CHAPTER - 1

INTRODUCTION

I have planned to build a rainbow bridge
Marrying the soil to the sky
And in this dancing planet midge
To sow the moods infinity.

- Aurobindo

A fervent aspiration and goal of all gifted poets who have achieved the highest realisation and have endeavoured to share that experience with the rest of humankind can be seen in these words of Sri Aurobindo. From the ancient cultures of the East to the present time, the great poet seers have inspired and illumined humanity to look further than the mundane and to gain a glimpse of the Beyond. A literary piece of work is a powerful medium of expression of a writer's inner experiences. Though, at a certain stage of realisation, mystic poets like Tagore and Bendre may naturally find it difficult to describe the consciousness they have attained, it is however possible for them to give a glimpse of higher worlds. Like a guiding finger leading along the path to self-realisation their inspiring utterances offer to readers a direction, through a poetic description of their elevating experiences.

The same lofty desire of 'spanning earth and heaven' emanates from the works of the two poets chosen in this study. Raimon Nath
Tagore from Bengal and Dattatreya Ramachandra Bendre from Karnataka - still a living presence through their thoughts and vision.

The most striking feature of Tagore's and Bendre's genius is the diversity of their creative achievement. However, behind this amazing diversity there are certain pervasive philosophical thoughts and convictions, which give a unity to their work.

In Tagore, modern India appears to have found its representative poetic voice. His long versatile and prolific literary career has articulated the aims and aspirations, urges, dreams and visions that pulsate in the hearts of his countrymen. His works have offered the quintessence of Indian culture, harmonising the old and the new, spanning the bridge between the wisdom of the Vedas and the glory of spirituality with the ideals of modern times.

While Tagore is a recognised figure world over, Bendre is a revered figure in Karnataka. He lived at a most opportune time in the turbulent period in the lives of Kannadigas, especially those living in North Karnataka. Realising their desperation, he worked for the consolidation of Kannadigas. His poems were instrumental in arousing the people from despondency. He awakened their pride not only in their language but also in being Kannadigas. By choosing to write in Kannada in spite of his mother tongue being Marathi, the dominant language of the period, he re-established the faith of the people in their mother-tongue. He embellished Kannada poetry by breaking out of the outmoded forms of poetry. Thus, he embodied the
desires and yearning of a quiescent people suppressed by the dominance of Marathi.

One may say with confidence, that the difference between Tagore's and Bendre's works can be said to be that of the extent of influence but not the quality of influence. Like most Renaissance thinkers of India, these two poets were great humanists. Both Tagore and Bendre laid emphasis on man, and since man was essentially a spiritual being, understood that his life and problems could be best interpreted through a spiritual approach.

To Bendre, Tagore was one of his four Gurus (Guruchaturmukha). In the poem “Gurudeva”, he addresses him as “the eye of the world”. He was particularly drawn to Tagore's stories and child poems. Speaking about these poems Bendre says, “It was Tagore's child poems that made me aware of my own mother”.¹ (qtd in Amur, p.33) More than his style of writing, Bendre was influenced and inspired by Tagore's thoughts and vision. Tagore's personality as a seer and mystic stirred him. Tagore's significant concepts about relation between man and Nature, love, happiness, and relationship between individual and community had a profound influence on Bendre's thought process. About the impact of this influence, Bendre had his own views. He said, "Imitation of theme or style does not elevate a poet or his poetry. What he needs is to keep the lives of great souls always before him."² (p.120) To him, Tagore was one such great soul. Bendre writes about Tagore's universal dimension and considers
On reading the works of these two foremost poets, one from Bengal and the other from Karnataka, what becomes evident is their profound faith in man and their deep reverence for life. Theirs is a continuous search for a correlation with Nature and to realise the divinity which subsists in every individual. For them, the flowering of civilization is in the finished man, a munificent man with a universal vision, the ultimate divine man.

The adage that great minds think alike rings true when we approach the works of these two poets, especially in their eternal quest for the true identity of man. In finding his true identity man identifies himself with his family, environs, country and later with the Eternal. Thus we find the two poets expressing their ideas implicitly and at times, explicitly on the relation between Nature and man, the inherent divinity in man and man's universality where race, religion or even national boundaries seem redundant.

Tagore and Bendre were both humanists firmly believing in the worth and dignity of the human individual. Their humanism had a moral and social basis, supplemented by aesthetic mystical experiences.

To define and interpret 'humanism' is not an easy task as it has a long history. It has always invited diverse connotations, with many humanists attempting to define and interpret it. 'Humanism stood for devotion in the literature of ancient Greece and Rome, and the
humane values that may be derived from them'. Starting with the
dictum of Protagoras: 'Man is the measure of all things', philosophy
turned from theology and cosmology to man. Socrates interpreted
humanism through his axiom: 'Know thyself'. His humanism lay in
conjoining man with the eternal, through the right knowledge of
virtue. Renaissance humanism can be interpreted as an intellectual
impulse, a cultural educational programme for the moulding of
a desirable type of man.4 (Nicholas Mann, pp.1-2) Huxley's theory of
'evolutionary humanism' is based on Darwinian Theory of evolution.
Man being the latest product of the evolutionary process, is a part of
nature. He is now the sole agent of further progress of evolution.

Focus of humanism is man. Its aim is the achievement of man's
happiness by recognising man as a man. Humanism is the underlying
current found in the works of both these poets. Their humanism
encompasses universality and a sense of identity with all fellow
humans, and a revolt against all types of tyranny and injustice.

AIM OF THE STUDY

Though comparatists have been comparing several writers with
Tagore or Bendre, Tagore has not been compared with Bendre in any
major research work. There is much to be gained comparing these two
poets. Hence this study. Their kinship is worth exploring

The works of these two exceptional poets cover a varied amount
of themes. The choice before an avid and rather avaricious reader is
vast. The present study deals with the concepts of Man, Nature and
Nationalism in the works of Tagore and Bendre, as these contribute,
among many others, towards the making of the ideal man who is the aspiration of these poets. An attempt has been made here to present these concepts in detail. Simultaneously the similarities and differences through a study of their novels, essays, poems and dramas are traced, along with the circumstances and reasons that gave rise to them.

Tagore's and Bendre's concepts are distinctively marked by keen observation, spiritual insight and an abundant volume of inspiration that was the prevalent spirit of the times. The term 'concept' has been consciously chosen in the place of 'thought'. The former covers the broader areas related to the issues of reflections or inner pre-occupation of mind of man than the latter.

A comparative study of these two poets, called the twin voices of Indian Renaissance, will certainly highlight the best in both. An interpretation of their works will help to attain a greater clarity of their perceptions; furthermore the poets and their concepts will be better understood by placing both the writers on a wider horizon. This study will also help to understand and appreciate the very emotional undertones that characterised India's 19th century Renaissance.

One is amazed to note that the two thinkers have almost similar views on various philosophical, social and political problems and have suggested more or less similar remedies to rectify the evils of modern times. Unity of thought and a vision of glory of man are the striking features of their works.
Tagore is the architect of modern Indian sensibility and has had a profound impact on modern literature in various languages. He is also a pioneer in comparative literature in its wider aspects. Bendre revered Tagore as his Guru. Tagore and Bendre are two ideal representatives of their age. Naturally, these features make a comparative study of Tagore and Bendre very appealing with a certainty that it will be most intriguing and illuminating.

"In them we hear the twin voices of a nation, "one manifested as many and many pointing to and converging in one".5 (Chellappan, p.4) Though collective Indian sensibility subsists in the literatures of various Indian languages down the ages, it was only during the freedom struggle that this consciousness became explicit and the poetry of Tagore and Bendre was both a product of and a contributor to this national consciousness. The teachings and very utterances that poets of this calibre offer to the world come from the most sublime realms of consciousness that human beings can attain to. Their poetry transcends the page to become 'mantra', an invocation to the transcendental consciousness.

Both represent the Renaissance of India with special reference to Bengal and Karnataka respectively. 'In both there was a rediscovery and reinterpretation of India's ancient wisdom in the light of creative wind that blew from the West'.

19th century Western Romantics influenced both the poets and thus naturally both glorified Nature. To them, Nature was an extended part of themselves. They endeavored to comprehend fully how...
harmonious Nature embraces our own existence into her fold. They continued with the spiritual kinship with nature that they found in the culture and literature of India.

Their was the time of the freedom struggle and the concept of India as a nation had recently been conceptualised. Tagore was against staunch, rigid nationalism. To him the universal man preceded any other division by race, religion or country. To Bendre nation was never an enigma. Bendre, like all 'Navodaya' writers, accepted nation as a valid category. To him the country was 'Bharat Mata' and Karnataka her daughter. However, the literary work of both these writers has been a yeoman contribution to national literature.

These two persuasive voices of Indian Renaissance lived and wrote at a momentous period in the political, social, cultural and literary history of India. Their writings are still a perennial source of interest, for these enshrine their views on the myriad aspects of life. These reflections of truth in no way appear out-dated. Their greatest contribution lies in their transcendence of the immediate time and place and their relevance to the present day Indian society.

**STRUCTURE OF THE PRESENT STUDY**

The present study has been divided into seven chapters.

**CHAPTER I- INTRODUCTION**

This chapter gives a general introduction of the two chosen poets of the present study - Tagore and Bendre. Their relevance as poets of
Renaissance, as well as poets during the turbulent period of freedom struggle is explained. The choice of the concepts chosen for this study has been clarified. It also states in brief the methodology and chapterisation

CHAPTER II- COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

As this study is a comparative study of two authors, this chapter elucidates the aims of Comparative Literature in general, and highlights the special features of Comparative Indian Literature and discusses the relation between Comparative Literature and Translation.

CHAPTER III- INTERFACING BIOGRAPHIES

To know and understand Tagore and Bendre is to know their age as well. An effort has been made in this chapter to deal with the cultural and familial background of the poets. A study of their lives has been made to show how their thought process evolved in accordance with, at times ahead of, their period. This will also bring to fore their relation to the ethos of Renaissance.

CHAPTER IV –THE CONCEPT OF MAN IN TAGORE AND BENDRE

Here, we come to the core of the present study where the first chosen concept 'Man' is analysed taking one poet at a time. The poets' philosophical ideal was their firm faith in the Divine and in Oneness of mankind. This chapter deals with their concept of man and a comparative evaluation of man as expressed in the writings of Tagore and Bendre.
CHAPTER V - THE CONCEPT OF NATURE IN TAGORE AND BENDRE

Nature is a recurring theme in the works of both the poets. The relevance of Nature to these two poets has been analysed in this chapter. This chapter focuses on how in the context of their respective backgrounds the poets' views of Nature have shaped their interpretation of it. It also tries to establish the intimate relation between man and Nature.

CHAPTER VI - THE CONCEPT OF NATIONALISM IN TAGORE AND BENDRE

This chapter is an attempt to explore a phenomenon of modern times, namely, Nationalism. Both Tagore and Bendre had an affinity to their regional language. This chapter tries to explore their efforts to negotiate their writings at a regional level. It also looks at the way they responded to their regional as well as their national concerns, the kind of compromise they had to make and how ultimately they resolved the problem.

CHAPTER VII - CONCLUSION

This chapter summarises the whole study. A comparison has been made of their concepts of Man, Nature and Nationalism, based on the detailed study made in chapters IV, V, VI. We attain a greater clarity of their perceptions; furthermore the poets and their concepts are better understood by the comparison made of both the writers on a wider horizon. The aim of the study has been justified.
Two separate Bibliographies on Tagore and Bendre each appear at the end.

**REFERENCES:**


2) D.R. Bendre, *Sahityada Virat Swarup*, Dharwad: Samaja Pustakalaya, 1974, p.120.

