CHAPTER-VII

CONCLUSION

The challenge of research about well-known luminaries is that they are too well known, and much has already been written and spoken about them. To even capture a glimpse of such a luminous life and its work is undeniably rewarding. Indeed, one of the biggest pitfalls most of us encounter as unavoidable is the entrenched notion that we already know them, as is felt about Rabindranath Tagore or Dattatreya Ramachandra Bendre. However, it is only by challenging ourselves with an open, humble and inquiring attitude and approach, we learn that we do still have many more things to learn.

Tagore himself described his Bengali family as the product of 'a confluence of three cultures, Hindu, Mohammedan and British.'¹ (Dutta and Robinson, p.17) Not only did he represent the ushering of a renaissance in literature and arts of Bengal as well as India, but his ideas and perspectives also continued to serve as powerful commentary in the socio-political arena of India. According to the Nobel official citation, "For the world he became the voice of India's spiritual heritage; and for India, especially for Bengal, he became a great living institution."²

His words and expression have the enduring power that can light up a melancholy heart, strengthen the spirit of the weak, and sharpen the conscience of the society. In all these regards, much of
his works transcends the local to become universal. It is because of his transcending sage-like personality, that he was called ‘Gurudev’.

As for Bendre, hailing from a family of scholars, he inherited a love for knowledge. Voracious reader that he was, Bendre delved into Marathi Jnaneshwara, the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Bhagawata, the Upanishads, Vachanas of 12th century philosophy, astrology, astronomy, numerology, poetics, rhetoric, besides Kannada literature. He was influenced deeply by Khalil Gibran, Keats, Maurice Maeterlink and Aurobindo. Though he was also influenced by Rabindranath Tagore, it was Aurobindo who left a distinct mark on Bendre’s life and letters.

Bendre started off with simple and earthly romantic poetry, often using the colloquial language. His later works dig deeper into social and philosophical matters. G. S. Amur says "Bendre believed in the value of an integrated personality but loved to project himself as a threefold being: Dattatreya Ramachandra Bendre, the biological self, the dehi; Professor Bendre, the thinking self; and Ambikatanayadatta, the creative self. The three selves were conceived as mutually supporting selves, as the imagery Bendre used to concretise this idea clearly suggests. He spoke of Ambikatanayadatta and Professor Bendre as closely related to each other as the banks of a river or the belly and the back. One could not exist without the other." (Amur, p.19)

Hailed as the ‘Vara Kavi’, his poems are linked to the Kannada poetic tradition through the use of folklore, vachanas and kirthanas.

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For him poetry is not different from life, which itself much too often unfolds as poetry. However, he always held life as greater than letters. As we have seen, though life offered him more than a fair share of pain and unhappiness, yet that did not embitter his soul or diminish his zest for life. He wrote:

Let me my plight
Keep unto my self
And serve you
O,Rasika only its sweet song.
If only your heart
which is like sugar candy
Melts there to
Pour back to me
Some of its sweet taste.

Bendre is even today a 'people's poet'. Bendre uses what William Wordsworth proposed for poetry 'the ordinary language of ordinary men and women'. Bendre's use of the spoken idiom and folk imagery made him popular with the common man too. Although Bendre used the language of the folk, he infused into it poetic profundity. That, he was a visionary is evident from his spiritual poems reflecting Vedic wisdom.

After this very brief review of the lives of these two poets, let us proceed with the comparison of the concepts chosen, so that an interpretation of their works will help attain a greater clarity of the perceptions of these two profound humanists.
With the advent of humanism in the 20th century, literature became man-centric. Today largely for all practical purposes man is the measure of all things. The sense of human autonomy is very deep, without de-linking the relevance of God. Even for Tagore and Bendre the destination of man remains spiritual. Man is at the core of their writings. They project a dynamic concept of man.

While their ultimate aim is the same they approach it in their own individual ways.

Tagore’s emphasis was on humanity. A true citizen of the world, he believed in one world and the eternal vision of man evolving into a Visvamanav. Tagore looks at man both from within and outside. As a greater species of creation he thinks that the great power within ignites man to play his role of his emancipation through emancipation of the whole mankind.

Tagore makes a revolutionary approach to the uniqueness of person that highlights the glory of man. He profoundly believes in upholding man as the true image of God. The concept of man so related to God brings forth another Tagorian dimension of the uniqueness of man. It is oneness of man and god. For a man to be ‘man’ his role of taking part in eternity by means of his uniqueness is infinite.

Tagore thinks that the real man was lost in the melee of mechanisation, automation and artificialities, which indicates a massacre of human sensibilities. To release the obsessions within and unite with the infinite is what Tagore highlights as the essential
concept of man. "It is a submission of man to the altar of Eternity, the ever present that makes man worthy of himself" (Kunjo.p.143)

Bendre’s approach is more spiritual. Because of the profound influence of saints and his religious upbringing, to him a complete surrender to the divine force was essential where even everyday chores are considered as the result of divine will. He accepted Spiritual Darwinism of Sri Aurobindo, where man would rise from bestiality overcoming vices and temptation to attain divinity. Where these two poets looked to seek answers to their queries also shows their different approach. Tagore looked within for his answer. He introspected that the way of freedom for man is to feel the divine presence of God within who makes him. To him the concept of man is in recognising steadfastness to truth and cultivation of courtesy, simplicity and other virtues that mirror the true culture of man as a social being.

Whereas Bendre sought for his answers in the Beyond. He believed more in the Divine force that steers life than in his own efforts to control it. Where the two are very similar is that they were both dualists. To them though man has a divine spark within, he is initially separate from God. There existed the animal beside the spiritual within him. Man has to endeavour conscientiously to evolve in order to attain divinity and become one with the Divine.

Both the poets have left an indelible mark on literature not just as poets but as revolutionaries and seers. Their great value is in their humanism. The flowering of civilization to them is in not society or
any institution, but in the finished man, a man in harmony, 
magnanimous and universal.

It is indisputable that both Tagore and Bendre were zealous 
poets of Nature. Nature represented an intriguing philosophy through 
her innumerable expressions to Tagore and Bendre. Nature included 
everything that could be grasped by the senses. Nature was the entire 
cosmos with all creatures right to the smallest point. Greatly inspired 
by Nature the poets celebrated in her various forms. For them Nature 
in all her aspects was an allegory of human life as well as of divine 
will. Above all, they believed in a divine presence in Nature. Their 
feeling of admiration turned into the deeper emotion of wonder at the 
mysteries of nature whose stimulating influence they sought and 
endeavoured to interpret. Tagore himself felt that his poetry began 
with a simple appreciation of Nature, but transcended beyond it to 
God and thus ultimately to the divine in man. Bendre's works too took 
the same path.

To Tagore and Bendre, Nature was majestic, wild, destructive, 
as well as graceful, charming and life giving. Nature was as eternal as 
it was transitory. It symbolised death and as well as rebirth. The 
relationship between the human mind and Nature is part of Tagore 
and Bendre's philosophic doctrine. The moods of man are mirrored in 
the moods of Nature. Thus Nature was interwoven in their writing and 
changed with the changes in the plot of the narrative. In their spiritual 
view, Nature is an intimate, interdependent relationship between man 
and Nature. Apparently each brought to his study and interpretation
of Nature certain qualities—those of close and devoted observation, deep understanding and sympathy, and added to these a profound and luminous imagination. It is also evident that in the final interpretation of these qualities, they resemble mostly while differing in some particular aspects only.

Imaginative delight in Nature is, indeed, no new thing in the history of poetry; it appeared in forms of perfect beauty as long ago as in the works of Kalidas. However, Nature achieved full consciousness in these two poets, especially in Tagore. It helped them to a deeper understanding of her, thus forming the base of some of the greatest modern poetry. Their poetry carries a transcendent faith and a profound philosophy of life. Chapter V discusses in detail this faith or philosophy, embodying as it does the conception of Nature.

This deepening of consciousness depends on close and doting observation, at times closely akin to imagination. Previously poets had been allured by Nature's splendour. Her fuller revelation was not consciously sought, bewitched as they were by her beauty. They wished rather to enjoy Nature's transient beauty than to pursue her passionately and win her soul. Their flight of imagination had not yet been engaged wholly by her compassion and love. To many, Nature had been a beautiful woman, to be decked up, her beauty added to their joys, and in some ways calmed their sorrows. It was not that they disrespected Nature, but they expressed their exultant joy by admiring her visual beauty in their poetry. They differ in approach
from the conscious and profound reverence towards the hidden beauty of Nature that is the soul of the two poets' inspiration.

The idea of nation did not date too far back even in Europe beyond 19th century. To Indians under British rule the idea of a nation of their own was undreamed of. India had never been defined in terms of boundaries. The times were turbulent and gave rise to ideas on nation and nationalism. Tagore's work shows his reflections on the subject. His writings are an example of how he did not accept the Western ideas of Nation. To him society has to be given priority over the Western idea of state, which is bestowed with all powers and thus it becomes a political state. However India had always given priority to society, and thus according to Tagore Western nationalism would be harmful in the Indian context. Instead, he preferred to raise national consciousness in our society-based civilization.

He strengthens his argument saying "Nation is a matter of being faithful to one's tradition, for nation is more spiritual than political element." Thus more than geographical boundaries he stresses more on Indian tradition of living together by overcoming differences to achieve a rare unity in existence, which is consolidated by a sense of the past tradition and associated pride. At centre of his idea of nation we find his idea of true man, a man whose mind is free from all sorts of hypocrisy and complexities — a man who is the epitome of intellectual freedom.

Thus it is obvious that in Tagore's scheme of an ideal society; ethical and spiritual emancipation of man rather than political
salvation always took precedence. His idea of nations was where all nations would be true to their social ideals.

Tagore contemplated against nationalism much before it assumed importance in post-colonial period, independent of Western discourse. It is noteworthy to underline that he takes a spiritual path in his alternative discourse on nationalism.

In contrast to Tagore's resolute thoughts on nationalism, we find that Bendre had little interest in the subject. To him it did not pose any problem. India as a nation existed for him without questioning its geographical existence. He like the majority of his countrymen of the time wanted to free his country from colonial rule.

Bendre's role in the unification of Karnataka was crucial. A state for Kannadigas was not in anyway opposed to a united India for him. Regional unification was an inseparable component of nation forming. The Indian nation carried along with it all indigenous local identities. The issues at national level were inter-related and integral to regional issues and together formed part of universalism.

The aim of the regional linguistic revival was not against the national framework, but to highlight certain internal rearrangements within that system. There existed no difference between nationalism and linguistic regionalism, at the political and the literary levels. Bendre and his work are a paradigm of this process.

As Amur has noted, there was no direct response to the colonial experience. However his contribution to India's cultural renaissance does manifest an indirect response to colonial rule.5 (Amur, 36)
In many of his poems on regional and national themes we find that Bendre has personified nation, which helped people to identify themselves emotionally with the idea of 'Bharat Mata'. Karnataka was the daughter of Mother India. Bendre projected the identity of a daughter within the folds of a mother through this beautiful personification in “Kannada Kandavvan Lali” (Lullaby for Kannada baby). Along with the notion of sacredness of the mother-daughter bond emerged the concept of interdependence and the sense of responsibility towards the integrity of the nation.

As K. Raghavendra Rao suggests, Bendre’s poetry represents a creative fusion of nationalism and linguistic regionalism. But Bendre, as in the case of internationalism, has taken the view that a genuine Indian nationalism and a genuine national literary tradition can emerge only through a process of revival of regional literatures and a subsequent interaction between them. He has subscribed to a federal model of cultural integration all along—not dead uniformity but a genuine unity in diversity."\(^{6}\)(p.5)

Bendre’s work echoes the need of unity of regional language, unity of local culture and regional history. He felt that strong individual regions would fortify the nation as a whole. We can say that Karnataka was the microcosm of India to him. Just as Dharwad mirrors Karnataka, so too his sentiments for Karnataka reflects those for India.

Tagore’s thought process can be said to be well articulated and structured and encompassing a wider horizon. He can be termed as
a 'secular rational mystic'. On the other hand, Bendre comes out not as a systematic thinker and can be grouped under the non-rational mystic tradition.

At the end when we take an overall view of this study, what strikes us is the ardent effort of the two poets to put their perceptions into words. Their belief in their idea of the sufficiency of nature is evident. Nature is the projection of God cast on the man's senses. The beneficence, the beauty, the mystery of nature reflects the beauty, the beneficence, and the mystery of God. In Nature we find all the experiences, good, bad and pleasant of human life. However it is difficult for man to decipher the symbolic suggestions of nature. As the poets feel man has to strive to perceive the meaning behind these mysterious symbols and grasp the truth. The truth has always existed. Man's quest is to discover and describe what portion of it he can. His materials are in nature, but the truth is within man. The task is to see nature afresh, to see beyond nature toward its increasing implications.

They also speak of the primacy of the soul, which is divine and identical in all men. What is needed is a spark of eternity, presenting immediate access to all knowledge. It is God, the all-prevailing spirit that is in all men. Tagore names this as 'world flow' and Bendre feels 'that man's goal should be to establish harmony and connectivity with everything around him'. Where 'Satva (essence), tatva (doctrine) and
‘Swatva’ (self identity) combine together as one then we have the ‘Nava Manava’ or in Tagore's words 'Supreme man'.

Their work reveals the immediacy of God. Deity to them has an unrestricted access to every soul, and conversely every soul has like access to all divinity. This process in either case being a divine inflowing, not continuously felt, but only in moments of exaltation such as can only be the mystic moments of a man. Man to them has to be a God-reaching creature. 'where the infinite became defined in humanity' This idea found expression in the poem addressed to what he calles'Jeevan Devta' or the Lord of life.

The strong thread of humanism weaves through all their works. We see even a distinctly political issue such as 'nation' is handled with gloves of humanism. Tagore's views on the subject are well-articulated, whereas Bendre's are generic. However, both had no awareness of the political advantages while speaking of regionalism or nationalism. Bendre wanted to unite the politically scattered Kannadigas; while Tagore envisioned India as a culturally united space rather than as a nation, nevertheless both wanted India to be free from British rule.

As is widely accepted there are certain rare moments in the lives of every person, when suddenly for a moment everything seems to fall into place, each one becomes 'part or particle of God.' The mystery becomes clear. The secrets even of all oracles seem answered. However
to recall those moments, to write them down, explain their revelation is not possible for everyone. It is for the poets and philosophers to do so. In their works man finds the reflections of his own experienced but overlooked thoughts. These moments of insight are rare, but when they do come, man sees truth for a moment face to face, not through the eyes of other men, however much they have facilitated it.

The two poets have excelled in conveying the truth through their writings. The differences in their approach or some concepts hardly seem to matter. In fact all differences melt away. To us both Tagore and Bendre come across as visionaries. And seers whose words humble one's soul, broaden the narrow mind greatly and profoundly calm the restless. It can be said that great souls tend to be alike in the last analysis as a comparison of Tagore and Bendre demonstrates.

REFERENCES:

1) qtd in Krishna Dutta and Andrew Robinson, op.cit., p.17.
3) Amur, *Dattatreya Ramachandra Bendre*, op.cit., p.19
5) Amur, *Dattatreya Ramachandra Bendre*, op.cit., p.36