic contemplation, devotional adoration and affirmative action. Realizing that God belongs to the broken home as well to magnificent temples and churches, his humanism pleads for social mutual co-operation, love and service. His spiritual humanism is purely apart from sensationalism, hypocrisy, dissemblance and programmatic expediency.
Rabindranath Tagore’s views were that man must come of his shell of his individual self in order to enter into the larger self of Humanity. His prose works especially those written in the latter part of his life reflects his philosophy of humanism by pointing out the divinity in Man. Humanism also lays special emphasis on men’s appreciation of the beauty and splendour of nature. The humanists keen responsiveness to every sort of natural beauty evokes in him, as in Wordsworth, a feeling of profound kinship with nature and its myriad forms of life. Environmental issues like river erosion and deforestation may be hot topics today, but Rabindranath Tagore had been eloquent about the exploitation of environment even a century ago.

He churned out poems, plays, short stories and prose emphasizing the need to protect nature. With India beginning year-long celebration to mark his 150th birth anniversary, many are pointing to his deep sensitivities for the environment. This creative genius has produced a great deal of poetry, which outlines deal with nature as integral to human civilization. He constantly seeks to remind human civilization through his nature poem about the pitfalls of an indiscriminate exploitation of natural resources. It is worthwhile to point out that human interaction with Nature was a lingering concern for Rabindranath Tagore from his very early age.

Drawing from the Upanishad tradition, Rabindranath Tagore saw the presence of the Divine Spirit within all creation manifested within the richness of nature. This presence was one which was marked by a deep spirit of creative joy whose reflection Rabindranath Tagore sought to create within his poetry. Subhas Dutta, an Environmentalist said that the literary works of Rabindranath Tagore could be used for raising awareness about the environment among the people.
Rabindranath Tagore not only wrote extensively on men’s relationship with the environment but implemented it too by building Shantineketan.

It is surrounded by greenery on all sides. He created an example for the whole world in terms of the relationship between nature and human. Pabitra Sarkar, a former Vice-Chancellor of Rabindra Bharati University and a Rabindranath Tagore admirer said, “In his literary works he has said he was born along with the trees and flowers”. He depicted his intense love for nature and its beauty in his plays and poems. His song *Akash Bhora Surjya Tara Bishwa Bhara Pran* speaks of his deep affection for nature.

VI. Rabindranath Tagore’s Philosophical thoughts:

The main philosophical thoughts of Rabindranath Tagore consists in them is the concept of ultimate reality, concept of world or nature, concept of soul, death and immortality and concept of liberation. Along with his philosophical thoughts one has to see how humanism is a dominant note in his concept of God which has already been discussed. Rabindranath Tagore says, ‘God’ as the idea of perfect being in men’s mind. The imperfection of the world leads one to have an idea of perfectness in his mind. In *Sadhana* he says that the idea of God that man has in his being in the wonder of all wonders. He has felt in the depth of his life that what appears is the manifestation of the perfect. And “To know him in the life is to be true: not to know him in this life is the desolation of death” (288).

Rabindranath Tagore accepts the existence of a world-mind for the knowledge and apprehension of all objects of the world. In his meeting with Einstein about ‘The Nature of Reality’ the latter says “If nobody is in this house yet the table remains where it is”. Rabindranath Tagore says, “Yes, it remains outside the mind, but not outside the universal mind. The table which I perceive
is perceptible by the same kind of consciousness which I possess.”(912). Thus, Rabindranath Tagore, like Berkeley believes that all objects of the world exist in the universal mind. The history of religion shows that the tribal also had some conception of God, who had infinite strength and power.

This sense of God comes from their sense of unity in their society according to Rabindranath Tagore. He says that man tries to find himself in his truth and beauty through the society. In this large life of social communion man feels the mystery of unity, as he does in music. From the sense of that Unity, man comes to the sense of his God. “The quality of the infinite is not the magnitude of extension, it is in the advitam, the mystery of unity.” (495). Thus man’s unity through society also proves the existence of God. But all these categorical proofs are not important for Rabindranath Tagore, who feels the presence of God in his own being. He gives such arguments for God’s existence to support his conviction is God.

Even though Rabindranath Tagore recognizes both personal and impersonal aspects of the Infinite, he pays more attention on finite apart of the absolute, which satisfies the religion. So, look the Vaisnavas or the Christian he describes a God, who is near to man and with whom man can form a personal relationship. At the same time Rabindranath Tagore rejects the popular idea that the absolute in India is completely passive being. In *Sadhana* he says the infinite in India asserted emphatically.

So, Rabindranath Tagore says that his God is a ‘Super person’ or a ‘Superman’. Now one may argue that making God personal is nothing but to make him finite. But Rabindranath Tagore never accepts this. He argues that there is no contrast between God’s personality and infinity. The absolute possessing a personality means He has infinite power, infinite bliss, and infinite
goodness, which are not attributes but essences of the reality. In his Personality he says that it is not in one’s own individual personality that reality is contained, but in an infinity personality. “This efflux of the consciousness of his personality requires an outlet of expression. Therefore, in Art, man reveals himself and not objects.” (Sisir Kumar Das, The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore, Vol-II, P.352).

Therefore, Rabindranath Tagore’s idea of the personal God is of a God with whom finite being can have personal relationship. He doesn’t discuss the question whether to be Absolute and at the same time to have personality is possible from the philosophical point of view or not but from the natural faith in God he describes absolute as ‘personal God’. According to him, this God is not at all a Passive Being, but He is bound to His creation with the bond of love. To be a loving God He must have personal relationship with men.

As God loves, what all in nature, He expresses but this act of self-sacrifice is done by God out of joy as, “in love lose and gain are harmonized. In his balance sheet, credit and debit accounts are in the same column and gifts are added to gains.” (Sisir Kumar Das, The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore, Vol-III, P.324). Thus God gives up Himself constantly in His creation so that He can gain Himself in love. God is not passive but active, and He acts out of His boundless joy, there is no outer force or necessity of it behind His action. Again if God were absolutely free, there would be no creation. God himself willingly has accepted the bondage in the form of creation. The lover God wants love from his creation. Thus the only motive behind the creation is but His joy. The immortal being manifests Himself in joy form (Anandarupamaratmyad vibhati)... The joy, which is without form, must create, must translate itself in the
forms. “As for ourselves, it is only when we wholly submit to the bonds of truth that we fully gain the joy of freedom.” (330).

VII. Rabindranath Tagore’s Ideas on man

Man has a feeling that he is truly represented in something which exceeds him. The call is deep in the mind -the call of his own inner truth, which is beyond his direct knowledge and analytical logic. And individuals are born who have no doubt of the truth of this transcendental man. As one’s consciousness more and more comprehends it, new valuations are developed in him, new depths and delicacies of delight, a sober dignity of expression through elimination of tawdriness, of frenzied emotions, of all violence in shape colour, words or behavior, of the dark mentality of ko-klux-klanism.

Man is undoubtedly a wonderful creature. In thousand and one ways he can be, in fact, has been, established. Yet one feels many thousands of other true descriptions of him are possible. Then normally one question arises. Why is it so? One may say ‘Man is the most elusive creature’ Rabindranath Tagore says that man isn’t imperfect, but incomplete. This is because as Rabindranath Tagore says, this was the invocation of the universal personality in the mind of individual as person.

In the process of solving this seeming paradox one may hope to disclose his identity in a sense man is. In another sense man is not. So simultaneously man is both exists and does not exist physically. His structural features are identified and reidentified. But his body cells are progressively perishing and new ones are being reborn. Psychologically, his experience memories, hopes etc. are undergoing a continuous change. The ways of his mental phenomena are stored and are never permanent. So, the impermanence is visible in his projection
like intention, need, hope, aspiration etc. The most evident proof of his incompleteness is his quest for new things or new values of life.

Rabindranath Tagore understands these peculiarities of man in two ways. One: man is literally a phenomenon like an ever-blossoming flower with endless petals enclosed within it. Two: He is essentially rooted in and perpetually drawing upon the boundless resources of a transcendental person, God or Absolute, what even name is give to it. Addition to these aspects of human nature one can find the other aspects namely conservative and creative. The past is certainly conserved in him. It is a living one with him. The past links him with the mother culture truly it nourishes him not only from the mother culture but also from the mother earth. Thus man is sustained by society and history. This is necessary but not enough to blossom with human nature. Man is rooted in nature and emerges out of the geological and the paleontological past. His evolutionary ancestry, though extremely significant, does not bring forth the full dignity of his human nature. This description of man, so dear to Rabindranath Tagore, highlights his conception of man both socially suited and transcendentally projected. Thus man is understood both as individual as well as universal. His universality is more an aspiration than a fulfillment of his individuality. The Universal man is God in the making.

So, man cannot understand the world without understanding himself. He is an unrepeatable part of it. He cannot abstract himself from it and then know it in isolation from the universe. Therefore, his self-knowledge is a part of world-knowledge and his world-knowledge is self-knowledge in it as a part of it. In his aspiration man gets beyond himself.

In his inspiration he succeeds in lifting himself from the rule of his daily life. In his mechanical moulds and habitual modes of life man is almost reduced
to materiality, removed from his own humanity. It is clear that Rabindranath Tagore’s ideology has heavily been drawn from *Upanishads*. It is also accepted that he skillfully imparted a new form to these ideas.

Thus, the fundamental desire of man, according to Rabindranath Tagore, ‘is to exist’ Human existence is an extract of the existence of the world of large. The man and cosmic universality are bound truly together in an ever-expressive harmony. If a man is said to be an artist by nature, it is only because of this persistent presence of expressive urge in him. He cannot stop only with the living world. He desires to express it, to communicate if to others and share it with the latter. Man must know the world where he dwells. To exist creatively he is forced to change it either by imagination or by technology. By imagination he wants to make good what is not there in the world-view he cherishes. By technology he wants to change the world unto his own preferred image of it. Without science, technology and art as spiritual probing, man cannot go to the depth of the harmony between the existence of his self and that of the universe as a whole. Conscious of this harmony but unable to live it, man is like a separated lover.

This is an existential, not pathological, sickness. It is not a sickening sickness. But it is a creative pain, pangs man for giving birth to an art. This creative consciousness has always in it an element of alienation or separation which Rabindranath Tagore names - Viraha.

However, Rabindranath Tagore’s man is both individual and universal. This description is very insightful. It provides the key to one understands the man’s rootedness not only of nationalism or internationalism but also of the human character of truth and beauty. This transparent perception of truth and beauty adds a new chapter to India’s history of culture. After a long time and
with a renewed vigour people found in his prose an arresting presence of man, transparency of truth and joyous beauty.

**VIII. Spiritual and moral values in Rabindranath Tagore’s Prose:**

For Rabindranath Tagore, reigns in this relation are realm. The inner self from which consciousness takes its direction to the world is personality. So what Rabindranath Tagore wants to say is personality is a self consciousness principle of transcendental unity within man. By this man extends himself into the infinite with the help of his knowledge, love and activity.

So, ‘personal man’ would be a man who consciously cultivates his personality and exhibits it to the world with his creative work. Actually, the truth of the experience, the personal man gathers from the world where he dwells. Thus Rabindranath Tagore reveals his aesthetics. It is to be mentioned here that personality is an expanding concept. In its sleeping form, which is there in every human being, it is almost inanimate. Much in the fashion of the present-day things, he argues that not every human being is a person. He may be an unperson if the potentiality within never comes out into actuality.

Therefore, man includes within his personality not only his fellow beings with love, but also assimilates nature into him. He creates art, music, painting, dance and such other expressions out of his personality. All these express the creativity within man which establishes the surplus man. This surplus is manifested in creativity, creation of the beautiful and the good, and in man’s forward march to creativity, he transcends his bio-physical finitude and encompasses the infinite within him.

Rabindranath Tagore wipes away all dark stains from the heart of this earth. He says that 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. Rabindranath Tagore asks God to touch them with His right hand, make them one in spirit, bring harmony into their life, and bring rhythm of beauty.

After the apocalypse of World War-I and the utter obstinacy of the world community to learn anything from the experience, whether in Europe, the United States of America, or the East, as in China, Rabindranath Tagore accurately describes the world as ‘wild with the delirium of hatred’. Cruel conflicts follow one another, exploitation of the masses, tangled in ‘bonds of greed’. Rabindranath Tagore appeals to the Divine Being, on behalf of suffering humanity, to ‘make them one in spirit, bring harmony into their life’, seeking a way forward to build, as it were, ‘the temple of our faith on a sure and world-wide basis’.

In his book The Religion of Man in 1930, delivered as the Hibbert Lectures at Manchester College, Oxford, Rabindranath Tagore further meditates on the need of what he had called for in Creative Unity, “to realize the God in man in a larger faith.” Trying perhaps to spell out its details, Rabindranath Tagore writes that “in this idea of unity” man “realizes the eternal in his life” and “consciousness of this unity is spiritual, and our effort to be true to it is our religion.” Like the Bauls, Rabindranath Tagore has dispensed with all images, temples, and ceremonials, declaring in his songs “the divinity of man” expressing love for the Supreme Person.

Rabindranath Tagore often quotes in his books, Advaitam is anandam; the infinite One is Infinite Love. Expanding on the Upanishads, he explains that the truth that is infinite dwells in the ideal of unity which one finds in the deeper relatedness. “Thus we find it is the One which expresses in creation”. 
This truth of realization is not in space, it can only be realized in one's own inner spirit, which is to say what all the great religions and religious teachers have said, that when one experiences the realization and presence of God, a dramatic change of consciousness and action takes place. Faith based on the exterior things of the earth falls short of the very nature of what’s involved in worship of the Divine Presence.

Discussing in *The Religion of Man* Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, the Bhagavad Gita, and Taoism, Rabindranath Tagore gives the reader his own beautiful translation of the Gayatri that let one contemplate the adorable splendour of Him who created the earth, the air and the starry spheres, and sends the power of comprehension within one’s mind. Perhaps analogous to the Jewish Shema, in its importance to the religious tradition of the Upanishads, Rabindranath Tagore writes that the Gayatri produced a sense of serene exaltation in man.

Rabindranath Tagore continues by conceding that it is evident that his religion is a poet’s religion, and neither that of an orthodox man of piety nor that of a theologian, that it comes to him through the same unseen and trackless channel as does the inspiration of his songs. Somehow they were wedded to each other.

As with the Romantics, there is a mysterious source for Rabindranath Tagore’s sense of transcendence, though more grounded in what can appear to Westerners as fairly orthodox texts and traditions, yet the Bauls were not part of mainstream Brahmanism whatsoever, nor was the entire history of his
family’s involvement with the Brahmo Samaj and what it represented. All of this provided Rabindranath Tagore with a rich experience and personal tradition of spiritual seeking beyond the confines of the more orthodox pathways of conventional Hinduism. Rabindranath Tagore relates in The Religion of Man how all these strands in his biography and background culminated in his mystical experience.

Though by birth a Brahmin and the son of a great Hindu reformer, Rabindranath Tagore’s feeling for Hinduism was strictly eclectic and was more or less confined to his admiration of the philosophic wisdom of the Upanishads and the literary heritage of Sanskrit. For Brahminism as such, for its priestly authority and the tyranny of its regimented social organization, he had nothing but contempt. ‘Jivan Devata,’ a theme on which Rabindranath Tagore wrote many variations, evokes his ‘poet’s religion,’ ‘strictly eclectic,’ drawing loyally from the Upanishads and the broad mystic traditions that he found capable of sustaining his universal vision of spirituality.

Rabindranath Tagore found it preferable to the rigid convolutions of Brahminism and more conducive to a productive social order for India in the modern world, though it should be remembered late in life in an introduction to a collection of scriptures Rabindranath Tagore acknowledged about the Upanishads that their emphasis was too intellectual, and did not sufficiently explore the approach to Reality through love and devotion. (perhaps bhakti) His addresses on education, agriculture, and Indian history in the 1920s and ‘30s demonstrate that his literary muse could fly with the intoxicated mystics and Jivan Devata, yet his feet were firmly planted, down to earth, in the good rich soil of India, more so at times than Gandhi’s bare feet.
Rabindranath Tagore does understand the pressure and arguments of modernity, observing in *The Religion of Man* that one finds in modern literature that something like a chuckle of an exultant disillusionment is becoming contagious, and the knights-errant of the cult of arson are abroad, setting fire to our time-honoured altars of worship, proclaiming that the images enshrined on them, even if beautiful, are made of mud. They say that it has been found out that the appearances in human idealism are deceptive, that the underlying mud is real. From such a point of view, the whole of creation may be said to be a gigantic deception, and the billions of revolving electric specks that have the appearance of ‘you’ or ‘me’ should be condemned as bearers of false evidence. It’s not that Rabindranath Tagore ignores modernity and just blithely sails off into mysticism out of mindless nostalgia.

Rabindranath Tagore understands the reasons for disillusionment and is himself disillusioned with Western civilization and its failure to live up to its highest claims, as articulated in Christianity, and which, as one has seen, he repeatedly stated after World War-I. It’s that Rabindranath Tagore believes the surest response is ‘the inborn criterion of the real,’ ‘the rose must be more satisfactory than its constituent gases,’ existing truly in a ‘perfect harmony’ of its parts.

Rabindranath Tagore emphasizes ‘wholeness’ over the clever ability to deconstruct. Animal in the savage has been transformed into higher stages in the civilized man by a magical grouping of the unruly and disillusioning materials of the human being, curbing and stressing in proper places, creating a unique value to our personality in all its completeness.

This is Rabindranath Tagore’s answer to the nihilism of modernity: ‘To keep alive our faith in the reality of the ideal perfection is the function of
civilization.’ Rather than surrendering to the ‘realism’ of modern literature, Rabindranath Tagore argues it contains a limited portion of human experience and truth. At their best literature and all the arts affirm the fullness of the human being, strengthening the foundation of civilization at the deepest level. As with his thought on the rose, many of his writings reflect on the nature of science and its relation to religion.

Science expands one’s physical strength and abilities through locomotion, steam, electricity, and other forces. In an incredible statement, especially for 1913, he says that there is no limit to man’s powers, for we are not outside the universal power which is the expression of universal law. Many of the maladies and limitations of human existence ‘are not absolute.’ Returning to the flower analogy, Rabindranath Tagore details its many constituent parts and biological functions in leading to the fruit of a plant. Science argues a flower has no relation to ‘the heart of men,’ nor is the notion that it is the emblem of something else anything but imaginary. ‘Beauty,’ responds Rabindranath Tagore ‘becomes its only qualification.’ Why do modern human beings choose to believe in a flower’s practical nature and yet reject its human influence? They observe the outer truth but not the inner one? In Sadhana, the Upanishads provide his text: ‘Verily from the everlasting joy do all objects have their birth.’

Rabindranath Tagore’s spirituality is often akin to that of more primordial religions, such as the Poet’s Religion of Rabindranath Tagore American Indians, that God imbues nature with transcendence and oneness. ‘Science collects facts’ and statistics, creating ‘mental pictures’ which are not stable and are in fact ‘evanescent.’ The picture of the struggle for existence leaves out reciprocity, love for others, and the sacrifice of self, inspired by love, “the
positive element in life,” none of which gainsays the laws of science, for the laws are “not something apart from us.” They are “our own.” Rabindranath Tagore argues again that the “universal law is one with our own power.” Through science “we come to know more of the laws of nature” and “tend to attain a universal body,” “worldwide.” (Sisir Kumar Das, *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, Vol-III, P.65).

Through man’s progress in science the wholeness of the world and his oneness with it is becoming clearer to his mind. When this perception of the perfection of unity is not merely intellectual, when it opens out his whole being into a luminous consciousness of the all, then it becomes a radiant joy, an overspreading love. His spirit finds its larger self in the whole world, and is filled with an absolute certainty that it is immortal. It dies a hundred times in its enclosures of self; for separateness is doomed to die, it cannot be made eternal. But it never can die where it is one with the all, for there is its truth, its joy.

In *Personality*, another set of lectures delivered in the United States in 1916, several times at Unitarian Churches, Rabindranath Tagore further explains that a flower is nothing when one analyses it, but it is positively a flower when one enjoys it. Again, his point highlights the wholeness of one’s personal experience of a flower and the joy it gives. One believes Rabindranath Tagore’s emphasis on unity and the role of science in expanding man’s awe before its discoveries and results are all the more insightful as men have progressed further along in one’s scientific advancement in understanding creation and the cosmos. Yet Rabindranath Tagore rightly criticized the West for being mainly concerned with the extension ‘outwards,’ to the neglect of ‘inner consciousness which is the field of fulfillment.’ His interest and dialogue with science runs throughout his books, unexpectedly resulting in a textbook, in 1937, Our
Universe, surveying scientific knowledge from the world of atoms to the world of stars. Rabindranath Tagore has often been criticized for a failure to appreciate the extent to which he was deceived and duped by Mussolini and then by the communist state.

Rabindranath Tagore is certainly bold enough to declare that the infinite would have been vain if he didn’t have come down to man to manifest himself. In this state of development of personality, man realizes that the entire universe is a real creation of the infinite, who being immanent in the finite establishes a spiritual unity, a bond between man and man, man and nature and the man and his supreme person or the Almighty.

**IX. Rabindranath Tagore’s views on Education:**

Rabindranath Tagore gives spiritual approach to Education. He considers that the aim of education is self realization. Self realization according to Rabindranath Tagore means the realization of the universal soul in one’s self. Man’s aim in life is to achieve this status. It is a process which cannot be realized without education. Rabindranath Tagore does not find any dichotomy between thought and life, Philosophy and education. He believes many contemporary Indian philosophers like Gandhi, Swami Vivekananda that everyone is potentially divine and every one can realize this potentiality.

Rabindranath Tagore’s philosophy is very much influenced by the Indian scriptures like the Gita and the Upanishads. However he is also very much influenced by the western classical and modern educational thought like Swami Vivekananda, he synthesizes the ancient vedantic tradition with the modern scientific attitude in formulating the goal of education.
Elaborating the aims of education, Rabindranath Tagore says “the fundamental purpose of education is not merely to enrich ourselves through the fullness of knowledge, but also to establish the bond of love and friendship between man and man.” (100). Thus, Rabindranath Tagore approach to education is humanistic and his approach to ultimate reality is integral. He believes in an inner harmony among man and nature and god. They are in fact three aspects of the same reality. In man, again the physical, mental and the spiritual aspects are equally important and internally related. Therefore, like Aurobindo, Rabindranath Tagore believes in a multi sided education with physical, intellectual moral and religious aims.

X. Physical Development:

According to Rabindranath Tagore, education of the body in the real sense, does not exist in play and experience but in applying the body systematically to some useful work. Pointing out the value of physical activities in the child’s education he says “even if they learnt nothing they would have had ample time for play climbing trees diving into ponds, plucking and tearing flowers, perpetrating thousand and one mischief’s on mother nature, they would have obtained the nourishment of the body, happiness of mind and the satisfaction of the natural impulse of childhood.” (102).

Among the contemporary Indian Philosophers of Education, Rabindranath Tagore holds an eminent position. He may be called as a humanist in the strict sense of the term. His humanist approach is not materialistic but integral in nature. His philosophy is Cosmopolitan Humanism and his theory of education is directly deduced from this philosophy.
Rabindranath Tagore’s significant and original ideas in the field of education were worthy to pay attention. Actually long before Madam Montessori’s name was heard in India, Rabindranath Tagore independently formed the same premises on which her educational programme was based. And it is an important point that Gandhiji was the first to recognize the provenance of Rabindranath Tagore’s views on education and his plea for the preservation of cottage industries. As a matter of fact he had sent many of his followers to Shantiniketan to study the Indian music, painting and poetry.

Though Rabindranath Tagore is primarily a poet, he did write voluminously in prose on almost every aspect of Indian life and culture, its history and tradition. His views on education attract the leading educationalists throughout the modern world. Revolution against the unrealistic, alien, mercenary and mechanical education system of the British, he explored his own alternative medium of education that upheld the highest ideals. Rabindranath Tagore put his education-related ideals into practice in Shantiniketan.

As education was an exploration, mere theoretical education cannot be satisfactory. The need, he said, was for improvisation at every level - even, for instance, in making little of financial resources go a long way. Education was nothing short of learning to love, and the atmosphere in which education is imparted is of great significance. Rabindranath Tagore preferred open-air classrooms in the midst of nature-a suggestion which is adopted today even in a limited sense would do away with unnecessary expenditure on building schools and classrooms and especially furniture and other things to equip them with.
XI. Conclusion:

Obviously what all that Rabindranath Tagore wrote, volume after volume, may not be of the first grade quality; possibly it cannot be. Unevenness is bound to be there in a writer who wrote so voluminously and for so long.

Some of the other serious defects from which Rabindranath Tagore’s essays and letters suffer are prolixity and repetitiousness. He has the tendency of explaining something over and over again, somewhat in the manner of an anxious teacher talking to a class of rather dull student. Many of his essays were in fact addresses delivered on various occasions somewhere. One obvious result is that the reader feels that he is speaking from a high pedestal and that he is not one of many frail blundering humans. He seems to be so sure of himself and the righteousness of his point of view that one does not see him struggling with doubts and fears and conflicts. One does not see the process; one is made to look at the point of arrival. This is particularly true of his essays, speeches and letters.

A strong element of didacticisms colours much of his serious writing. One is told not only ‘what to do’ but also ‘how to do’. He was a true teacher to his capacity, analyzing the spiritual malaise and prescribing the remedy. This Gurudevness sometimes makes him irritatingly platitudinous. Another serious allegation against his essays and speeches is their thinness and valorousness and it is not entirely untenable. His essays in general are imprecise and cloudy. When one wants to summarize a Rabindranath Tagore’s essay, one is often disappointed to find that he has actually little to say and that he has taken a long period to say that. It is not that he is comprehensive and hence has to discuss a thing threadbare from every single point of view; he is rhetorical and repetitive.
Practically speaking, it should be accepted that one of the best qualities of Rabindranath Tagore’s prose and letters is his effortless use of imagery. It is subtle and homely, at the same time. Much of it is taken from the nature and natural processes. To sum up, in spite of all its limitations, Rabindranath Tagore’s prose and other works remain very much alive, forceful and rich. Its sheer variety is astonishing; it is certainly difficult to believe that one man could have written so much in various fields. One may disagree with him, but one can never ignore him.

Rabindranath Tagore’s influence on world literature is immeasurable. His best prose, like his poetry, teaches one the great lesson of love and humanity. At its best it makes one experience intensely and instantly the joy of being alive. It imparts a charm that makes one get solace. One feels his significance in this wider society. Rabindranath Tagore regarded man as the culmination of the creative process of a superior great power. The inner being of man is organic with the heart of eternity.

The philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore is an absolute idealism of the concrete type. His supreme spirit is not an abstract entity residing at a safe distance from the world, but is the concrete dynamic life at the centre of things, giving rise to the roar of the wind and the surge of the sea. It is the final truth of the cosmic dance of life and death. Rabindranath Tagore's is a wholeness of vision, which cannot tolerate absolute divisions between body and mind, matter and life, individual and society, community and nation, and empire and the world. Mystic experience the world over has this philosophy underlying it. Rabindranath Tagore’s religious message is simple: Stick to religion, let religions go. Happiness is for those who realize this oneness and wholeness of spirit. It is for those who respond to the call of the divine in them.