RABINDRANATH TAGORE
1861 - 1941

Rabindranath Tagore is one of the most famous of Indian citizens. His poems and stories are widely known in many countries. A writer with the sensitive soul of the artist, he continually saw in the world about him that which others missed. His high ideals made him one of India's great moral leaders. He continually emphasized the brotherhood of man and love for all creation. He believed in the closest possible union with God, with love the motivating power for living.

Among his many works, *Sadhana*, *The Realization of Life*; *Gitanjali*, *The Religion of Man*, and *Faith of A Poet* are some of the best known.
Rabindranath Tagore believed that in man are two natures—the personal self, and the true self. The personal self manifests itself in the preservation of individual identity. The striving to continue the individual existence and its pleasures is the root of sin. The true self is realized by the surrender of the sense of individual existence and coming to awareness that we are a part of the World-soul. The true self he calls the soul. "Pride of self interferes with the proper function of the soul, which is to realize itself by perfecting its union with the world and the world's God."\textsuperscript{13} Avidyā, ignorance, causes man to move and act within the narrow confines of the personal self. But "our individual self is not the highest meaning of our being," because "in us we have the world-man who is immortal."\textsuperscript{14} In contrast to Avidyā, dharma is working in our self. Tagore defines this as the inmost nature, the essence, the ultimate truth of all things.\textsuperscript{15}

Much more is involved than simple mental assent to the idea that we are part of the World-soul or that the Immortal Being resides within us. Tagore felt that man is a part of the universe, and when he realizes this, he comes into harmony with the spirit of the universe. The self goes "through a continual change and growth of form, which may be termed a continual life going on at the same time."\textsuperscript{16}

Tagore taught that "everything has sprung from immortal life and is vibrating with life."\textsuperscript{17} Even death was believed by the

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{13} Rabindranath Tagore, \textit{Sadhana: The Realization of Life}, p.31.
\bibitem{14} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 64.
\bibitem{15} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 74.
\bibitem{16} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 81.
\bibitem{17} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 21.
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ancient seers to be only the reflection of life. The reflection of God was both death and immortality. Death was but a change in forms. That which exists in man as innate goodness is the Supreme Being: "to realize one's self in the all-pervading God is the essence of goodness ... the keynote of the teaching of the Upanishads."  

In order to attain deliverance from the bondage of ignorance, man must gain the knowledge of the existence of the soul apart from the self. This he declared to be the first step toward the realization of the supreme deliverance. Pride of self comes in to interfere with the proper functioning of the soul. This pride prevents union of the soul with the world and the world's God. Pride of self manifests itself in ignorance that "darkens our consciousness and tends to limit it within the boundaries of our personal self."  

The history of the race is the story of man's search for the unknown, his quest for the realization of his immortal self—his soul." Man's progress continues, never restrained by death or dissolution of the body.

Tagore said that the emphatic teaching of the Upanishads was:

Know thou the One, the Soul. It is the bridge leading to the Immortal Being. --- This is the ultimate end of man, to find the One which is in

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20. Ibid., p. 31.  
21. Ibid., p. 32.  
22. Ibid., p. 33.
him; which is his truth, which is his soul, the key with which he opens the gate of the spiritual life, the heavenly kingdom. Says the Upanishads: This deity who is manifesting himself in the activities of the universe always dwells in the heart of man as the supreme soul. Those who realize him through the immediate perception of the heart attain immortality.  

This attaining of perceptive knowledge Tagore taught was not something that could be progressively added to; it was something total, complete, and so even eternity could not be enough to comprehend God. Since God is one, and not made of parts, he could never be understood in this way. It comes only as men come to know him as heart of our hearts, and soul of our soul. We can only know him in the love and joy we feel when we give up our self and stand before him face to face.

Tagore expressed the prayer of the true seeker: "From unreality lead me to the real, from darkness to the light, from death to immortality."

"The individual I am attains its perfect end when it realizes its freedom of harmony in the infinite I Am." It is not by withdrawing from life that true union with God can be found. "He who

24. Ibid., p. 37.
25. Ibid., p. 38.
26. Ibid., p. 85.
thinks to reach God by running away from the world, where and when can he expect to meet him?" 27 "True striving in the quest of truth consists not in the neglect of action, but in the effort to attune it closer and closer to the eternal harmony." 26

When this perception of the perfection of unity is not merely intellectual, when it opens out our whole being into a luminous consciousness of the all, then it becomes a radiant joy, and overspreading love. Our 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 can never die when it is one with the All, for there is its truth, its joy." 29

The attainment of a sense of oneness with the Amritam, The Immortal Bliss, is demonstrated by a life of unselfish love for all mankind. "The immortal Being manifests himself in joy form." 30 The Infinite reveals himself in all that is endlessly new and eternally beautiful in us. When man's "work is the outcome of joy, the forms that it takes have the elements of immortality. The immortal in man imparts to it its own quality of permanence." Our self, as a form of God's joy, is deathless. For his joy is Amritam, eternal. 31 The surrender of self, the abandonment of its desires, gives way to a life of joy. The life is filled with this joy, and is motivated not by the

27. Rabindranath Tagore, Sadhana: The Realization of Life, p.130
28. Ibid., p. 126.
29. Ibid., p. 113.
30. Ibid., p. 104.
31. Ibid., p. 81.
desires of self, but by joy itself, joy which springs from measureless love. This Tagore calls "the Karma Yoga of the Gita, the way to become one with the infinite activity, by the exercise of the activity of disinterested goodness." When this state is attained, self no longer displays itself. The soul transcends self and in so doing gives self its true meaning. The true self reveals itself by giving up everything it has, like the fragrant perfume of the flower in full bloom. The dying to self "is not a call to annihilation, but to eternal life. It is the extinction of the lamp in the morning light, not the abolition of the sun." The true meaning of life is love, love which knows no distinction, but demonstrates itself in impartial benevolence toward all creatures and all classes. Tagore regarded the human soul as being on a journey "from law to love, from discipline to liberation, from the moral plane to the spiritual." He likened it to a going back to Brahman, to the infinite love. Its goal, the joy of living in Brahman, he felt was attained when, as taught by Buddha, man shall deceive none, entertain no hatred for anybody, and never wish to injure through anger. He shall have measureless love for all creatures, even as a mother has for her only child, whom she protects with her own life. Up above, below, and all around him he shall

52. Rabindranath Tagore, Sadhana: The Realization of Life, p.50.
33. Ibid., p. 76.
34. Ibid., p. 82.
35. Ibid., p. 106.
extend his love, which is without bounds and obstacles and which is free from all cruelty and antagonism. While standing, sitting, walking, lying down, till he falls asleep, he shall keep his mind active in the exercise of universal good will. 36

To Tagore death was not to be looked upon as an enemy, but as the natural termination of the present life. With that termination comes freedom. To him it was the leaving of the narrower life for the universal life, the dedication of his accumulated wisdom toward that universal life, as he entered into relationship with the life. He compared this to the enlarging world of a child as he leaves the womb for further growth of body and mind; then to leaving the home circle for a fuller life in contacts with the multitude. Then, as the body declines, the man, richer for experience, leaves at death the narrow confines of this life for a wider one beyond. 37

Freedom is gained by vidya, knowledge of experience, as man realizes his oneness with the spirit of the universe. Real freedom is not found in disassociating oneself from his fellow men, but in mutual understanding and co-operating, in the conquest of selfish desires. The person who achieves this must give up the keen obsession with the things of the present finite life. 38 Renouncing the things of the present for the sake of the future, he receives death as a welcome guest. The present which is given up he compared to the petals which the flower sheds to develop its fruit, or to the falling of the flower for the rebirth of the tree. 39

37. Rabindranath Tagore, Towards Universal Man, pp. 92, 93.
Selfish desire interferes with the rhythm of life, the harmony of the universe, "because greed has no limit. It is by the rhythm of the finite life, by its "restrictions that we pass to the immortal life." 40

Man must not alone be bound by the claims of the finite, but must recognize that "the fulfillment which is in the infinite has also its call to him. When we respond to that call, then death does not come to us as an abrupt interruption of our world of reality." 41

Tagore believed that the goal of life is union with Brahman by the surrender of self to him. The self he compared to a river flowing into the sea. The sea he compared to eternal rest in Brahman. As the river eventually merges completely with the sea, so the soul is to merge with the Infinite. But the river is not the sea. We do not possess Brahman. He encompasses us as a part of the whole. Because He is infinitely beyond what we ever can be, we are eternally becoming. Because of this there is eternal progress toward the infinite perfection. There is purpose. Life has meaning; it is filled with love and joy. 42

Tagore also believed that the paramatman, the supreme soul, has already revealed himself to the individual soul. From the godward side, the union is already complete. He quoted the Upanishads. "He who knows Brahman, the true, the all-conscious, and the infinite as hidden in the depths of the soul; which is the supreme sky (the

41. Rabindranath Tagore, Towards Universal Man, p. 92.
42. Rabindranath Tagore, Sadhana: The Realization of Life, pp. 155, 156.
inner sky of consciousness) enjoys all objects of desire in union with the all-knowing Brahman." This he compares to a marriage of the soul. "The nameless immediate presence is ever here in our innermost being." The soul-bride by virtue of the divine union, he compared to the river which at one end has attained the ocean of her fulfillment and so is at rest and complete, while at the other outward end there is incessant movement and change.43

Life to one who realizes his union with the Infinite is not drudgery, but the service of love. The desire for closer union grows until the surrender is complete and God works out His will in the human life.

Since he believed that the soul "enjoys all objects of desire in union with the all-knowing Brahman," he believed that the individual soul will retain its identity or consciousness until the union is complete from the human side, which, since He is Infinite, means a continual process of becoming. But the soul realizes that its ultimate object of repose is Brahman, and like a perfect poem progresses with meaning and joy to that end. This he referred to as the "perfectness of being that lends to the imperfection of becoming that quality of beauty which finds its expression in all poetry, drama, and art."44

To Tagore the prospect of becoming one with the all did not need to wait until death. Even now, here in this present life, the union begins; a union which will never end, but which will increase

44. Ibid., p. 157.
and strengthen as the process of self-surrender progresses. The realiza-
tion that the individual is truly a part of Brahman, and will be-
come Brahman, brings to an end the desire for things and fills the
soul with an inexpressible longing to be united with the All-soul. The
immortal life begins here as this union begins to be realized.

Tagore saw the Beautiful in all the world around him. He
said that "Whenever we see the Good and the true in perfect accord,
the Beautiful stands revealed." "Beauty is Good in its fullness as ful-
ness of Beauty is Good incarnate." He felt that the beauty of good-
ness is of much more significance than simply perceiving or understand-
ing things, because it "endows man with Godliness." He quoted a poet
as saying that Beauty is truth and truth Beauty. He then added:

The Upanishads, too, tell us: Ananda-
rupamagratm yadvibhathi, - all that is,
is manifestation of His joy, His death-
lessness. From the speck of dust at
our feet to the stars in the heavens -
all is a manifestation of truth and
beauty, of joy and immortality.

He concluded this essay with the following:

Art and literature bring home to us
that what is True is Joy, what is True
is Eternal. They annote over and over
again the truth propounded by the Upa-
nishads:

45. Rabindranath Tagore, On Art and Aesthetics, A Series
of Lectures, Essays and Letters, p. 5.
46. Ibid., p. 6.
47. Ibid., "The Sense of Beauty", pp. 8, 9.
Rasvai sakh, Rasam hi evayam
lavdhvandhi bhavati---
(He is truth in all its Beauty,
and to realize Him is to taste
Joy everlasting) 48

He believed that man has a finite and an infinite side. On this latter side our "aspiration, enjoyment, and sacrifice are infinite. This infinite side of man must have its revealments in some symbols which have the elements of immortality." In these symbols, since it reaches toward perfection, it rejects the "flimsy, feeble, and incongruous. It builds for its dwelling a paradise where only those materials are used that have transcended the earth's mortality." 49

To him men were not simply creatures of dust, but beings of high destiny and purpose. He said that:

Men are the children of light, Whenever they fully realize themselves, they feel their immortality. And as they feel it, they extend their realm of the Immortal into every region of human life.

This building of man's world, — the living world of truth and beauty, — is the function of Art.

Man is true, where he feels his infinity, where he is divine and the divine is the creator in him. Therefore, with the attainment of truth, he creates, He would hear the same message that came from the Indian sage of ancient time:

49. Ibid., p. 28.
Hearken to me, ye children of the Immortal, dwellers of the heavenly worlds, I have known the Supreme Person who comes as light from the dark beyond. 50

He felt that the Artist sensed the relationship of himself with the Supreme Being. He feels within himself the impelling urge to make manifest in his creative achievements the Divine Person, whether it is in line or colour or music, of the revealed or subtly hidden, or the attempt to express that which is inexpressible. 51 His production are measured not from the factual, but "are challenged from the standpoint of the Immortal Person." 52 "Art is calling us the 'children of the immortal'" and is showing "Our right to dwell in the heavenly worlds." He recognized something in man that "asserts its immortality in spite of the obvious fact of death." What is this? In a lecture delivered in America he said:

It is that deeper unity, that ultimate mystery in him, which, from the center of his world radiates towards its circumference; which is in his body, yet transcends his body; which is in his mind, yet grows beyond his mind; which, through the things belonging to him expresses something that is not in them; which, while occupying his present, overflows its banks of the past and the future. It is the personality of man,

51. Ibid., p. 29.
52. Ibid., p. 30.
conscious of its inexhaustible abundance. ... And this consciousness of the infinite, in the personal man, ever strives to make its expressions immortal and to make the whole world its own. In art the "person in us is sending its answers to the Supreme Person, who reveals Himself to us in a world of endless beauty across the lightless world of facts. 53

In his lecture on the religion of an artist, he expressed the thought that just as light is perceived freely by all, regardless of scientific understanding of it, so man comes in touch with "the infinite reality immediately within us only when we perceive the pure truth of love or goodness. "This could not be brought about by theological exegesis or ethical and philosophical discussions. Though he felt that he did not have the answers to "the problem of evil" or "what happens after death", he was sure that there were times when his "soul has touched the infinite, and has become intensely conscious of its through the illumination of joy." 54

When man creates works of art or literature, he seeks to preserve it. As Tagore so expressively put it:

Man is eager that his feeling for what is real to him must never die; it must find an imperishable form. The consciousness of this self of mine is so intensely evident to me that it assumes

54. Ibid., "The Religion of An Artist", p. 44.
the character of immortality. I cannot imagine that it ever has been or can be non-existent. In a similar manner all things that are real to me are for myself eternal, and therefore worthy of a language that has a permanent meaning. 55

Tagore appeared to accept the basic premises of evolution and to look forward to the highest of attainments. He glorified man as the chief element of existence, the "evolution which Science talks of is that of Man's universe." 56 Man has sought to attain an inward unity with the divine reality and also an outward unity with all mankind. "His multicellular body is born and it dies. His multi-personal humanity is immortal. In this ideal of unity he realizes the eternal in his life and the boundless in his love." 57 He thought of religion as man's attempts to reach this spiritual unity and be true to it.

Man through the senses, such as the eyes, becomes aware of the physical universe. Tagore said that:

We have also an inner faculty of our own which helps us to find our relationship with the supreme self of man, the universe of personality. This faculty is our luminous imagination, which in its higher stages is special to man. It offers us that vision of wholeness which for the biological necessity of physical survival is superfluous; its purpose is to arouse in

57. Ibid., p. 10.
us the sense of perfection which is our true sense of immortality. For perfection dwells ideally in Man the Eternal, inspiring love for this ideal in the individual, urging him more and more to realize it. 58

Tagore distinguished between the individual man and ideal Man. The individual sought to express the ideal Man by works of art, music, writing, philosophy, service and worship. This is religion, known by its many names. He explained that:

On the surface of our being we have the ever-changing phases of the individual self, but in the depth there dwells the Eternal Spirit of human unity beyond our direct knowledge. --- It inspires in us works that are the expressions of a Universal Spirit; it invokes unexpectedly in the midst of a self-centered life a supreme sacrifice. At its call we dedicate ourselves to the cause of truth and beauty, to unrewarded service of others. 59

Man has, as do the animals, intelligence and power, but unlike animals, man has the ability to develop his consciousness and comprehension. This:

gradually deepens and widens the realization of his immortal being, the perfect, the eternal. It inspires

58. Rabindranath Tagore, The Religion of Man, p. 11.
59. Ibid., pp. 11, 12.
those creations of his that reveal the divinity in him—which is his humanity—in the varied manifestations of truth, goodness, and beauty, in the freedom of activity which is not for his own use but for his ultimate expression.  

Many of the religious songs of simple villagers, such as the Bauls of Bengal, sang of the divinity of man and love to man as their devotion. A God of human personality, Tagore felt, was the only God a man could know how to worship. To the Christian who believes in Jesus Christ as both divine and human, the reason for the humanity of Christ was partly for the purpose of revealing to man the character and personality of the Unsearchable God, who glory and presence would be to man a consuming fire. Thus He became Man, a man in many respects similar to Tagore’s Universal Man or Divine Man—one who was Himself eternal, revealed in human form, in every respect like one of us except that He did not do wrong. He lived an exemplary ideal life so that mankind could know how God expected man to live. Tagore referred to Truth, which man seeks to know, as eternal and understandable only by the Universal Man. Likewise he thinks of man: “The truth of Man is in the heart of eternity; the fact of it being evolved through endless ages.”  

60. Rabindranath Tagore, The Religion of Man, p. 11.
The Isha of our Upanishad, the Super Soul, which permeates all moving things, is the God of this human universe whose mind we share in all our true knowledge, love and service, and whom to reveal in ourselves through renunciation of self is the highest end of life. 

Tagore conceived of man in his upward evolution toward perfection as receiving freedom of movement, freedom to think with the development of the mind and the implanting of the Spirit of man within man. This gives to man his own creative personality. Man has the ability to create because of the surplus of energy and ability to plan and execute beyond what is required for existence. Religion comes to him as he seeks to become aware of his true purpose of being, of his relationship to other beings and other powers than himself. He begins to comprehend the possibility of the Infinite. He finds a moral sense of freedom and responsibility in goodness and truth; he begins spiritually to feel a sense of kindred with other beings to whom he can respond by the free-willed expression of love. Tagore wrote of the "evolution of man's consciousness" and "sought for truth in a perfect harmony with the world of personality." 

Tagore referred to the Atharva Veda in its discussion of Man.

"Who was it that imparted form to man, gave him majesty, movement, manifestation, and character, inspired him with wisdom, music, and dancing? When his body was raised upwards he found also

63. Ibid., p. 29.
the oblique sides and all other direc-
tions in him,—he who is the Person,
the citadel of the infinite being.

Tasmadh Vai Vidvān Purushamidan Brahma
Manyatā "And therefore the wise man
knoweth this person as Brahma."64

The imagination of man makes man "intensely conscious of a
life which we must live which transcend the individual life."65 It
also creates within man:

the guest chambers of priceless value
.to offer hospitality to the World-
spirit of man.66

Man in his "free spirit is godly and alone can claim kinship
with God."67 The Christian thinks of man as the temple of God, a God
who promises by His Holy Spirit to dwell within man (Isaiah 57:15;
1 Corinthians 6:19; 2 Corinthians 6:16).

As did most Hindus, Tagore felt that man with his freedom of
will and imagination might not be reached in a single lifetime. He
said that Man "has the responsibility to outlive his life in order to
live in truth:

And freedom, in its process of creat-
ion, gives rise to perpetual suggest-
ions of something further than its
obvious purpose. For freedom is for
expressing the infinite;—this im-
plies a history of constant regene-
ration, a series of fresh beginnings

64. Rabindranath Tagore, The Religion of Man, p. 31.
65. Ibid., p. 33.
66. Ibid., p. 33.
67. Ibid., p. 33.
and continual challenge to the old
in order to reach a more and more
perfect harmony with some fundamen-
tal ideal of truth. 68

Tagore thought of various civilizations and religions of dif-
ferent times and lands as parts of a whole, like different peaks and
mountains in the same chain with differing elevations, flora and fauna,
but all of the same underlying unity. He referred to Buddha's declara-
tion that he would not seek his own salvation if all men were not saved
and thus felt a unity with all men. So

We all belong to a divine unity,
from which our great-souled men
have their direct inspiration;
they feel it immediately in their
own personality, and proclaim it
in their life, 'I am one with the
Supreme, with the Deathless, with
the Perfect.' 69

Man's longing for an unknown goal, his attempts to preserve
the memories of the past and dreams of the future he held to be because
of an instinctive feeling within man that "in our ideal life we must
touch all men and all times through the manifestation of a truth which
is eternal and universal." 70 In his attempts to pay "homage to the
Man of the everlasting life" man may even give up his essential labor
for the necessities of life, and even life itself. 71 The Christian
cannot but recall in this connection the words of Christ. "Jesus said

68. Rabindranath Tagore, The Religion of Man, p. 34.
69. Ibid.
70. Ibid., p. 35.
71. Ibid.
unto her, 'I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in
Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and
believeth in me, shall never die.' (John 11:25, 26).

Tagore thought of the savage man as seeking to express the
majesty of the ideal Man with his ornaments and embellishment. Un-
satisfied with his present limitations he seeks something beyond him-
self which is able to give him power or worth. He makes himself appear
powerful in order to equate himself or unite himself with a god of
power, usually relentless, unpitying and terrible. Even this Tagore
felt was because Man feels "that he is truly represented in something
which exceeds himself." He begins to realize that he is incomplete;
there is "in himself some meaning yet to be realized. To Tagore this
call for realization is the call of "inner truth which is beyond his
direct knowledge and inner logic." Tagore referred to this as the
concept of Transcendental Man. Seeking to reach this state man dreams.
His dreams are revealed in the varied expressions of science, music,
philosophy, and ethics. These he felt should be regarded as truly
spiritual parts to be coordinated in one great religion of Man, "repre-
senting his ceaseless endeavour to reach the perfect in great thoughts
and deeds and dreams in immortal symbols of art, revealing his aspira-
tions for rising in dignity of being."

Tagore spoke of man building up beliefs in "elaborate reli-
gions" for the purpose of convincing himself that he is something
greater than himself. He spoke of the common tendencies in all these
religious attempts,

72. Rabindranath Tagore, The Religion of Man, p. 36.
73. Ibid.
74. Ibid., p. 37.
in order to know himself truly man in
his religion cultivates the vision of
a being who exceeds him in truth and
with whom also he has kinship. --- In
them men seek their own supreme value,
which they call divine, in some per-
sonality anthropomorphic in character.75

This he felt was a significant advance from purely ritual-
istic or inhuman creeds of outer compulsions, from "cults of powers"
such as the savage comprehended. However, this did not narrow the
 confines of religion. The limited finite proceeds toward the infinite
expressed in an inner perfection, a perfection which cannot be ex-
pressed by simply discussing the relative parts, just as a beautiful
lotus exceeds the constituent parts. To him the Infinite One is in-
finitc love. This Infinite One is not realized by physical possession
in space, but in spiritual unity, which "can only be realized in One's
inner spirit"76. He expressed it as Purushah the Person which is
beyond space. It is in being true, not having truth; in being in
union with the Supreme that man attains reality.

The union of the spirit of man was not to be attained by the
mind. It transcends the mind's limits of consciousness and human
reasoning which operate in the realm of the senses. When by the help
of yoga man is able to comprehend that which is beyond human knowledge
and reasoning:

our inner self is filled with joy,
which indicates that through such

75. Rabindranath Tagore, The Religion of Man, p. 38.
76. Ibid., p. 41.
freedom we come into touch with
the Reality that is an end in it-
self and therefore is bliss.77

Tagore pictured man's religious development as beginning
with the worship of the Infinite as Light when man worshipped the sun
and fire. Then as he became aware of Life in creation he worshipped
it and began to realize Life as a mystery unfolding within himself.
Truth began to be realized by him as it is revealed in Nature. As he
progressed in development spiritually he became impressed deep within
himself that:

'=Raso vai sah' 'The infinite is love
itself' the eternal spirit of joy.
His religion, which is his realization
of the infinite, began its journey
from the impersonal dyaus 'the sky,'
wherein light had its manifestation,
then came to Life, which represented
the force of self-creation in time,
and ended in purushah, the Person, in
whom dwells timeless love. It said
'Tam vedyam purusham vedah,' 'know
him the Person who is to be realized,'
'Yathah maa vaa mrityuh parivyahatih' 'so
that death may not cause you sorrow.'
For this Person is deathless in whom the
individual person has his immortal
truth. Of him it is said 'Esha deva
visvakarma mahatma sadah janyam
hrdaye sannivishatah,' 'this is the
divine being, the world-worker, who is
the Great Soul ever dwelling inherent
in the hearts of all people.'

77. Rabindranath Tagore, The Religion of Man, p. 44.
'Ya étad vidur amritás te bhavanti,'
'Those who realize him, transcend
the limits of mortality,—not in
duration of time, but in perfection
of truth.'

In order for man to enter into such a union with a world-
ensnapping worker man must learn to work for all without any motives
of selfishness. His work is done to help and bless as many as he comes
in contact with, without thought of personal gain or advancement. Posi-
tive goodness and love should motivate every action, and these ideals
can and must be demonstrated on the human level. Truth is to be revealed
in man. Self is to be sublimated into all pervading truth — love itself.
It is not merely done by putting aside all evil thoughts and actions,
but by removing all limits to the expression of truth in love.'

Tagore called this loving living to a sacrifice of self, but
a sacrifice which "ends in an eternal gain, in which the putting out of
the lamplight is no loss because of the all-pervading light of the sun."

Tagore represented all the great religions as arising in a
historical person who demonstrated in his life the ideals of truth,
goodness, and morality. This human demonstration revealed to all men
the way of emancipation.

They came as the messengers of Man
to men of all countries and spoke
of the salvation that could only be
reached by the perfecting of our

78. Rabindranath Tagore, The Religion of Man, p. 42.
79. Ibid., p. 43.
80. Ibid.
relationship with Man the Eternal, Man the Divine. --- Their life and teaching had the deeper implication of a Being who is the infinite in Man, the Father, the Friend, the Lover, whose service must be realized through serving all mankind. For the God in Man depends upon men's service and men's love for his own love's fulfillment.

The orthodox Christian would not misunderstand, if these words were applied to Jesus Christ. At his trial before the Roman Governor, moved by the deep sincerity and goodness revealed in Christ, Pilate presented Christ to the people in words of deep import, "Behold the Man!" (John 19:5). He it was who was foreshadowed by Isaiah as the One who should be called "Wonderful, Counsellor, The Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9:6). And also, "His name shall be called Immanuel, which being interpreted is 'God with us.'" (Isaiah 7:14; Mathew 1:23). He called himself the "Light of the World," "the Son of man," a friend (John 8:12; Matthew 26:64).

He declared himself to be "the way, the truth, the life" (John 14:6). Of him it could be said that he was "Man the Divine," for John 1:1-3 presents him as Creator, before all things, with God, and himself God. One of his closest followers emphasized the keynote of his teaching, "God is love" (1 John 4:8). It has ever been the purpose of God that man should demonstrate his character as revealed in the Ideal Man. That demonstration will reveal to man love, truth,

61. Rabindranath Tagore, The Religion of Man, p. 44.
purity, goodness, and concern for others, made possible by God dwelling with man by His Holy Spirit. The Christian would make a distinction, however, between a God who dwells within as the result of man's free choice and the natural man under control of the power of Evil as men allow the superhuman but not divine Satan and evil angels to control their thoughts and actions. Yet inspite of man's wayward tendencies God promised to implant within man a hatred for evil forces (Genesis 3:15) which operates in man by the agency of God's Holy Spirit and good angels speaking to man's mind. Like Tagore, Christ represented covetousness as the basic diversion from the attainment of the new man within (Colossians 3:10). As man surrenders to divine control he attains freedom from sin, and eventually from death, and lives eternally with God (Revelation 21,22).

Tagore wrote of Vaishvava poets with whose love poems he had become familiar in his youth. He felt that these were writings primarily about

the Supreme Lover, whose touch we experience in all our relations of love, the love of nature's beauty, of the animal, the child, the comrade, the beloved, the love that illuminates our consciousness of reality. They sang of a love that ever flows through numerous obstacles between men and Man the Divine, the eternal relation which has the relationship of mutual dependence for a fulfillment that needs perfect union of individuals and the Universal.82

82. Rabindranath Tagore, The Religion of Man, p. 66.
As men become deafened by self-seeking and the claims of the world they do not hear the call of love. Man may see in Nature the great Architect and Mathematician, but must go beyond the mechanics of the universe to the hall of union, where dwells the Lover in the heart of existence. When a man reaches it he at once realizes that he has come to Truth, to immortality, and he is glad with a gladness which has an end, and yet which has no end.83

As indicated by Dr. V. S. Naravane in Modern Indian Thought, Tagore did not go into details concerning the ultimate destiny of man. He said:

All that I feel about it is from vision and not from knowledge. Frankly, I acknowledge that I cannot satisfactorily answer any questions about evil, or about what happens after death. Nevertheless I am sure that there have come moments in my own experience when my soul has touched the infinite and has become conscious of it through the illumination of joy.85

Tagore was content with an inner peace and illumination which were rooted in truth. To him beauty gave "an eternal assurance of our spiritual relationship to reality, which waits for its perfection in

83. Rabindranath Tagore, The Religion of Man, p. 66.
84. V. S. Naravane, Modern Indian Thought, p. 113.
the response of our love." 86

In commenting of the religion of poet-singers whose songs tell of love for a divine or ideal man, Tagore mentioned that "religion invariably concentrates itself on humanity." 87 He said that

It is for dignity of being that we aspire through the expansion of our consciousness in a great reality of Man to which we belong. We realize it through admiration and love, through hope that soars beyond the actual, beyond our span of life into an endless time where we live the life of all men. 88

The human is the only thing man is capable of understanding. Tagore appeared to agree with the idea that for us the universe exists only as it is comprehended by the knowledge of man, or at least may be known only as far as man's intelligence is capable of apprehending it. Even the infinite One must be understood by human comprehension. One of the poets Tagore translated as saying:

Nothing is greater than the person; he is the supreme, he is the ultimate goal. 89

Tagore then refers to another East Bengal poet who "sings of the Eternal Person within him, coming out and appearing before his eyes." 90

87. Ibid., p. 71.
88. Ibid., p. 71.
89. Ibid., p. 73.
90. Ibid., p. 73.
I have seen the Vision; the vision of my own self, revealing itself, coming out from within me. 91

Tagore did nor believe in that end of man which brings the mind of man to a state of inactivity, to nothingness, or even to a state where eternal joy is all that is experienced, if this experience be simply an inactive resignation. He would have man eternally active even in the perfection of attainment. He wrote:

In India there are those whose endeavour is to merge completely their personal self in an impersonal entity which is without any quality or definition, to reach a condition wherein mind becomes perfectly blank, losing all its activities. Those who claim the right to speak about it say that this is the purest state of consciousness, it is all joy, without any object or content. This is considered to be the ultimate end of Yoga, the cult of union, thus completely to identify one's being with the infinite being who is beyond all thought and words. Such a realization of transcendental consciousness accompanied by a perfect sense of bliss is a time-honoured tradition in our country, carrying in it the positive evidence which cannot be denied by any negative argument of refutation. Without disputing its truth I maintain that it may be valuable as a great psychological experience but all the same it is not religion, --- and man is more perfect as a man than where he vanished in an original indefiniteness. 92

91. Rabindranath Tagore, The Religion of Man, p. 73.
92. Ibid., p. 74.
He regarded the Supreme Being as being both infinite and finite. The finite is his manifestation in man, a manifestation marked by growth and progress toward the perfection or completion that is the infinite, the Supreme Man. Man eventually must by disinterested activity reveal in himself the Supreme Person. 93

Man's existence as a personality cannot be proved in the same way that the material universe is, that is, by sense perceptions. Tagore defines the personality as:

a self-conscious principle of transcendent unity within man which comprehends all the details of fact that are individually his in knowledge and feeling, wish and will and work. 94

This he conceived as having two aspects—a negative one that is the individual separateness, and a positive one continually expanding toward the infinite in increasing knowledge, love and action. 95

Tagore stressed the fact that man does dream of a limitless unattained state. This he felt was unique of mankind—living for the endless future. It is the possibility of what might be in the future that stimulates man's imagination, makes man feel that his outreach is limitless. As he contemplates the future it is in life—with the suggestion of immortality. 96

94. Ibid., p. 75.
95. Ibid., p. 75.
96. Ibid., p. 75.
The present life, governed by desire, is restricted to the physical needs and makes man little different from the animal whose existence is restricted to the present span of time. Faith in a yet-to-be realized perfection takes man to the future, the future of dreams and paradise, of unity with the infinite. As he expressed it:

All great human facts are surrounded by an immense atmosphere of expectation. They are never complete if we leave out from them what might be, what should be, what is not yet proven but profoundly felt, what points toward the immortal.

We may study, may analyze man or music into component parts or notes, but man is more than a sum of parts, just as a musical composition may express much more than simple chords or a series of individual notes. Individual notes may be compounded into frightful noise; man without the underlying creative reality may have through perversion or inattention the impact of a frightful noise, a disharmony instead of the music of the spirit that leads on to perfection.

Tagore believed that from earliest times man has felt a spirit of unity within that could cause man to sacrifice his individuality and in that unity find meaning and freedom beyond the limits of self. From tribal unity in the worship of One he progressed to belief in a universal God. This has been true of all men everywhere and is

98. Ibid., p. 30.
the expression of religion. Tagore defined religion as:

The endeavour of man to cultivate and express those qualities which are inherent in the nature of man, the eternal and to have faith in him. 99

These qualities are not entirely natural, often going directly contrary to the natural physical desires of man. The function of religion is to subordinate the animal nature of man to the true Man. When man's faith is strong, the work of subordination is easier, but may involve sacrifice of even life itself. This true Man or Supreme Man as Tagore called him, may be realized by the imagination, but is not in actuality the creation of the mind. He conceived him as being more real than men, but transcending and permeating each of us. His purpose ever is to direct us to truth in its perfection. Though it may involve suffering or sacrifice, we are led to find joy in cooperation with him. By this realization in "love for him we are made conscious of a great love that radiates from his being, who is Mahatma, the Supreme Spirit." 100

This Supreme Spirit, Tagore felt, lives in the life of the immortal Man. Seeking this life man will not perish, but he who apparently prospers and triumphs over enemies may perish. He suggests that there is a life which is truer for man than their transient physical existence. 101 He stated:

100. Ibid., p. 90.
101. Ibid., p. 90.
Our life gains what is called 'value' in those of its aspects which represent eternal humanity in knowledge, in sympathy, in deeds, in character, and creativeness. And from the beginning of our history we are seeking, often at the cost of everything else, the value for our life and not merely success; in other words, we are trying to realize in ourselves the immortal Man, so that we may die but not perish, this is the meaning of the utterance in the Upanishad: 'tam vedyan purusham veda, yathā ma vō mrityuh pariyyathāṁ' — 'Realize the Person so that thou mayest not suffer from death.'

Because of the strong influence of this yearning men have been led to cast away all fear and greed, defied all the instincts that cling to the brute nature, for the sake of acknowledging and preserving a life which belongs to the Eternal Person.

Man has from earliest times felt that this present existence is not the end, and that behind and beyond this life there exists some great mystery with whom he must remain in perfect relationship. He has felt himself to be at the "threshold of larger life, which is forever giving him a far higher value than a mere continuation of his physical life in the material world." As man becomes aware that he is a part of this present physical world and learns to find meaning and purpose in life in a closer relationship with it, he finds

102. Rabindranath Tagore, The Religion of Man, p. 90
103. ibid., p. 91.
104. ibid., p. 91.
a deeper happiness. He begins to sense:

A profound meaning of our own self at the consciousness of some ideal of perfection, some truth beautiful or majestic which gives us an inner sense of completeness, a heightened sense of our reality.107

This leads men on to a strengthened faith in some ideal of perfection. This ideal of perfection varies according to individual comprehension and awareness, but:

has been based upon a bond of unity running through individuals culminating in a supreme Being who represents the eternal in human personality.106

This awareness produces the revelation of truth that is demonstrated in Man. (The Christian believes that all that can be known about God, the eternal Supreme Being, has been demonstrated in Jesus Christ, the God-man. As Jesus said, "He that hath seen me has seen the Father." John 14:9. The life and character of God who "no man hath seen, nor can see" I Timothy 6:16, in this present body was revealed to men in the divine-human Christ.)

Tagore believed that man's faith in the good, the true, the perfect, the eternal must find expression. Man has found that expression is best given in various mediums which have within themselves a unity, an inner harmony; such as, music.

106. Ibid., p. 91.
Our impulse to give expression to Universal Man produces arts and literature. They in their cadence of lines, colours, movements, words, thoughts, express vastly more than what they appear to be on the surface. They open the windows of our mind to the eternal reality of man.107

Man not only expresses these ideals in the arts, but "in his own behaviour"

he should create a music of expression in his conduct and surroundings which makes him represent the supreme Personality.108

Tagore referred to the Japanese people, with their simple living, their courtesy and conduct, their love of beauty. This representation in their pictures, the social ideals, their expression of the beautiful is unique to their dharma, and to have value, must also "represent the Man of the Everlasting Life."109 Likewise Gautama Buddha began a movement which illuminated art and literature for centuries by inspiring a desire for freedom, "freedom which enables us to realize dharma, the truth of Eternal man." True civilization empowers man to "realize the infinite," "to increase life." This "increase of life realizes the eternal life and yet does not transcend the limits of life's unity, just as the tree increases in size and beauty but remains in balance and unity."110

Tagore came to a gradual belief in the divine as manifest in the human. He felt that the divine essence realized in the hu-

108. ibid., p. 94.
109. ibid., p. 94.
110. ibid., p. 96.
man was both "definite and finite at the same time, the eternal Person manifested in all persons."\textsuperscript{111} He believed that this manifestation of God as Man is the only way in which human beings could know or imagine God, either in this or any other universe. God is "the infinite ideal of Man towards whom men move in their collective growth" and also the One "with whom they seek their union of love as individuals, in whom they find their ideal of father, friend, and beloved."\textsuperscript{112}

Man seeks a goal; be it freedom from want, freedom from fear, freedom from death— all these, or more. Freedom alone is meaningless; it must be freedom from something. Tagore conceived of freedom as more than knowledge, but rather found in it a "perfect harmony of relationship" which can be realized only in being.\textsuperscript{113} Because there is a gulf between the object of knowledge and the knower in which subject cannot become object, union cannot be through knowledge. The reaching of truth is manifest "not through feeling it by our senses or knowing it by our reason, but through the union of perfect sympathy."\textsuperscript{114} It is not by being completely free from worldly amenities and finding in poverty the way, but freedom from the desire for truth and reality by concentrating the mind on the outward being.

The religions of India all teach about mukti, liberation of the soul. The self is constantly maintaining our individuality and "all its activities are engaged in the expression of finite and individual nature." On the other hand:

\textsuperscript{111} Ravidranath Tagore, \textit{The Religion of Man}, p. 102.
\textsuperscript{112} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 102.
\textsuperscript{113} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 106.
\textsuperscript{114} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 106.
In our soul we are conscious of the transcendental truth in us, the Universal, the Supreme Man; and this soul, the spiritual self, has its enjoyment in the renunciation of the individual self for the sake of the supreme soul.\(^{117}\)

This renunciation is spoken of as the dedication of the self to high ideals, rather than simply self-denial or negation. It is achieved in harmony with the infinite man, the finding of self in the all. It is "our freedom in truth" which seeks the way from the unreal to reality, to joy forever.\(^{116}\)

Tagore brought out how even simple villagers could comprehend freedom from the "isolation of self" by coming into harmony with the All. Their poets, sang of unity, such as the unity of man’s two minds. Truth is to be found in unity and muki is attained by realization of unity:

The texts of our daily worship and meditation are for training our mind to overcome the barrier of separateness from the rest of existence and to realize Advaitam, the Supreme Unity which is anantam, infinitude.\(^{117}\)

This is a philosophical training, seeking to help man look beyond the "world of appearances" to an "emancipation in the inner truth of all things where the Many reveal the One."\(^{118}\) Without this

\(^{117}\) Rabindranath Tagore, *The Religion of Man*, p. 111.
search for unity the natural, social and political worlds seem a meaningless confusion of distorted facts, noise instead of divine harmony. Some would seek for freedom in non-existence, but Tagore believed that existence is not in itself evil; it is wrong to try to exist in a world of broken truths. Some would, like the village poets of Bengal, believe in an existence that could never end because of the mutual enjoyment, the interrelationship between the finite and Infinite. The poet sang to his God:

It goes on blossoming for ages,
the soul lotus, in which I am bound,
as well as thou, without escape.
There is no end to the opening of
its petals, and the honey in it has
so much sweetness that thou, like
an enchanted bee, canst never desert it,
and therefore thou art bound, and I am,
and mukti is nowhere.\textsuperscript{119}

Tagore said that religion in India is only a means to an end, a transcendent outreach toward the end of "perfect liberation of the individual in the universal spirit across the futherest reach-erest reaches of humanity itself."\textsuperscript{120} He felt that India was aspiring to a realization which is:

\begin{quote}
Beyond all limits of personality,
divested of all moral or aesthetic distinctions; it is the pure consciousness of Being, the ultimate reality, which has an infinite illumination of bliss.\textsuperscript{121}
\end{quote}

\begin{thebibliography}{100}
\bibitem{119} Rabindranath Tagore, \textit{The Religion of Man}, pp. 117,118.
\bibitem{120} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 119.
\bibitem{121} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 120.
\end{thebibliography}
Tagore referred to the attitude in which ancient India's teachers referred to the soul of man. They considered it as very important; indeed:

They saw no end to its dignity, which found its consummation in Brahma himself. Any limited view of man would therefore be an incomplete view. He could not reach his finality as a mere Citizen or Patriot, for neither City nor Country, nor the bubble called the world could contain his eternal soul.

The goal of life was expected to be reached in the final stage of life after education, work, and family life were largely ended and man waited for the freedom that comes through death. The soul has progressed through childhood and adult life. Now in the last stage desire weakens as the body begins to fail. Then:

Enriched with its experiences, the soul now leaves the narrower life for the universal life, to which it dedicates its accumulated wisdom and itself enters into relations with the Life Eternal, so that finally the decaying body has come to the very end of its tether, the soul views its breaking away quite simply and without regret, in the expectation of its own entry into the infinite.

From individual body to community, from community to universe, from universe to infinity, this is the soul's normal progress.\textsuperscript{123}

Tagore referred to the time of death (of the one who has prepared for it) as the day when "the emancipated soul steps out of all bonds to face the Supreme Soul."\textsuperscript{124} He spoke also of the "ultimate modulation" of the individual desires "in the Supreme."\textsuperscript{125} However, he felt that if this is the real view of India, then everything else should be subordinated to the one goal of becoming free from personality, which hinders and binds man, preventing union with the Supreme. Since men are not prepared to be this boldly self-less, he asked, "What then is the goal?" His answer makes clear that he was not an absolute monist at heart. He said:

But such an ideal of the utter extinction of the individual separateness has not universal sanction in India. There are many of us whose prayer is for dualism, so that for them the bond of devotion with God may continue forever. For them religion is a truth which is ultimate and they refuse to envy those who are ready to sail for the further shore of existence across humanity. They know that human imperfection is the cause of our sorrow, but there is a fulfillment in love within the

\textsuperscript{123} Habindranath Tagore, \textit{The Religion of Man}, pp. 123,124.  
\textsuperscript{124} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 123.  
\textsuperscript{125} \textit{Ibid.}
These words indicate that Tagore at least hoped for a *bhakti* relationship of ceaseless approaching to God, in which man's personality survives to wonder and adore. Such is close to the Christian concept held by some of an increasing nearness and devotion to God in heaven, beyond death after the resurrection to a new life by the power of God. Tagore further expressed a similar thought in his concluding chapter. He referred to the belief of some that Vedanta meant that:

> Brahman is the absolute Truth, the impersonal It, in which there can be no distinctions of this and that, the good and the evil, the beautiful and its opposite, having no other quality except its ineffable blissfulness in the eternal solitude of its own consciousness, utterly devoid of all things and all thoughts.\(^{127}\)

This concept was not Tagore's. To him God was Truth, Goodness, Beauty. To him the end was joy shared, experienced, eternal. His was a God who is both human and divine, whose expression to man has ever been in human character, who can be worshipped, conversed with, loved—a friend. He did not deny the possibility that some may have attained a state of *samādhi* by *yoga*, transcending the limits of personality in an absolute union with the All-Soul. At the same time as he stated this belief he asserted his own:

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let us at the same time have faith in the testimony of others who have felt a profound love, which is the intense feeling of union for a Being who comprehends in himself all things that are human in knowledge, will and action. And he is God who is not merely a sum total of facts, but the goal that lies immensely beyond all that is comprised in the past and the present.128

His poems, such as *Gitanjali*, Tagore's real belief shines forth. It is apparent that he looked for a personal communion with a Personal God. For example:

In this laborious world of thine, tumultuous with toil and struggle, among hurrying crowds, shall I stand before thee face to face.
And when my work shall be done in this world, O King of kings,
Alone and speechless shall I stand before Thee face to face. (Song No. 77)129

All that I am, that I have, that I hope and all my love have ever flowed toward thee in depth of secrecy.
One final glance from thine eyes and my life will be ever thine own.
The flowers have been woven and the garland is prepared for the bridegroom.
After the wedding the birds shall leave her home and meet her lord alone in the solitude of night. (Song No. 91)130

130. Ibid., p. 84.
In his *Gitanjali* Tagore frequently referred to life and death. Night, darkness, emptiness, sleep are associated with death. Joy, light, awakening, morning, freedom are associated with true life. He clearly believed in life beyond this, as shown by the following verses:

Thou hast made me endless, such is thy pleasure. This frail vessel thou emptiest again and again and fillest it ever with fresh life. (Song No. 1)\(^1\)

If the day is done, if birds sing no more, if the wind has flagged tired, then draw the veil of darkness thick upon me, even as thou hast wrapt the earth with the coverlet of sleep and tenderly closed the petals of the drooping lotus at dusk. From the traveller, whose sack of provisions is empty before the voyage is ended, whose garment is torn and dust-laden, whose strength is exhausted, remove shame and poverty and renew his life like a flower under the cover of thy kindly night. (Song No. 24)\(^2\)

In the night of weariness let me give myself up to sleep without struggle, resting my trust upon thee. ... It is thou who drawest the veil of night upon the tired eyes of the day to renew its sight in a fresher gladness of awakening. (Song No. 25)\(^3\)

Ah, my sleep, precious sleep, which only waits for his touch to vanish, Ah, my closed eyes that would open their lids only to the light of his smile when he stands before me like a dream emerging from darkness of sleep.

\(^1\) Rabindranath Tagore, *Gitanjali*, p. 1.
\(^2\) Ibid., pp. 20, 21.
\(^3\) Ibid., p. 20.
Let him appear before my sight as the first of all lights and all forms. The first thrill of joy to my awakened soul let it come from his glance. And let my return to myself be immediate return to him. (Song No. 47) 134

Even so in death the same unknown will appear as ever known to me. And because I love this life, I know I shall love death as well.

The child cries out when from the right breast the mother takes it away, in the very next moment to find in the left one its consolation. (Song No. 95) 135

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135. Ibid., p. 87.