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CONCLUSION

To summarize, it may be said that in spite of the occasional differences of opinions between Rabindranath and Gandhi, there always existed a common spiritual affinity of mind between the two great thinkers.

Both had a common destination, being born in the same era and in the same soil, both had the same impress of the heritage of the land and time.

Both were the harbingers of hope to mankind for all time to come. They belonged not only to India but to the world as a whole. Being two great humanist thinkers of the modern age, their messages have left far reaching influences on the millions of peace-loving and aspirant people of the East and the West as well.

It is because of the fact that the 'humanism' they professed was widely different from the type of 'humanism' that is known today, as "secular humanism" upheld by the neo-atheists thinkers of the modern scientific Western world who disregard 'God' in explaining the evolution of man. They conceive 'humanism' as something exclusive of 'God' or the 'religion' which proclaims an indivisible
faith in Him. Naturally, these neo-atheists pay little attention to find out the very source of humanity and fail to define the true nature of man in terms of 'spirit' or 'soul'.

The 'humanism' that was idealized and upheld by Rabindranath and Ghandhi, may be best termed as the "spiritual humanism" that characterized India's Nineteenth Century Renaissance period - the era, to which the thinkers truly belonged by birth, mind and thought.

To know the thinkers is to know the very spirit of the age. The intellectual awakening started by Rammohon Roy and carried on by several reformist societies and individuals of the day, stood on the side of rationalism and the scientific attitude of mind on the one hand, and a deep and honest regard for the purer spiritual heritage and cultural tradition of India on the other. Western ideas of progress and liberalism were consciously or unconsciously sought to be blended with the best and purest of the Indian tradition. The genesis of the thinkers' particular way of thinking thus, has to be sought, in the atmosphere of contemporary India. The age witnessed more or less a synthetic outlook - an impact of Western education on Eastern mind - a combination of thoughts which was conservative in its outlook, but modern in essence, nationalistic in its expression but internationalistic
in its core. In fact, the symptoms of various social and cultural changes and the reformist movements were nothing but the manifestation of a deeper urge for national self-expression on the part of a group of men who were socially conscious, intellectually advanced and economically well placed in India of the time. Rabindranath and Gandhi were among these people, who sought to give to all the divergent ideas and unrelated or scattered ideals and initiatives of the time, a definite national purpose. Enriched by the full inheritance of the spiritual tradition of India, they also accepted with full enthusiasm what was best in Western thinking i.e. liberalism, humanitarian ideals, spirit of enquiry and inquisitiveness as well as sense of history. Considering the background of the thinkers' family, the social and intellectual atmosphere, in which their formative years and years of early maturity were attained, the acceptance of a liberal and evolutionary outlook of life was but quite natural.

Thus the liberal humanitarian ideals of the Christian world (i.e. of the West) when imported to India through the Western education, assumed a peculiar spiritual colour, that may be regarded as typically Indian or indigenous in its essence.

Like most of the Renaissance thinkers of the time, Rabindranath and Gandhi proclaimed that 'God' in man was a
reality, or the 'life divine' was the *summun bonum* in the
evolution of man - it is the highest stage man has yet to
realize. Rabindranath described it as "The Religion of
Man" and Gandhi upheld it as the ideal of "self-realization"
- a philosophy of not only of 'being' but of 'becoming'
also.

The thinkers' 'humanism' was deeply rooted in a
profound faith in God. Humanism bereft of its life giving
force i.e. God to them was like a flower plant which dies
away without being a living touch with the soil of the
ground. The thinkers' humanism was only a corollary of
their realisation of the presence of 'God' in all human
beings in concrete shape. It is based on India's ancient
"Advaita" ideal, or the realization of 'spiritual unity
with all'. With the thinkers, to serve man in his distress
and sorrows, is only to serve and worship God. Gandhi
thus explained, "My creed is service of God and therefore
of humanity". Rabindranath similarly explained that
humanity is the 'religion' of human being. Thus the
thinkers' humanism is totally different from the pattern,
advocated by the neo-atheists thinkers of the modern
days, who regard it, as something floating like gossamer
without any subsistence. Thus, it was the common "unity
of faith" that drew Rabindranath and Gandhi, to a closer
'unity of heart', which is often overlooked by the common
people.
Rabindranath was a great poet and Gandhi was a hard practical minded man as the people knew them; only a deep study on the two great minds reveals the fact that Gandhi beneath his rough and rugged outward appearances, cherished a soft, sympathetic and poetic mind like Rabindranath, which drew its continuous sustenance, joy of life and complete peace of mind through direct communion with 'God'. To the thinkers a true religion is that which helps man to see his Maker 'face to face' as Gandhi explained it. Or in other words, by 'religion' the thinkers meant not any particular creed or faith but the ideal, which helps man to realize the 'divine in him' as well as the 'divine in others', or the spiritual unity with all. They believed that the essence of all religions is equally pure and true and fundamentally the same and one. A true religion always implies, an emphasis on the moral values of man as 'spirit'. The thinkers thus interpreted 'Hinduism' not as a particular 'creed' or 'faith', but as a particular way of thinking and living and accommodating in its wider encircle, of everything which has come in touch with the soil and culture of the land from the time immemorial. Rabindranath described it as the 'spirit of unity through diversity'. The term 'Hindu', as it is understood by the thinkers, meant every Indian, irrespective of his birth, belief, faith or creed. The thinkers identified as 'Hindus' all who contributed directly or indirectly to the growth of
the age old Indian culture and her history in general. Thus Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians and the people of other faiths are equally honoured and identified as 'Hindus' or 'Indians'. Rabindranath in his famous poem entitled, "Bharat Tirtha" (भारत तिर्थ) glorified and idealized this supreme ideal of Hindu culture. In interpreting the essence of Hinduism Gandhi repeatedly emphasized and glorified this very spirit of 'unity in diversity'. Religion in this sense becomes an all embracing love, a spirit of toleration and accommodation with all kind of foreign and indigenous cultures, tradition and ideas. It is a sense of respect to all, and a feeling of spiritual unity with the people of the world as a whole. It also means supreme dependence upon the absolute truth. It demands thus, complete concentration of our being and personality to 'truth' which is 'God'. The fundamental tenet of religion which the thinkers stressed was not thus an adherence to dogmas and creeds but a 'God fearing life'. They held it as the spirit of 'religion' and wanted its extension to every sphere of human relationship i.e. individual, social, political, economic and others. The thinkers devoutly believed that what was morally wrong, could never be politically right, socially granted and economically valid.

Rabindranath and Gandhi taught Indians as well as
the people of the world that means should be as honest and
pure as the end, otherwise the moral impurity of the means
would endanger the moral value of the end also. The
thinkers thus repeatedly insisted that mere transfer of
political power from one hand to other, would not lead to
the accomplishment of what they termed as 'Purna Swaraj'
in India. To Rabindranath and Gandhi what constituted the
right principles of personal conduct were to be infused
into the action of collectivity. They insisted that at the
bottom lies the individual and in his spiritual and moral
improvement lies the happiness of the collective life of
the people i.e. of the group, society and the state. To
them, the ideal of 'self realization' was not only a
personal concept but a collective ideal. The principle of
identification of means and end at the moral level, may be
viewed as the greatest contribution of the thinkers to the
modern world. They firmly insisted that both politics and
economics should be grounded on 'morality'. Gandhi clearly
explained that he wanted to infuse 'religion' into politics.
In its wider implication, it goes against the very principle
of Machievellian state-craftship based on political
convenience and opportunism. Rabindranath condemned it as
the evil spirit of 'modern nation' in his lectures on
"Nationalism". Both Rabindranath and Gandhi, bitterly,
criticized the so-called modern nations of the Western
world, who are purely guided by the spirit of self-interest,
economic motivation and political gain at the cost of each other, causing increasing bitterness, hatred, jealousy and war. Both Gandhi and Rabindranath declared that India's 'nationalism' was not a threat to others as it is based not on the ideal of individual self-interest or political gain at the cost of others. In its true sense, India's 'nationalism' was only a corrolary to world peace and universal brotherhood. India's ideal of 'self-realisation' is a spiritual concept and she stood for its extension to the international level. Realisation of the spiritual unity with the whole of mankind was the ideal which Rabindranath and Gandhi glorified and idealized throughout their lives. Thus the thinkers had no hatred against any country of the world even against the British people.

Till the violent repressive policy of the British Government which led to the mass massacre in Zalianwala Bag in 1919, the thinkers maintained, more or less a conciliatory and co-operative attitude towards the British administrators in India. They held that no foreign government could bring about happiness of the Indian masses unless they themselves tried to achieve it from within. What was needed was the reassurance of self-confidence and self-help spirit among the masses through various kinds of constructive programmes. It is interesting to note that long before Gandhi was well-known in Indian politics,
Rabindranath had begun various kinds of experiments in educational improvement and village reconstruction around his favourite Shantiniketan school from 1905. He took leading part in formulating a national educational programme in 1906 and many of his new suggestions and improvements were later adopted by Gandhi in 1921. Long before Gandhi, Rabindranath in his many essays, addresses of the time, appealed to the Indian people not to follow the path of 'violence' and 'revolution', in bringing about political change in the country. He repeatedly insisted that the people should depend on their 'soul-force', to resist or rectify a social or political wrong. He identified it as an act of 'self-purification' through 'long suffering' and hardships. It is with this ideal in mind as Rabindranath himself pointed out in many places of his writings, he took a leading part in the anti-partition movement of Bengal in (1905-6) and later withdrew himself from the current of politics of the time when increasing lawlessness and violence overtook the movement.

Like Gandhi, Rabindranath was firmly against the principle of increasing state or governmental interferences and influences in every-day business of human life. He insisted that in the West, the state is glorified and entrusted with all kinds of responsibilities of welfare works, whereas in India, it is the 'society', which is
placed above the state. Rabindranath explained that if it is in the interest of the Western countries to preserve the 'State', so it is in her own interest, India should preserve her 'Society'. He added that while in Europe the problem is always 'political', in India, it is typically 'social'. Like Gandhi, Rabindranath upheld India's traditional 'samaj' ideal based on the ideal of service, love and co-operation with others. He explained, like Gandhi, that in her "Varnashrama" ideal there was no place for internal rivalry, jealousy and hatred as it was not the 'pride of wealth' but 'virtue' that was counted and honoured, and became the sole determining factor of an individual's status in the society. Like Gandhi, Rabindranath in general, maintained an anti-state and anti-governmental attitude of mind and favoured least state or governmental interference in every day affairs of man. He wholeheartedly supported Gandhi's version - 'That Government is best, which rules the least'. In its ideal form, it means a highly enlightened anarchism where everybody is self-regulated or guided by the spirit of 'dharma' or moral obligation to others.

In the realm of economics too, Rabindranath like Gandhi, insisted that 'morality' should be taken into account as the chief guiding factor. Economic growth should correspond with 'moral growth' of man. Unlike Marx,
both Rabindranath and Gandhi, proclaimed firmly the supremacy of the 'soul' over the 'matter'. The thinkers had unlimited faith in the capacity of the human mind to change, improve and rise above all limitations of worldly or egocentric impulses. They declared that the so-called theory of 'class-consciousness', 'class-war' and 'bloody revolution' was foreign to India's traditional 'samaj' ideal. Both Rabindranath and Gandhi criticized Bolshevik 'economy', as they believed, it was based on 'force' from outside. They upheld the 'trusteeship' ideal of voluntary surrender of the surplus wealth of the rich to the cause of poor. They maintained that a total class-less society was neither possible nor desirable. Through continuous persuasion the rich could be encouraged to share their surplus wealth with the poor. Forceful confiscation of the lands of propertied class or violent elimination of them, through 'force' or 'revolution' would serve no good to the society at large. What is needed is the 'change of heart' of the rich people through proper persuasion and love. Like Gandhi, Rabindranath was against rapid industrialisation of India. Instead, he stressed the need of reorganization and improvement of India's villages on self-help basis and constructive work. Long before Gandhi, in his article on "Swadeshi Samaj" (written in 1904) and in his presidential speech of Bengal Provincial Conference at Pabna (1908), Rabindranath had repeatedly
emphasized the need of village regeneration of India on self-help basis. Not only did he write or speak but had even begun experimental work on that line in his family estates in North and East Bengal from 1890. Centering on his Shantiniketan educational institution, he undertook several village welfare programmes which ultimately led to the establishment of 'Shrineeketan'. It is interesting to note that Rabindranath initiated all these types of new experiments in educational and village reorganizational work at a time when Gandhi was totally unknown to the public of India in general. An understanding of Rabindranath's social thought is, therefore, essential for a fuller appreciation of such a unique personality he was.

In dealing with the Hindu-Muslim problem, both Rabindranath and Gandhi maintained that the issue should not be used or exploited for winning some political gains. Or, in other words, the issue should not be used as an instrument for anti-British drive. The problem should be looked as 'an end in itself' rather than 'a means to a certain end'. They appealed to the political parties including the National Congress not to use the issue as a matter of political convenience on the political platform. Rabindranath, like Gandhi, believed that Hindus and Muslims were only two blood-brothers having a common mother, namely, India. The spirit of mutual tolerance,
co-operation, love and trust should be fostered and encouraged among the two communities for achieving permanent communal peace and harmony. With this ideal in mind, Rabindranath took active part in the anti-partition movement of Bengal in 1905-6. He initiated the "Raksha-Bandhan" ceremony (Oct. 16, 1906) as a symbol of indissoluble unity between Hindus and Muslims. Both the thinkers warned the British administrators not to exploit the issue for their personal gain. They maintained that "religion" could not be accepted as a dividing factor between the two communities who are culturally one and the same. The thinkers held that so-called Hindu-Muslim problem was an artificial growth of the late British period in India. They appealed to both the Hindus and Muslims not to be misguided by the political slogans of the interested parties. The Muslims should be given equal opportunities in every sphere of social life as the Hindus. They should be treated as equals with the Hindus and unless they are fully assured of their social, economic and political securities and positions, the Muslims would never feel contended and happy. The Hindu-Muslim problem should be left to be settled by themselves rather than by the outsiders. In this process both Rabindranath and Gandhi emphasized that unless the common people are properly educated and well-informed, they would easily fall a victim to all kinds of political and social deceptions.
The thinkers stood for mass-education and bitterly criticized the system of English education which aimed at producing a particular class of intelligentsia, who would serve the interest of British government.

Rabindranath, as early as 1906, took a leading part in the National Council of Education which aimed at making arrangements for imparting national education to the youth of the day and thereby save them from the evil effects of the prevailing educational system. Many of Rabindranath's suggestions on educational improvement and reconstructions of the time were later adapted with little modification by Gandhi during the twenties when he initiated the programmes which he called 'National education'.

Both the thinkers maintained that real education consisted in drawing out the best in man - soul, mind and body. In their opinion the existing English education was defective for various reasons - (a) it was based upon foreign culture to the almost entire exclusion of indigenous culture, (b) it stressed only the bookish knowledge and neglected proper improvement of body and mind. (c) Real education is impossible through a foreign medium. Both Rabindranath and Gandhi repeatedly pointed out that the mother-tongue should be accepted as the medium of instruction in place of English. They also emphasized that education in India should be closely linked with her village
and its social life. Education to be real, should be activity centred, craft-oriented and self-supporting by nature. Character-building was emphasized more than literary training both by Rabindranath and Gandhi. They also were in favour of spread of education among women.

In dealing with the problem of women in India, both Gandhi and Rabindranath insisted that women should not unnecessarily compete with their male partners in earning bread. They pointed out that woman is not a weaker sex, but only a complementary to man. Her presence at home in managing house-hold business and rearing up children, is as important and meaningful as her male partner's contribution, as an earning member of the home. A woman should not be ashamed of her position at home, as mother, wife and sister. The thinkers appealed to the women of India not to imitate the women of Europe in dress and their way of living. The thinkers were also of the opinion that the increasing feeling of discontentment and unhappiness among the women of Western Europe was due to the fact that their male partners were busy in making money at the cost of domestic happiness. They were not paying due attention and love to their wives at home. Similarly, women had lost confidence in themselves and were competing with their male partners outside to prove as Rabindranath put it that "they are not women". Or in other words, their
revolting mood is nothing but the expression of a feeling of self-pity or helplessness. The thinkers emphasized that they should reassure their faith in themselves and contribute greatly to the cause of humanity, being the mother of the race. The thinkers maintained that Indian women should follow the spiritual tradition of their ancestors, who enriched Indian culture in a great way in the past.

In conclusion, it may be said that it immaterial to raise the question who influenced whom? Both Rabindranath and Gandhi were not only great friends but one was complementary to the other in the truest sense of the term—belonging to the same age they enriched Indian culture in her traditional way i.e. 'maintaining unity through diversity'. Like Gandhi, Rabindranath was a 'child of God', who taught men that the supreme task of human existence was 'self-realization', that the individual had to develop the means of knowing what the innermost core of 'personality' (the self) willed, and acting up to it resolutely never afraid of consequences. Regarding the futility of this type of spiritual approach to every kind of problem of today's world, Rabindranath commented on Gandhi: "Perhaps he (Gandhi) will not succeed. Perhaps he will fail as Buddha failed and as Christ failed to wean men from their iniquities, but he will always be remembered as one who made his life a lesson for all ages to come". If this statement regarding Gandhi is true, the same statement is
applicable to Rabindranath also, who taught an identical lesson only in the language of poetry and songs.

It has already been discussed in the foregoing pages that the difference of opinion between Rabindranath and Gandhi during the Non-cooperation Movement and on the issue of 'Charka' was a very temporary phenomenon or a kind of misunderstanding as their friends interpreted it. It was Gandhi, who first acknowledged it, and publicly declared that he had no real difference with the Poet. It is interesting to note how much Gandhi valued and honoured Rabindranath's opinion on every decision, he undertook in his life, at the last stage. During his epic fast at Yarvada Jail of Poona in 1932, Gandhi was personally interested in knowing Rabindranath's views in the matter and accordingly sent a letter to the Poet. Rabindranath not only telegraphed back his sincere support to Gandhi but even in his old age undertook laborious journey by train from Calcutta to Poona, only to be personally present beside the fasting Gandhi. Rabindranath supported Gandhi even when he was engaged with Satyagraha movement in South Africa. As one knows from Andrews' writings, Rabindranath and Gokhale sent Pearson and Andrews to South Africa to extend their wholehearted support and sympathy to Gandhi in his struggle against the repressionary policy of the Whites.
Both the thinkers had unlimited faith in man. They firmly believed that it was not in founding of a new kind of organization, but in 'man' only, was the hope of permanent world-peace and happiness. The relevance of the study of the two great minds has become crucial day by day, due to the fact that the Western countries of today, in their pursuit of material and political gain, do not stop to consider the moral adequacy of the means, but adopt whatever means which promise success. Naturally, the humanitarian ideals and democratic ideas they profess result in nothing but some empty words. Rabindranath and Gandhi were rightly of the opinion that in the Western countries they have achieved 'power', but no 'Swaraj'.

Rabindranath and Gandhi put men before 'organization' and accepted man as 'he is'. They did not suspect 'human nature' and believed that man was bound to respond to all noble appeals if he was rightly approached and was honestly trusted - thus as Rabindranath proclaimed his faith in the eternal virtues in man: "Therefore I do not put my faith in any new institution, but in the individuals all over the world, who think clearly, feel nobly and act rightly, thus becoming the channels of moral truth. Our moral ideals do not work with chisels and hammers. Like trees, they spread their roots in the soil and their branches in the sky, without consulting any architect for their plans".*

*Creative Unity, p.153.