Chapter IV

Art and Thought of Rabindranath Tagore

Aesthetic Approach of Rabindra Nath Tagore:

The word 'Aesthetic' is derived from the Greek word Aesthetic, (sense-perception) but it traditionally regarded as a branch of philosophy concerned with the understanding of beauty and its manifestation in art and nature. There developed a tendency in 20th Century to treat it as an independent Science concerned with investigating the phenomena of arts and their place in human life. In the 20th Century, not only Western people but also their Oriental Indian counterparts, all of a sudden in the complexity of nationalism of modern Society began to appreciate that art of beauty.

Indian thinkers as Rabindranath Tagore and Abanindranath Nath Tagore of Bengal-renaissance group, Aurobindo Ghosh and Dr. Ananada Coomaraswamy, who in contact with the foreign people on their visit to particular country tried to widen the understanding through the delicacy of beauty of the Oriental art. For a brief history of aesthetical studies, divide the 20th Century into three periods, as the word 'aesthetic' changed in its perspective during three different periods.

1. The Prewar concepts of aesthetics.

2. Aesthetical studies.

3. Post war aesthetical studies.

I. In the first period, aesthetics was treated as the study of one art or the other and its activity and theory. This was the period when aesthetic in India was treated as a theory of specially painting, sculpture, temple-architecture and poetry with the pioneer-works of many scholars. In the Theory of aesthetics, it used to be known as nationalist art.
II. During the second stage of its developments the word ‘Aesthetic’ was not only taken as the art of painting, sculpture and architecture but it began to be treated as the spiritual activity of the subject. As social structure changed into events after events, aesthetic in arts depicted events, conscious and unconscious physiological process, which supported the Vedantic aesthetics of India and its parallel reflections in Sanskrit literature of the classical period. The word Śīlpa and Kalā, vocational and avocational art began to be enumerated in the sense of aesthetic. Philosophically, the word Secīdaanand is reproduced with the three word-cum-formula by Devendranath (father of Rabindranath Tagore) that is Satyam, Sīhvium, and Sundaram.\[1\]

Tagore’s love for aesthetic made him to create new direction in his through-system. His aesthetic is based on the nature as well as on the dignity of man.

To understand this very varied response must try to comprehend Tagore’s personality to a much greater extent are normally needs to with an artist. This aesthetics and about his own paintings and his total relationship to Indian and western artistic traditions, in additions and the significance of his chosen amateur status he has very deep vision in the field of aesthetics.\[2\]

Aesthetic theory of Tagore is very well illustrated in his illuminating appreciation of Balmiki and Kalidas. In the vast epic of Balmiki, Tagore is the essential “humanness” or rasa informing the whole work. Rama is a great hero for Tagore not because he is a god came to earth for the redress of suffering humanity, but because he embodies in himself the highest human values. The Kumara sambhava of Kalidasa assumes new significance as the saga of an ideal Indian housewife, whose beauty of heart outshines her beauty of person; the former alone leading to the cherished goal while the latter is foredoomed to failure despite the assistance of the god of physical love. Tagore thus bridges

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the gulf between the life-affirming and life-denying philosophies of ancient India, the one rankly materialistic and the other severely monastical. Tagore has strikingly shown how the aesthetic life of man is embedded in his total life, and how the internal standard is the best of the many standards by which it may be judged, and how the internal standards, when fully cultivated, helps in breaking down the walls between the morally good and the beautiful and the true.

Tagore, who inherited the best in ancient Sanskrit classics and later Bengali Vaisnaviten poetic tradition, tried to give aesthetics, which was at once Indian and universal. He was something of a revolutionary in his own way when he gave a new meaning altogether to the school-men’s concepts of Rasa and AlanKara and invested them with new significance. “Like ethics, aesthetics aim chiefly at influencing life,” said Tagore. A creative writer that Tagore was, he could illustrate his points with homely and poetic metaphors; and the influence of his aesthetic is felt even in the works of great poet like Keemumpa in other language (like Kannada) in remote provinces like Karnataka.³

Tagore’s aesthetic vision was of the beautiful rather than of the sublime. Tagore certainly conceives aesthetic emotion as a form of knowledge—in some ways a more satisfactory form of knowledge than perception thought, for aesthetic experience deepens the awareness of specific objects to which it refers, and, more generally, heightens the awareness of all reality. ‘Everything around is real, yet we do not see reality in its immediacy, in its purity. It is only in artistic creation that reality comes before our consciousness unveiled, and we see it face to face’. The identity of truth and beauty is a favourite theme with Tagore, and he is fond of quoting Keats well known line to that effect.

Tagore’s way of looking at aesthetic emotion is also in contrast with traditional Indian views on the subject. It may be recalled that for the rasavadin the kinship of aesthetic experience with mystical experience did not imply that

the former was accredited as a kind of knowledge, as the latter undoubtedly was. Tagore’s view of aesthetic emotion are very close to European scholastic views. In particular, the eminent modern representative of scholastic aesthetic, Jacques Maritain, insists like Tagore that there is such a thing as ‘Poetical knowledge, that it is ‘knowledge through emotion, and that ‘when we participate in the poet’s emotion we do not participate in his feelings but in his spiritualized and international emotion, in his emotion which is can see by his poetry.’

His basic attitude is aesthetic because he sees man in his’ surplus; i.e. in his creative impulse to move beyond what is immediately given and express himself in newer and newer fashions. The entire Tagorean aesthetic can therefore be called a search for truth from the perspective of art. Tagore’s view of art with a focus on the relation between human personality and aesthetic truth. Tagore views this relation basically from an aesthetic point of view. The aesthetic apprehension of reality forms the core of almost all his reflections on man and his world. V.S. Naravane has rightly pointed out; Tagore does not introduce aesthetic into his world view in order to complete or systematise his ideas. He allows his deepest thoughts on metaphysical by his aesthetic approach, and even his specific aesthetic opinions. Aesthetic is this very foundation of his philosophy, not its coping stone.

According to Tagore, the truth of this kind of awareness (aesthetic awareness) has an integral character. It emerges from an in between relational realm, of man and his world; it is revealed through an integration of man’s being with the world. He is basically an artist. The truth of an aesthetic experience consists in an authentic presentation of the art-object, revealing a unity or harmony among its different co-ordinates within the field of the artist’s and/or the beholder’s perception. Rabindranath Tagore says when we talk of aesthetic in relation to arts we must know that it is not about beauty in its

ordinary meaning but in that deeper meaning which a poet has expressed in his utterance: truth is beauty, beauty truth. An artist may paint a picture of a decrepit person not pleasing to the eye, and yet we call it perfect when we become deeply conscious of its reality.⁶

The aesthetic perception of a harmonious whole in an art-object is based upon aesthetic internationality. For Tagore, 'truth', 'beauty' and 'harmony' are interchangeable terms for the phenomena which occur in relation to the personal man. Aesthetic truth is basically communicable. Tagore's concept of true human becoming. The Universality of aesthetic judgments consists in a revelation of the uniqueness of man. As Tagore contended, our arts and literature represent the creative activity which is fundamental in man.⁷

The artist's personality, which is central to his work and imparts it solidity and permanence, is what differentiates art from science. Tagore repeatedly avers that it is personality of man that constitutes the real world and forms the centrifugal force of art. Tagore opines that as perfect truth can only be known through personality, so the artist is basically concerned with the world of personality. It is the realization of this reality, which gives birth to all arts and creative activities.⁸

When Rabindranath Tagore met Einstein, the latter is reported to have said—"I am more spiritual than you are". Aesthetic experience is spiritual experience in a sense that soul enjoys it, but spiritual is different than the enjoyment of soul in beautiful. No only scientist, any one who creates, physically mentally, spiritually anything which can be shared among human being as a experience of joy that can be categories as aesthetic experience. Because it generates generality.⁹ In this way we can say that Tagore indubitably offers us a fairly profound and elaborate aesthetic theory, though, he does not

⁶ Sisir Kumar Das: The English Writing of Rabindranath Tagore, Vol. 3, Sahitya Akademi New Delhi, p. 582.
write about art and aesthetic theory. Much of the finest of the Indian and Western aesthetics has been retouched and modernised by him, and this he has concept of man's surplus emotions as the source of art, he evinces affinity with the inimitable English *Ramanli* (poet) *William Wordsworth*. His ideas are a landmark in the history of aesthetics. This is because; Tagore’s aesthetic philosophy assimilates the best of Indian Western aesthetics.

**Transition from Child Art to Mature Art:**

The new methods of human evaluation and development of psychology have brought so many new issues before us. Child art is also one of such new developments. Only a few decades back this word came into existence. First of all Herbert Spencer, in his book on education, written between 1854-59 recognised the child as an artist, which was a revolutionary statement.¹⁰

It is said that Rabindranath’s paintings belong to child work. As if you give a pen or pencil and a sketchbook to a child, he will draw by rubbing the pencil on the sketchbook and produce any shape or form without any consciousness. This production will define child art. Rabindranath also has no pre-idea about his pictures, methods and basic knowledge of drawing and paintings. He gradually learnt that is enough to him that the colours, pen, pencil that he uses, create paintings. He does not know what he creates. He says that whenever he intended to create something, he gathered some painting materials used and produced something. And this something (Painting) is to express, not to explain. It means, his condition is like a child artist who produces something but is unable to explain it. But his art is not child like because the artist knows that his activity is for any picture.¹¹

Rabindranath Tagore says about his art how he started painting in his life when he watched his nephew Abanindranath Tagore’s activities of arts; encouraged him to draw some pictures on paper. The fountainhead of Tagore’s

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inspiration whether in poetry or in painting or in music or in any of the others arts, was the family environment in which he had been brought up. One of his elder brothers to whom he was mostly indebted for his artistic life, Jyotirindranath Tagore, was not only a distinguished writer but also a good painter as well. Two of his nephews, Gaganendranath Tagore and Abanindranath Tagore, became famous as painters. Like literature and music, the art of painting was also cultivated in the family, and Rabindranath developed a deep love for it, from his childhood.

It is also interesting to note how he started his career as a painter. As a conscious and conscientious artist of words, he always took pains to change and correct his first draft, sometimes considerably. The erasures and marks of corrections naturally appeared displeasing to sight and he tried to remove this displeasing look of the corrected manuscript by adding lines and curves to his marking turning them into beautiful patterns. Gradually, the beauty of these patterns began to attract him and to create in him a desire to draw even outside his manuscript.\(^\text{12}\)

Various modes of signatures adopted by Rabindranath in his paintings are a useful clue to their chronology. The process adopted by him was “First there is the hint of a line, then the lines become a form. The more pronounced the form becomes, the clearer becomes the picture in his conception. This creation of form is a source of endless wonders”. It is significant that when he began to paint, he did not start by following traditional mannerisms. There is only one head by him where seemingly he tried to delineate facial features in stylised outline like Ajanta. When he met the Austrian pioneer of child art, Franz Cizek, at Vienna in 1921 during his fifth tour to Europe. In his famous Juvenile Art Class which Cizek had established in 1897, Rabindranath must have seen children freely using paint and brush and must have felt that lack of skill and training was no handicap for expressing oneself through colours and

shapes. The common elements in both of them to their approach to the education of children and the role of art in it, connote escape attention.\(^{13}\)

Tagore’s case was completely different. He grew into a painter without any formal or academic training. His paintings are, absolutely his own, and quite inimitable technically or otherwise. It will be unwise, to look for any direct influence of any European painter or of any modern school of art on his paintings. Although we find their affinity with the works of some contemporary German painters like Munch, Marx and Paul Klee. Tagore’s is, of course, not a unique case of a great poet being at the same time a painter also. Lin-Yu-Tang has said: “Poetry and painting come from the same human spirit, and it is natural that the spirit and inner technique of both should be the same. The painter shows the same impression, the same method of suggestion, the same emphasis on an indefinable atmosphere, the same fantastic union with nature, which characterise Chinese poetry. For the poetic mood and picturesque moment are often the same, and the artist’s mind which can seize the one and give it form in poetry, can also, with a little cultivation, express the other in painting”. This is true of the genius of Rabindranath Tagore, Victor Hugo, Michelangelo, and several other versatile artists.

One may infer that painting was a child’s play with Tagore, that it did not involve any discipline or hard work on his part, that he painted his pictures easily without effort. It is true, it all started as a play, but soon Tagore grew serious about it and ceaselessly toiled to develop his technique. It is said wrongly that he suddenly became a great painter. He continued his practice in his own way very silently and seriously for about 30 years before even his closest friends came to know about it. He was very shy and hesitant about showing them to anybody.\(^{14}\)

\(^{13}\) Ratan Parimoo: Rabindra Nath Tagore: Collection of Essays, Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi, 1980, pp.28, 34, 35.

After that for years later Mukul Dey states that Rabindranath accompanied him to the Ramgarh hills, and on this visit also, Rabindranath Tagore made sketches of his daughter in law and of the artist himself. Later, in 1920 when an art school had been opened at Santiniketan, Mukul Dey states that Rabindranath inaugurated a competition of paintings, himself contributing pictures and becoming one of the judges of the competition. These pictures were his sole attempts at painting and, as the movement started by his nephew Abanindranath developed it, after some time it was one of the greatest regrets of his life that he had not educated his hands or eyes or legs into doing things artistically.\(^\text{15}\)

Tagore’s pictures are not any interpretation of ideas or representation of facts; yet they convey a message and a mood unalteringly. Without a formal training in painting, without submitting himself to the discipline of tradition, Tagore has emerged as a painter of great significance and value.\(^\text{16}\) Tagore says about his work: “People often ask me about the meaning of my pictures I remain silent even as my pictures are it is for them to express and not to explain...”\(^\text{17}\)

Tagore’s paintings are meaningless. He insisted that he took to painting, as he had earlier taken to song and music, without the benefit of any formal training and force of some inner urge for self-expression. “My pictures” he wrote in an introduction to the first exhibition of his paintings “are my verifications in lines if, by chance, they are entitled to claim recognition, it must primarily be for some rhythmic significance of form which is ultimate and not for any interpretation of an idea or representation of facts”. Elsewhere, Tagore had referred to the sheer exuberance of delight in existence and relent

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\(^\text{17}\) http://www.hinduonnet.com/thehindu/mp/2005/01/03/stories/2005010301750400.htm

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less promptings of a personality "beyond ego" that lie behind his verses and pictures.18

The extraordinary skill of a professional artist like Picasso is bound to enter his work even when he becomes a child. But as, in the case of Tagore, the technical skill had not been acquired before he began to paint, the resemblance to the state of mind of a child is far more obvious. It is this comparison with the impulses of a child painters be significant, to any extent the painting of Rabindranath Tagore may be called a sophisticated child art, much more accurately than similar work of the many advanced artists who have surrendered themselves to the methods of child art.

The second child hood of Rabindranath Nath Tagore could not prolong into adult hood without damage. As long as he plumbed the inner depths with a naïve wonder, and as long as he was devoted to the passionate ends of the third eye rescuing phantoms and shaping elements how ever fully but creatively he remained an honest child artist there was no question of trying to become a great painter, which he could not be. The compulsion was to be creative for the sheer delight of making gestures with the kinetic hand and perhaps of achieving the catharsis of erotic pleasures. As soon as he lasted the fruit of the tree of self-conscious knowledge he had began to embarrass himself with pre-occupations with natural forms. The truth must have downed on him that he lacked the skill of a great painter. So he struggles to acquire all the rudiments of technique nearly two thousand pictures of poor craftsmanship, which lack the painting quality of the fantasies of his innocent's child hood phase of expression.19

His drawings and paintings mostly in small sizes show that certain things can, perhaps, be better expressed in the visual language than in words, of which he was no doubt a master. He never faced the hindrance that formal

training can sometimes bring in the way of freedom and vitality of
imagination.20

"Tagore's work has often been explained by giving the analogy of
Child art. Though this point will be discussed again later, it may be noted here
that a careful analysis of Tagore's evolution will reveal that Mulk Raj
Anand's theory characterizing it is from "scribble to expression", parallel to as
happens in Child art, does not quite fit in with the actual course of his
development as a painter. Tagore brings out imaged while scrabbling, the
doodles the also delineate at the same time, whereas the child has to grow in
age (from 3 year old to 5 year old) to be able to pass from the scribbling stage
to image making stage. That kind of growth does not take place in Tagore.21

In 1986 one could hear an even fainter echo of Coomaraswamy,
confused by the intervening movement towards premeditated 'Naive' art.
Critics described Tagore's work as 'naïve and almost childlike Picasso had
painted a lot of child art late in his life, it was essentially cerebral painting. But
Tagore as a painter had a pristine quality about him- something unpredicted in
the history of art.'

Mulk Raj Anand's efforts to establish Tagore as a child-artist through
comparison with the work of Bombay children were not convincing, but his
view of Tagore's attitude had the merit of greater sensitivity than that of most
others. 'It is likely that he brought all his mature personality with him at the
time of his surrender to painting; he tried as far as possible to take off peel after
peel of the onion and become innocent.' Parimoo's conclusion, though based
on a study of possible primitive art inspiration in Tagore's painting which is
not wholly convincing either, still seems the most sensible one: 'It is only out
of inhibitions that some critics continue to call him a child-artist'.22

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21 Ratan Parimoo: *Rabindra Nath Tagore: Collection of Essays*, Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi, 1980,
p.38.
He is already an old man, confident and mature, with fully developed all around sensibilities. Moreover, while child's scribbling is mere recording of motor act and exclusively a game of movement, Rabindranath's scribbling is accompanied by the exercising of the unconscious and is directed towards giving concrete forms to images. In fact image-making seems to be the whole basis of his painting from the beginning to the end. When child begins to draw images they are always schematic and based on a schema peculiar to children of that age and mental limitations.

However, one similarity with child art must be pointed out: that just as by the time a child grows in to a teenager his picture-making begin to be more naturalistic, in Tagore's paintings similar difference can be observed between his earlier work which has a similar flat pattern quality and the letter work, which is more painterly, where the images are built in terms of colour masses and conceived in space.²³

So Tagore's paintings have not pre-conception similar with child art. Because a Child has no possible intellect and awareness about the world while Tagore had thousands memories in his mind. He produced figures more purely clearly rather than a Child. In the last we can say that Tagore's pictures are "child like, but not childish.

**Unconscious as the Source of his Paintings:**

Rabindranath's unconscious approach about painting is his major and unique quality. He never produced pictures pre-idea and consciousness. It was no doubt fostered by much of Rabindranath's early writing which appeared to attribute his art to the workings of his unconscious mind. 'The imaginative pictures of the poet accumulated around him like a dancing multitude, unrecognised by his reason', and said the Comtesse de Noailles. While Henri Bidou wrote that 'it was simply the hand itself animated by its own elemental

spirit, the hand which has inscribed so many verses and in which rhythm is already inherent, which, without consulting the poet, produced from the immense number of possibilities, the one predestined design’.

Professor Sarkar had missed Tagore’s irony. Unfortunately Archer did too. In his wide-ranging essay on Tagore’s painting he attempted conclusively to locate the prime source of Tagore’s painting—like much of that by Klee, Munch and Picasso—in the unconscious. This led him to dismiss most of Rabindranath’s work after 1930 as a failure, because he believed it was promoted by his conscious urge to paint, unsupported by technical competence to do so. ‘His art is incontestably modern’, Archer wrote. ‘In intimate essentials it presupposes [my emphasis] the modern theory of the unconscious, the revolutionary ideas of Freud and that re-evaluation of reason which has followed the discoveries of psychoanalysis’.

‘Archer released in his painting the primal forces of the unconscious...Tagore’s zest for painting left him gradually; as he became more and more a conscious artist his hand ceased to move automatically and his painting became less and less “Problem picture”. As soon as he tasted the fruit of the tree of self conscious knowledge, he began to embarrass himself with pre-occupations with natural forms. The truth must have dawned on him that he lacked the skill of a great painter; wrote Mulk Raj Anand.

There can be no question at all that Tagore’s art began as an unconscious process, but we can be almost as certain too that it very quickly became a collaboration between the conscious and unconscious, like that of most worthwhile artists. Many of the works ‘have an air of being done on the spur of the moment—and often were’, said a western critic. This seems to catch Tagore’s peculiar fusion of mental preparation with physical spontaneity.

Tagore’s own statements about the role of his conscious mind in his working methods are clear, at least after 1930. He told one of his close associates, Ranee Chanda, that he would often pour ink over an initial image
because it seemed too facile, and then try to dig it out with new depth and mystery. In ‘My Pictures’ we find him writing of his own reactions to his work: ‘I interests me deeply to watch how lines find their life and character, as their connections with each other develop in various cadences and how they begin to speak in gesticulations’.

Why, did Archer choose to attribute all Tagore’s best work to the workings of the unconscious? Subaramanyan identified four reasons. First, there was the tendency of the time (both when Archer’s opinions were being formed and when Tagore was painting) to look for all serious art in the promptings of the unconscious. Secondly, such a theory enabled Archer and others to overlook Tagore’s technical limitations. Thirdly, some of Tagore’s own comments support Archer’s view. Lastly, Archer disapproved ‘of the sense of euphoria or childish delight that praise from European art critics in France, Germany, England, and Russia drove the poet into’.  

Tagore says, that the consciousness of the Real within me seeks for its own corroboration the touch of the Real outside me. When it faith the self in me is depressed. When our surrounding is monotonous and insignificant, having no emotional reaction upon our minds, we became vague to our selves. For we are like pictures whose reality is helped by the background if it is sympathetic. According to the stages of our consciousness we have more or less been able to identify ourselves with this world, if not as a whole at least in fragments; and our enjoyment dwells in that where in we feel ourselves thus united. In art we express the delight of the unity by which this world realizes as humanly significant to us.

It is an interesting situation that before the process of automatism and tapping the unconscious source of pictorial imagery could influence American artist in a big way during the 1940’s after their invention in Europe earlier, Rabindranath had by the end of 1920,s made this process as the gateway

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through which he made his creative urges to out flow. Especially the work of such American painters could be noted as that of Arshille Gorky (died 1948) and Jackson Pollock (died 1956). Pollock around 1940 has created works which on unconscious through automatism, rather than depend entirely on the natural rhythmic quality of the motor activity. The fish like mouths, bodies, and monstrous eyes of the shapes in these works, plate 20, are quite parallel to Rabindranath’s painting in plate 19. In her article Dr. Karamrish explains how Klee and Kandensky were creating ‘new forms and colour harmonies absolutely independent of natural forms and answering to their own emotional need; And we meet once more a direct foretaste the kind of art which only six years later Rabindranath himself was to start to practice.

During his visits to Italy, France, Germany and England. No notes have been published to show exactly what pictures he saw, but the methods of three artists are so relevant to his own kind of painting that he had made some general contact with their work. The first artist is Klee, and in his work, there appear two of Tagore’s most salient tenets. ‘Klee is a type of personality whose mental functions are habitually based on feelings and whose relation to the perceptions, which ensue is self contained, introspective, and subjective. He creates symbols, as Klee once said, to reassure his mind. It is the typical form of musical expression, and that is why it came so easily to Klee.

It is for the same reason that Rabindranath’s own work came later to parallel Klee’s art, for Rabindranath was a musician and their attitude to forms was equally close. Forms, in Klee’s view, could not be expected to duplicate nature, for the very act of creation caused them to be reborn. But one point was essential. Both artists concede a purely formal character to shapes and lines, yet both acknowledge that however ‘abstract’ a form may be, it also possesses realistic association. Intellectual awareness or recognition is liable to occur and the act of spontaneous growth is to the extent defected. In such a process the picture came first, the subject later, the little last of all, and thus, for the third time there is a remarkable coincidence in the methods of the two artists. For
Klee, the little was at best an approximation to the subject, a comment on one of its aspects, a parallel in words to its prevailing mood or even a mere label serving by some starting quality of phrasing to suggest the original.

In a similar way Rabindranath's pictures were given titles long after they were finished. For some years none of his pictures had titles at all. Experiment of this kind so fascinated Rabindranath that he rapidly discarded erasures as a starting point and allowed himself an even freer range of invention. For several months he was content to use a fountain pen, and in 1929 began to exploit a variety of coloured ink. When he began to compose more easily and freely and while his drawings continued to originate in a willing surrender to the unconscious, he now allowed more rational considerations to have at least partial play. In one erasure, for example a number of small triangles and projections have been ultimately continued to suggest a figure with a receding forehead. The earliest stages of such a composition must certainly have been unconscious, but to find projection may well have been deliberate. This intervention by the conscious or semi-conscious now became a part of the creative process. It is necessary to notice that the chief 'source' of his art is the unconscious. Because the work's, he painted a very large number of pictures, is very miscellaneous; but it focussed attention on hitherto unexplored of art, especially the unconscious.

**Rhythm As The Essence of his Approach to Art:**

Rhythm is the movement generated and regulated by harmonious restriction. This is the creative force in the hand of the artist. Rhythm had been guiding all his inner works-composing poems, singing songs and painting pictures. But news from a newspaper even of some tragic happening is still born. Some news may be a mere commonplace in the obscurity of a

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26 *Thoughts from Rabindranath Tagore*: Macmillan and Co ltd, St Martin's Street, London, 1929, p.173.
journal, but give it a proper rhythm and it will never cease to shine.27
Rabindranath’s images are born of a powerful imagination and a sense of
rhythm that characterises the Indian and Persian decorative art expressions.
This is a kind of spirituality in his forms of men, women, birds, animals and
trees and even inanimate objects. The evocative quality of his works seems to
grow more silently immerse oneself in his dream images.28 He would give a
form, and from a form this quality have build up a whole painting with balance
and rhythm as their strong points.29 As Tagore himself explained: “From my
childhood I think I had an inborn sense of rhythm. The only training, which I
had from my young days; was the training in rhythm, the rhythm in thought, the
rhythm in sound. I had come to know that rhythm gives reality to that which is
desultory, which is insignificant in itself. And, there fore, when the scratches in
my manuscript cried like sinners, for salvation and assailed my eye, with the
ugliness of their irrelevance, I often took more time in rescuring them into a
merciful finality of rhythm”...30

He encouraged in his rhythmic futility by being offered moral and
material incentives for its cultivation. Man is eager that his feelings 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
the character of immortality: He cannot imagine that it ever has been or can be
non-existent.

It is the magic of mathematics, the rhythm, which is in the heart of all
creation, which moves in the atom and, in its different measures, fashions gold
and lead, the rose and the thorn, the sun and the planets. These are the dance-
steps of numbers in the arena of time and space, which weave the Maya, the
patterns of appearance, the incessant flow of change, that ever is and is not. It is

27 S.R. Bakshi: Rabindranath Tagore and the Challenges of the Today, Om Publication, New Delhi, 2001, p.582.
the rhythm that churns up images from the vague and makes tangible what is elusive. This is Maya. This is the art in creation, and art in literature, which is the magic of rhythm. We believe any fact to be true because of a harmony, a rhythm reason, the process of which is analysable by the logic of mathematics, but not its results in me, just as we can count the notes but cannot accent for the music. The mystery is that I am convinced, and this also belongs to the maya of creation, whose one important, indispensable factor is this self-conscious personality that I represent. I believe it is also a self-conscious personality, which has its eternal harmony with mine.\textsuperscript{31} Introducing his pictures, Rabindranath wrote, “One thing which is common to all arts is the principle of rhythm which transforms inert materials into living creatures. My instinct for it no carries of information, and my training in its use led me to know that lines and colours in art are no carries on information; they seek their rhythmic incarnation in pictures”.\textsuperscript{32} In his writings on art Tagore talks of the principle of rhythm as being that which gave his works significance. He also opposes the need for representation... “...lines and colours in art are no carriers of information; they seek their rhythmic incarnation in Pictures. Their ultimate purpose is not to illustrate or to copy other facts or inner vision, but to evolve a harmonious wholeness, which finds its passage through our eyesight into imagination. It neither questions our mind for meaning nor burdens it with unmeaningness, for it is above all meaning”.\textsuperscript{33} The poet here enunciates a theory of art which was certainly not known among his Indian contemporaries; he is linked to such European painters as Klee and Kandinsky. His work, however, continues to be connected to writing, first by his predilection for lines, and again by his rhythmic forms and in the late stage even by a certain literariness. It is necessary to notice that the chief ‘source’ of his art is the unconscious. His forms seem to rise and appear from long buried distant memories. His hand is merely the instrument that records the scenes and

\textsuperscript{32} Dr. Vivek Ranjan Bhattacharya: \textit{Tagore's Vision of A Global Family}, Enkay Publisher Pvt Ltd, New Delhi, 1982, p.59.
\textsuperscript{33} Rabindranath Tagore, \textit{Chitrallipi} (Introduction)
creatures of those depths. Klee mentions the importance of this source. “But chosen are those artists who penetrate to the region of that secret place, where primeval power nurtures all evolution”. 34 Rhythm had also guided his poetic activity, because when words “are bound together by some bond of rhythm they attain their significance as a reality which can be described as creative, “words are barren, dismal and uninspiring by themselves” Thus the artist did not start by thinking of the image first and then strive to bring that out by deliberate efforts. There do not exist any preparatory sketches. It is the sheer force of rhythms that has brought out the image.

Majority of Tagore’s manuscript erasures are more than heraldic decorations organically related and it is clear that he had a tremendous sense of ‘flat design’. And he himself talked of “rhythmic interrelationship” and “harmonious wholeness”. Tagore maintained this quality when he began painting single images independently of the doodles. Rabindranath leaves the background empty and untouched. The single images appear appropriately placed in relation to the picture plane but the background is not fully worked out so that background often appears to be neutral. 35 Tagore was a lover of rhythm since his childhood. So his paintings could be constructed as neither objective nor Subjective. He painted just for the sake of painting. He was not interested in formulating any doctrine of art. Rabindranath himself assessed in formulating any doctrine art but be contented by simply “saying that in my case my pictures did not have their origin in trained discipline, in tradition and deliberate attempt at illustration, but in my instinct for rhythm, my pleasure in harmonious combination of line and colours”. Rabindranath “by his rhythm movements of line and grace of forms created such an extraordinary atmosphere that before long it led to a conflict between his creative faculty and inventive instinct.” Lines and forms still came without conscious decision or

34 Jaya Appasamy: Abanindranath Tagore and The Art of His Times, Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi, 1968, p.90.
control while the process of projecting them on to paper still seemed to generate of its own accord a linear rhythm.

Today in Rabindra Bhavan alone there are about 200 paintings by him, many of which are fairly big size one is also struck by the variety of his techniques. Indeed, for each painting he had a new technique so that he had to invent his technique at every stage. He would give a form, and from a form balance and rhythm as their strong point. About the selection of his pigments and painting materials he was singularly unconventional.