RABINDRANATH TAGORE

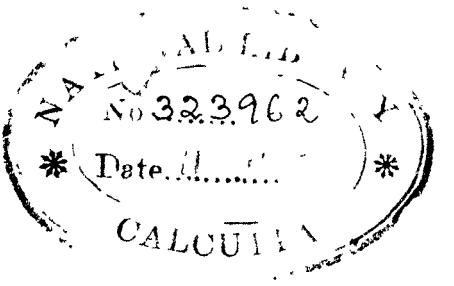
RABINDRANATH TAGORE

—A Philosophical Study—

Vishwanath S. Naravane, M.A., D PHIL.
Lecturer in Philosophy
University of Allahabad

CENTRAL BOOK DEPOT
ALLAHABAD

PUBLISHED BY :
CENTRAL BOOK DEPOT
ALLAHABAD



PRINTED AT
VANGUARD PRESS
ALLAHABAD

To

MY FATHER

and to the memory of

MY MOTHER

this book is gratefully dedicated.

PREFACE

This book is based upon a thesis entitled "The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore" which was accepted by the University of Allahabad in 1946 for the D. Phil. degree.

The chief aim of this work is to provide a systematic and exhaustive *statement* of Tagore's philosophical views. The reader is requested to remember that the main emphasis, throughout this book, is expositive rather than critical.

For a really satisfactory, critical evaluation of Tagore's philosophy it is necessary to examine fully the various trends in Indian thought and to relate them carefully to the social and political conditions in India during the last one hundred years or more. I am aware that the present work lacks such a sociological approach. This is a grave defect, and explains the hesitation and consequent delay in the publication of this book.

The hesitation was finally overcome when I became convinced that it will prove useful at least as a source book for those who wish to begin a serious study of Tagore's philosophy. I feel sure the book contains much valuable material which so far lay scattered in Tagore's voluminous writings, and which had never been philosophically assessed or explained.

It is to be hoped that the account of Tagore's philosophy given here is sufficiently objective and sympathetic in spite of the fact that with several aspects of that philosophy I am not personally in agreement. Whatever one's in-

clinations in philosophy, to read Tagore is to be impressed at once by the profundity of his outlook, his inspiring humanism, his deep understanding of fundamentals, and the beauty and felicity of his expression. One feels always the intellectual altitude. The study of Tagore's philosophy was for me a very exhilarating experience. Like many other good and beautiful things, Tagore's writings are positively habit-forming! One feels like dipping into them every now and then.

Those who have read Tagore only in English translations can scarcely have any idea of how much, and how well, he has written on philosophical questions. In the present book I have made use of the Bengali writings. Wherever translations have been used, I have done so always in addition to, never to the exclusion of, the original Bengali sources.

It is a pleasure to acknowledge my grateful thanks to Dr. Amaranatha Jha for all his help, including the loan of books. It was at the suggestion of Dr. Jha, who was then Vice-Chancellor of the Allahabad University that this subject was allotted to me for research. He is thus in a way responsible for this book having been written at all.

I am also thankful to my respected teacher, Prof. A. C. Mukerji, under whose able guidance I had the privilege of working as a research student.

I have been fortunate in getting opportunities of discussing a number of points with scholars who were personally intimate with Tagore. Conversations with Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, Dr. S. K. Maitra, Dr. Nihar Ranjan Rai, and Dr. Amiya Chakravarty have been of

great assistance to me and I am deeply grateful to all of them.

Prof. Dhurjati Prasad Mukerji has helped in various ways and has taken a keen interest in my work. I am particularly grateful to him for explaining Tagore's views on certain questions of aesthetics in the light of his own conversations and correspondence with the poet.

I am thankful to the authorities of the Allahabad University for sending me some extracts from my examiners' reports when I was preparing the book for the press.

Vishwanath S. Naravane

CONTENTS

Chapter 1

THE BACKGROUND

An exhaustive study of the philosophical views of any thinker necessarily involves an investigation into the influences which moulded his thought. This is even more true in the case of a person like *Rabindra Nath Tagore*, whose writings have been so variously interpreted, and whose title to be called a philosopher at all has been challenged by one set of people, while others regard him as the greatest philosopher that modern India has produced. This extreme diversity about the appraisal of his work, coupled with an initial doubt whether we are dealing with a philosopher at all, equally demand that an interpretation, or even an exposition of Tagore's philosophy must be preceded by a tudy of the environment which gave form to his sideas, of the doctrines, books and people that shaped his outlook, of the religious, literary, artistic and metaphysical ideas which influenced him—a study, in short, of the milieu in which Tagore wrote and lived.

In this introductory chapter therefore we shall not attempt to present the metaphysical, ethical or aesthetic opinions of Tagore; but we shall enter upon a general survey of the poet's work in order to bring out the chief sources of his inspiration, and the impressions which were most vital for the development of his thought, and which coloured his philosophic outlook in one way or another.

Attempts have been made to study the work of Tagore in the context of his biography, and

different periods of his creative life have been characterized by such labels as Vaisnava Stage, Upanisadic Stage, and so on. The pattern of Tagore's philosophic thought, however, is much too elastic to permit of such a procedure. There has undoubtedly been an evolution in his ideas, but it is much more helpful to study that evolution by tracing the different ideas through his poems, plays and prose writings rather than try to trace it predominantly with reference to the details of his life. To explain one poem by Rabindranath, says one of his critics, nothing is more helpful than another poem by Rabindranath.[1] And this holds true of his other writings as well.

Moreover, even if we accept the biographer's method, the 'stages' which we shall have to consider would be legion. It is well known that Tagore's interests were extraordinarily wide. Innumerable impressions were being recorded in his mind every moment. In the course of a letter he has written: ....."You are well aware how deeply my mind has always communed with the environment around me. Whatever happens, I am unable to circumvent the spirit of my age".[2] It was not merely with his own environment, however, that his mind 'communed'. More than any other poet in recent years, he had the power to look beyond the time and space which clothed his own thought and life. He travelled extensively and read voraciously; he had a marvellous insight into cultural history; and, artist that he was, he created anew for himself the environment and atmosphere of past ages, whenever he read history or literature. And these creations of his own mind left their impressions upon the mind itself. *Brojendranath Seal* has spoken of the tremendous "inter-penetrative

powers" of Tagore.[3] He was "a great reconciler, even in diction."[4]

Tagore has written: "The strings of my lute are various. They can hardly ever be fully tuned and adjusted. My faculties are like rebellious animals drawing a carriage. If they were all horses, I could some how control them. But how can one charioteer harness and control at the same time a horse, a camel and an elephant"?[5] The marvel is, however, that he was able to control his various faculties, and that he evolved his own ideas in and through the welter of diverse and often contrary forces to which he was subject. It is in this light that we have to assess his works. "Whatever ideas I have, they have been gained by me through my own habit of correlation."[6] The various impressions of which we spoke above were 'dissolved' when they passed through the mould of his personality. "His work", says *Sri Aurobindo*, "is a constant music of the overpassing of borders".[7] Ideas could not clog him. "I hope to be able to persuade people that I am not born in an ageing world. My eyes have seen much, but never for a moment have they felt any weariness. At every moment they have seen something new".[8] No wonder *Keyserling* described him as "the most universal, the most encompassing human being that I have met."[9]

Tagore's intellectual energies were employed in so many spheres of human knowledge that he was often accused of a pathetic eclecticism. But if results are allowed to speak for themselves, this charge appears quite baseless; for his reading was never aimless, and there is no trace of mediocrity in any of the numerous branches of his creative work. Poetry and drama; fiction and literary criticism; philosophy, theology and

educational theory; history, politics and sociology; aesthetics and phonetics—every medium of literature and every variety of art has been enriched by his writings. The wonder is not so much that Rabindranath has adorned everything that he has touched, but that he has *touched* almost everything. It has been said that if the Germans were asked to choose between the works of Goethe and the rest of their literature, many of them would vote for the former. If a similar alternative were decreed for Bengal, it would not be impossible to find people who would rather keep the works of Rabindranath Tagore than the rest of Bengali literature, rich and varied as it is. It is difficult to imagine a greater compliment than this to the versatility of any individual. And yet in the case of Rabindranath Tagore, it does not sound fantastic.

This very immensity of range might scare away anyone approaching the writings of Tagore from a philosopher's point of view. Philosophy seems to frown at the superfluous or the merely pleasing, it is suspicious of all statements that only edify or instruct without 'proving' anything, it is afraid of all generalizations that are not the outcome of pointed argument and sharp analysis. All these presuppose a certain amount of specialization. In fact modern history shows an ever-increasing need for specialization in philosophy; so much so that if we consider the achievement of any of the great philosophers of modern times, we see that he has started with some particular science or group of sciences and found therein the scaffolding indispensable for building up the structure of his philosophy. The system of Bertrand Russell, for instance, would scarcely have been possible without a life-long study of mathematics; nor that of Bergson

without his special study of the biological sciences.

Tagore never specialized in any particular science or any field of knowledge. He had "taken all knowledge for his province", he had modelled his life, thought and art upon the dictum: Nihil Humani a me alienum puto. The diversity of his interests did not disqualify him for serious philosophic speculation, but it is certainly true, as we shall see later, that Tagore did not establish a system, nor ever claimed to have done so. True to the Indian tradition that a poet must have a philosophy or 'Darsana', he has given us, not merely in his essays and sermons but also in his poems, many serious and sublime ideas about the most fundamental problems with which philosophy is concerned. He never tried to score cheap logical victories. "It is better to be wise and worshipful," he said, "than clever and supercilious."[10] He was intolerant of all sectarianism, of the "big 'No' which guards the temple of truth, preventing people from entering it."[11]

Nor is there any reason why a well-knit philosophic theory must always be insisted upon. The greatest among the Greek and Indian philosophers were never afraid that encroachments from the domain of art or literature might 'water down' the philosophic worth of their writings. On the contrary, Plato, Aristotle and the Upanisadic philosophers were all agreed that the true philosopher is the man with a universal vision and therefore the last to look down upon those facets of 'mortal wisdom' which had no direct theoretical bearing. From this point of view, the so-called eclecticism of Tagore imposes no restrictions on the student of his philosophy except only that he must not interpret or pass

judgments upon the poet's ideas without keeping in mind the general background of his thought.

Those who say that it is wrong to speak of a 'philosophy of Tagore' because he never had one, are certainly unfair in their estimate of the quality of Tagore's thought. The data and materials of philosophic reflection are not the crude and chaotic experiences of immaturity but the already highly organized 'groups' of experience, art, cultural history, higher science in which human minds participate. In the case of Tagore, this intimate participation in experience-groups had already taken place long before he started writing on philosophic subjects. His expression was that of an artist, but his thought was the thought of a philosopher. He had, in other words, that 'philosophic discipline' which demands a spirit of wholeness, a synoptic vision of the thought-world. To philosophize is to seek an attitude towards the universe as a whole; because philosophy is either continuous with the rest of experience or it is barren and meaningless. It must, in order to be true, grasp the quintessence of experience reflectively, and in this Tagore has succeeded as few others have.

This very 'spirit of wholeness' on the part of the critic demands that we study the influences on Tagore's philosophy not in a merely analytic fashion, but in their 'togetherness'. Another problem which confronts us at the very outset is one of picking out those influences which, though non-philosophic in themselves, have elicited from the poet certain philosophic responses, and of isolating them from those others which have no significance at all for his philosophy. There is a real danger that we might look at the various impressions in too detached a manner, and

thus miss the inner logic of their fusion. Rabindranath himself has warned us against doing him this injustice. He beseeches us not to 'look at him from outside'.[12]

This difficulty apart, an exhaustive survey of all the influences would in itself constitute a gigantic task. His reading was so wide, his affiliations so numerous, his eye so observant, and the age in which his thought matured so vibrant with currents and cross-currents of ideas, that an adequate estimate of these influences would hardly be an easier matter than an examination of his own doctrines ! All that we can do here therefore is to "knock at some of the mental back-doors of the poet's personality".[13]

One might be tempted to evolve some method of classifying the impressions which shaped Tagore's thought. Curiously enough, one of the first attempts at such a classification was made by the poet himself. In his contribution to the volume "Contemporary Indian Philosophy", he says that his thought was mainly determined by three 'upheavals' (i) The revolution in Religion, introduced by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, which led to a 're-opening of the channels of spiritual life' (ii) The literary revolution, for which Bankim Chatterji was mainly responsible, and which aimed at "liberating language from empty rhetoric"; and (iii) The political and social revolution which followed the above two and heralded a 'new faith in India's heritage'.[14]

This is a valuable and authoritative summary of the genesis of Tagore's thought, and yet it is too general and leaves out some of the most important influences which no student of his philosophy can ignore. Another ostensibly philosophic classification has been attempted by Nalinikanta Gupta, who mentions (i) the influ-

ence of the Upanisads on Tagore's mind, (ii) of Vaisnavism on his heart, (iii) of modern Science on his brain, (iv) of Nature on his senses.[15] This is an ingenious classification, but it involves several generalizations which are open to discussion. It may be seriously questioned, for instance, how far we are justified in asserting that the influence which external Nature exerted upon Tagore was confined to his senses. Tagore's attitude towards Nature was emotional, sometimes intellectual, but rarely (if ever) 'sensationalistic'. Moreover, the very idea of splitting up the personality of a writer into departments like mind, brain,heart and the senses savours of that exclusively analytical approach the dangers of which we referred to above.

Instead of classifying the influences in accordance with some particular plan, we shall therefore start with the influence of Tagore's family, education and environment, then go on to discuss some of the purely religious and philosophic influences, and conclude with brief reference to some of the major artistic and literary influences.

THE TAGORE FAMILY

The atmosphere of Maharshi Devendranath Tagore's family was saturated with art, philosophy and literature. Being extremely unorthodox compared with existing social conditions, the Tagore family provided for its members more intellectual freedom than was possible for an average person at that time. In the course of a letter, Tagore writes, "at the time of my birth we were outcastes from society. Our family was like Robinson Crusoe on an island."[16] As a result of this his "mind was brought up in an atmosphere of freedom from the dominance of any creed."[17]

Apart from this air of liberty, there was in the family of Devendranath a happy synthesis of many contrary ideas. An intense pride in Indian civilization was here combined with an equally keen desire to accept what the West had to give. As Sjt. Prabhat Mukerji says, the seriousness of the old and the restlessness of the new were harmoniously blended, and this dual influence on Rabindranath must indeed have been a lasting one.

There was at that time in Bengal a wave of enthusiasm for literature, philosophy and art. Of the literary atmosphere of his father's family, Rabindranath has frequently spoken. The Natya Sala Committee was established in Jorasanko as early as 1865. New plays were written and acted. Letter-writing, acting, reading from European classics were collectively done. Rabindranath describes the national renaissance which swept Bengal at that time. There was an emergence of an ideal of nationalism in poetry, religion and the art.[18] Between 1856 and 1861 Bengal witnessed the Brahma-Samaj 'prachar' of Devendranath, the poems of Michael Madhusudan, and the social reforms of Iswarchandra Vidyasagar. It was in such an atmosphere that Rabindranath grew up. As Edward Thompson puts it "all the surging tides of the Indian Renaissance flowed round his daily life".[19]

An important factor in this general environment was the personality of Devendranath, who lived through some of the most stirring years of Indian history.[20] His father Dwarkanath had rendered great help to Ram Mohan without renouncing his orthodox beliefs. Devendranath, too, retained his passion for Indian Philosophy throughout his life. But it was not a blind devotion. He made a careful selection from the

Upanisads of passages to suit modern spiritual needs. A profound scholar of Sanskrit and Persian, he was also well acquainted with Western philosophical literature. Among his works are translations of the Kathopanisad, and of the sermons of the French theist Fenelon.

Devendranath's fondness for religious and philosophical discussions led to the establishment of the "Tattva-bodhini Sabha" Joined by such able men as Akshay Dutta and Ramchandra Vidyavagish, he also published the "Tattva-bodhini Patrika". While absorbed in propaganda for the Brahma Samaj, he had to steer between attacks of orthodoxy on the one hand, and the opposition of Christian missionaries on the other.

Tagore has paid rich tributes to the tireless work and the vigorous intellectual activity of his father. The Upanisadic strand in his writings, which we shall presently examine, shows the direct influence of his father's teachings. Devendranath was against all dogmatism and "taught us to love the whole truth".[21] In his later years, he was noticed studying Geology and other scientific subjects which indicates the many-sidedness of his interests. His life has been described as "a triumph of rationalism."[22]

TAGORE AND THE BRAHMO SAMAJ

In order to appreciate the extent to which Tagore was influenced by the Brahma Samaj, one has to remember that although this movement started as a revolt against established conventions it later on tended to become a sect by itself. While therefore Tagore came under the spell of the social-reform movement connected with the Samaj, and while he upheld its main religious principles, it must be accepted that the influence of the Brahma Samaj

movement as a whole made itself felt to Tagore more through its dominant personalities than its actual achievement or day-to-day functioning. Into the history of the Brahma Samaj and its intimate connection with the Tagore family we cannot enter here.The religious revolution which it initiated soon lost its ideological significance, and its influence endured primarily as a movement for social reform.

Among the personalities of the Brahma Samaj, none had a deeper influence over Tagore than its founder, Ram Mohan. The poet's writings are strewn with appreciative references to the work of Ram Mohan. The secret of this tremendous influence lies mainly in the fact that Ram Mohan was the first to attempt a synthesis between the East and the West in every sphere of life, not excluding Religion. *Dr. Kalidas Nag* aptly calls him an 'Oriental-Occidentalist'.[23] In Indian history we find again and again efforts to synthesize conflicting elements in social and religious life. The colossal effort of Samkaracharya was itself inspired by the urgent need of rebuilding the fabric of Hindu life and thought in the light of a thousand years of Buddhist influence. In the case of Ram Mohan's Brahma Samaj too we find that although it was based on the deeper truths of the Vedas and the Upanisads, the impact of the aggressive Western civilization, and the need for Hinduism to expand its borders in certain directions, so as to assimilate centuries of Islamic and Christian influence, were also important factors in the situation.

Nicol Macnicol says: "The name of Ram Mohan Roy will ever remain memorable as that of a man who first among his countrymen led the way to wards the dangers and glories of the blue water."[24] Tagore never ceased to admire Ram

Mohan's magnificent attempt to guide India's cultural life in accordance with the requirements of a new age. In one of his essays he says: "We have to make our union with the West worthwhile. This is our responsibility in the process of building up a greater India. We might turn our faces away and declare that we have nothing to accept, but we cannot turn the tide of history; we cannot, even if we try, impoverish Indian culture in this manner.

"All the greatest men amongst us have tried to bring about a synthesis between the East and the West. The best example of this is Ram Mohan Roy. There was a day when, all alone, he had the courage to take his stand upon the common claim of humanity, and tried to unite India with the rest of the world. His vision was not dimmed by obsolete conventions and customs. His remarkably generous heart, and his equally generous intellect, prompted him to accept the message of the West without ignoring the East. He braved the wrath and hostility of his countrymen in order to impart to us a knowledge of the universal rights of men as men. He taught us that truth belongs to all men; that we Indians belong to the whole world.

"Ram Mohan did not permit India's consciousness to become narrow or slavish, but extended it in time and space. He established a bridge between Indian and European culture, and therefore even to-day his personality and work remain a powerful force towards the creation of a new India. No blind conventions touched him, no narrow egoism led him to resist the demands of a changing age. He saw that great Time does not end with the past, that it carries its victorious banner into the future under which we must all march together."[25]

We have quoted this long passage from one of the most significant sociological essays of Tagore because it gives us a very vivid idea of the true achievement of Ram Mohan, who had grasped with amazing clarity the fact that the Industrial Revolution in England was bound to bring the East and the West closer, and that India could no longer keep herself in isolation. He was not content to attack the evils *within* Hinduism. This had been done a hundred times before him. "As with Luther, so with Ram Mohan, there were reformers before the reformation". What impressed Rabindranath was the bold attempt to reconcile *all* the important religions with which he came in contact (Hinduism, Islam, Christianity and Buddhism) on the basis of the truths common to them. *Monier Williams*: says "Ram Mohan Roy was perhaps the first earnest-minded investigator of the science of comparative religion in the world."

As early as 1885, Tagore had written a long essay on Ram Mohan in the course of which he had associated himself wholeheartedly with the Brahma Samaj. He had declared that 'Brahma Dharma' was universal religion. "Brahmadharma is the result of India's deepest 'sadhana'... ....The whole world has reason to be grateful to India for this."[26] Later on, he cut himself off more and more from the Samaj, but the influence of Ram Mohan persisted throughout his life.

We have considered the influence of Devendranath and Ram Mohan over Rabindranath. Another important figure of the Brahma Samaj movement was that of Keshab Chandra Sen. Tagore has written: "Ram Mohan had flung open the door,....Keshab came and intellectual and religious horizons were widened." The influence

of Keshab Chandra over Rabindranath can be seen in the latter's acceptance of many of the ideas of Christianity which Keshab Chandra had popularized. *Edward Thompson* says: "Keshab Chandra Sen's direct influence over Rabindranath has not been much.....But his figure was so important during these formative years, that without him the poet must have been born in a far poorer heritage of thought and emotion."[27]

Tagore and the Upanisads

We must now consider some of the purely religious and philosophical influences over Tagore.

The Upanisadic element in Tagore's writings has been noticed by many of his critics, and in later chapters we shall see in detail the ideas which he owes to the Upanisads. Here we must confine ourselves to some general remarks and references.

It has often been said that in Tagore we find the culmination of the 'Indian Renaissance', a phrase which has become very popular with recent writers on Indian culture. Frequently, however, the term 'Renaissance' is used much too casually. It has been employed to denote a certain quickening of literary and artistic talent which takes place in an 'age of fusion and tentative endeavour'. It is not generally seen that Tagore is most truly the representative of the Indian Renaissance if that phrase is used in its literal sense of a rebirth, a 'revival'. The enthusiasm with which the great reformers and thinkers of the nineteenth century in India looked back to the ancient philosophical and artistic achievements of their country was equal to the zeal of the fifteenth-century Europeans for the ancient wisdom of Hellas.

In art, philosophy, religion, and social life

alike India of the later nineteenth century harked back to her ancient past. In the Tagore family, Vedic hymns were regularly chanted and passages specially selected from the Upanisads by Devendranath were recited. Nor were these the only scriptures with which Rabindranath was familiar. He was steeped in the epics, and references to the 'Bhagawadgita' abound in his works. He even set about making a new translation of the Geeta into Bengali.

Shree Kshitimohan Sen has quoted a number of passages from the Vedas, specially the Rig Veda, of which he says, Rabindranath had made a special study. He often referred in his pedagogic writings, to the educational ideals of the Vedic age, where the individual was allowed to grow up in harmony with the external world. Of course, Tagore took care to emphasize that blind acceptance of all that the Upanisads contained could be the basis of any sane philosophy. He condemned the tendency towards 'pan-Hinduism' which led some of his contemporaries to believe that the Vedas were infallible. This explains, to a certain extent, why Rabindranath was not much moved by the Arya Samaj Movement for which the infallibility of Vedas was an article of faith. "Even scriptures", Tagore tells us, "were once merely traditions".[28] As *Dr. Amiya Chakravarty* says: Rabindranath was "not influenced by idyllic concepts of an imaginary golden age, but by actualizations of a living past—a growing present silhouetted against the background of historic truth".[29] Unlike Bankim Chatterji, Tagore's attitude towards ancient Indian philosophy was marked by restraint and balance. As his biographer Prabhat Mukerji says, "while others found in the Upanisads something that flattered their national

vanity, Rabindranath found in them an ideal of tolerance and catholicity".[30] He never hesitated to condemn those who made such absurd suggestions as that the latest scientific discoveries about magnetism, radium, etc., were already known to the ancients. In a short playlet "Arya O Anarya" he satirized this attitude towards the Upanisads. As early as 1883 he had joined issue with some of his contemporaries on this point. The controversy between the journal's 'Sahitya' and 'Sadhana' about pan-Hinduism had created a furore at the time. Tagore was even bold enough to attack eminent men like Bankim Chatterji, Chandranath Basu and Pandit Shasdhar. Almost a decade later he wrote a poem in which we get an echo of this controversy.[31]

And yet the Upanisads had a more abiding fascination for Tagore than anything else. Apart from the family tradition, he seems to have made an independent study of the Upanisads specially those which have a theistic tendency, like "Isa" and "Svetasvatara". In his sermons collected under the title "Dharma" Tagore has given us his own interpretations of famous Upanisadic passages. In the "Santiniketan" sermons, too, the philosophy of the Upanisads is seen again and again, though somewhat modified by Vaisnava ideas. Sometimes he even enters upon scholarly discussions about the etymological derivation of certain words, and about their grammar and syntax.[32] Tagore complains that the Upanisads no longer 'live' for us, since they are treated as sacrosanct and read without understanding. A literal and mechanical approach to the Upanisads does not yield much that can inspire us. Rabindranath condemns.[33] The unsympathetic treatment which

they have received at the hands of European writers like *Gough* who, in spite of his scholarship, failed to give a proper estimate of these great works of philosophy because he could not grasp the spirit which breathes through them and confined himself only to the letter.

In the Upanisads, Tagore found an intellectual reservoir in which all kinds of ideas are stored up, and which has been a perennial source of supply for diverse schools of thought. They do not advocate a particular theory about Reality to the exclusion of all other theories. Since Tagore's own philosophic thought was not dogmatic in the least, he could make better use of the Upanisads than those who 'interpret' them with preconceived notions about 'dualism' or 'monism'.

The immanence of God Tagore seems to have taken over directly from the Upanisads. Even foreign critics are struck by this. *V. Lesny*, for instance, says: "The teaching of some of the Upanisads may be abbreviated to the effect that .....everything around us is permeated by God.....On this theopanism Rabindranath's religious and philosophical opinions, especially as expounded in 'Sadhana', are found".[34] Rabindranath often describes God as all-pervasive; he who 'inheres' in everything. In one of his poems, he writes of the

"....eternal, unbroken unity
Of one God in herbs and forest bushes,
In water and fire, in all the universe,
With all its creatures....."[35]

Here we find almost literal faithfulness to the passage in the "Svetaswatara Upanisad" where

God is described as dwelling in every object of creation, in trees, in water, in forest vegetation, etc. :

"....Yo devognau yopsu
Yo visvam bhuvanamavivesa.
Ya osadhisu, yo vanaspatisu....etc.[36]

God, however, is not merely united with all else, He is also exalted above all else, and this transcendence of God, too, Rabindranath takes over from the Upanisads. Brahman, the 'Supreme God of all the gods',[37] is described by Tagore in one of his sermons as "the One who is silent like a tree, while all else moves." Corresponding to the two aspects of transcendence and immanence we find in Tagore's works, as in the Upanisads, the two conceptions of God's magnificence and his tenderness. There is, Tagore claims, later no contradiction in accepting both these ideas.

We find Tagore acknowledging what Rudolf Otto calls the "awesomeness" of God, "for fear of whom fire burns and winds blow and the sun shines."[38]

He is likened to a 'lifted thunderbolt'[39] and his power is compared with that of a terrible flash of lightning which breaks open the door and crashes into the house:

But this is only one aspect of God. "I thought you to be the terrible one whose tongue of fire flames into the broken heart of the wretched.... But now that to strike me you have come down to my own little world, you have grown small and I am afraid no longer."[40] In illustration of this merciful aspect of God Rabindranath was fond of quoting the Upanisadic words : "Rudra, yatte daksinamukham tena mampahi nityam".

The God of 'Gitanjali' is emphatically this Upanisadic God in whom power and punishment go side by side with love; the God who has sword in one hand and garland in another:[41] the God who conceals music even beneath his thunder:

"Vajre tomar baje bansi".[42]

; the God who says to man, 'I hear you, therefore I hurt, I love you, therefore I punish'.[43]

It has often been urged by European critics that the Upanisads preach the doctrine of an abstract God, wholly outside the intellectual domains, which concern the human mind. Tagore was familiar with this objection, which he tried to answer. "Some modern philosophers of Europe", he says, "who are directly or indirectly indebted to the Upanisads, far from recognizing that debt, maintain that the Brahma of India is a mere abstraction, a negation of all that is in the world; that the Infinite Being (preached by the Upanisads) is found nowhere except in metaphysics".[44] But such an interpretation "is not in accord with the spirit of the Indian mind", even though "a doctrine like this might be prevalent with a *section* of our countrymen". The immanence of God, which we referred to above as being a striking feature of Upanisadic philosophy, is itself a refutation of this charge. "We are enjoined to see whatever there is in the world as being enveloped by God. 'Isavasyamidam sarvam yatkincejagatyam jagat. Can this God be abstracted from the world?".[45] The fact is that there is a positive as well as a negative element in the Upanisads, as surely as there is an immanent as well as transcendent view of God in them, and Tagore was influenced more by the positive than by the negative element.

It will not be accurate to say, however, that Tagore has altogether ignored the negative side. There is an element of mysticism in his writings, reminiscent of the 'negative theology' of the Upanisads. In fact he sometimes defended the latter. "We often hear the complaint", he says, "that the Brahma of the Upanisads is a bundle of negations.....But are we not driven to take the same course ourselves when a blind man asks for a description of light ? Have we not to say in such a case that light has neither sound nor taste nor form nor weight ?"[46]. How then can we blame the Upanisadic thinker for describing God as 'not this', 'not this' ?"

Tagore also points out that the Upanisads proclaim a God who has to be attained by spiritual experience over and above intellectual knowledge. This explains how different tendencies of thought, apparently self-contradictory, find their reconciliation in the Upanisads. "This has been possible", he says, "because they are based not merely upon theological reasoning but on experience of spiritual life. As life is not dogmatic; in it opposing forces are reconciled; ideas of non-dualism and dualism, the Infinite and the finite, do not exclude each other". The Upanisadic ideas, he proceeds, "are concrete, like all truths realized through life. The idea of Brahma, when judged from the viewpoint of the intellect alone, may be an abstraction, but it is concretely real for those who have the direct vision to see it."

But then, if all kinds of diverse ideas have found refuge in the Upanisads, what is the distinctly positive element of which Rabindranath speaks ? It is the idea of Joy, of eternal, blissful life. Tagore sees in this 'principle of Joy' the core of Upanisadic Philosophy, which gives meaning to the negative aspect. This primal

Anandam', this Joy of Brahman, being intellec-,tually unprovable, we have to declare: 'From Him both speech and mind come back baffled. But he who realizes the Joy of Brahman is always free from fear'.[47] This, then, is the "great affirmation"; that the world is blissful. Even sorrow, Tagore says in one of his sermons, is 'anandarupamamritam.' Here, as in scores of other writings, we see the impress left upon him by the Upanisadic idea of Joy. The same might be said of the idea of 'Prana' or life. In fact he often seems to speak of 'life' and 'joy' in identical terms.

In the Ethics of Tagore, too, Upanisadic influence is distinctly visible. That is why he regarded the ideal of self-realization as the highest aim of moral life. His view of 'personality' too can be understood in the light of the Upanisadic emphasis on the 'inner self'. Nothing is dear in itself, the Upanisad tells us, but everything is dear for the sake of the Self. Rabindranath connects the problem of self with that of Immortality, and here too he cites the Upanisads in support of his views. In one of his poems he writes with enthusiasm about a famous passage in the Upanisads which addresses human beings as 'children of the Immortal'.[48] And on a number of occasions he has quoted Maitreyi's words:

Yenaham namrtasyam kimaham tena kuryam?[49]

We have discussed in such detail the influence of Upanisadic Philosophy on Tagore because it was one of the most abiding and decisive factors in the development of his ideas. We conclude with a quotation from his biographer, Prabhat Kumar Mukerji: "Nothing has influenced him more, both consciously and as an

under-current of his thought, than the Upanisads.....I maintain that Rabindranath's entire life is only an evolution and development of his Upanisadic education."[50]

RABINDRANATH AND VAISNAVISM

The true relation between Vaisnava thought and the philosophy of Tagore will probably remain a matter of controversy for Tagore-scholars for many years to come. Even to-day, hardly seven years since the poet's death, the most extreme opinions are being expressed on this point. There are critics, like Dr. Nihar Ranjan Ray, who emphasize the "deep temperamental differences" between Tagore and the Vaisnava writers.[51] On the other hand, there is hardly any striking idea in Tagore's works, be its content ethical, aesthetic or metaphysical, to which critics have not turned and proclaimed: "Here we see the Vaisnava 'prabhava'. Even less justifiable is the manner in which critics seek to counterpose the Upanisadic and the Vaisnava attitudes between which Tagore is supposed to have 'struggled'. The common meeting-ground between Vaisnavism and the Upanisads is scarcely ever taken into consideration, and a case is sought to be made out for a purely Vaisnava or a purely Vedic 'interpretation' of the poet.

What is entirely beyond the limits of controversy, however, is the fact that Tagore was deeply under the spell of the atmosphere and spirit of Vaisnava literature. It is doubtful whether he ever studied the philosophical writings of the Bengal Vaisnavas[52] but he was steeped in Vaisnava poetry ever since his boyhood days. In his Autobiography he tells us how he read the Vaisnava lyrics 'with eager curiosity' and

"went deeper and deeper in the unexplored regions of this treasure-house".[53] The poems of "Bhanusingher Padavali" indicate the extent to which he had absorbed the Vaisnava spirit. In this connection, Sri Aurobindo has spoken of "happiness and originality with which Rabindranath has assimilated the whole spirit of Vaisnava poetry"[54]

One of the factors responsible for this assimilation was the intimate association between Tagore and such profound scholars of Vaisnavism as Srish Chandra Mozumdar and Akshay Sarkar—especially the latter whose collection of the songs of Vidyapati earned a long and appreciative review from Rabindranath. Another factor was the appeal which Vaisnavism held for the Bengali imagination in general and which Tagore, a child of Bengal, could not possibly have escaped. It has been said that "just as the softer beauty of Kalidas' poetry has touched the Bengali imagination far more than the sterner graces of the Epics, so the cult of Krishna has thrown that of Rama very much in the background".

In must be said, however, that 'cult' is not at all a happy word in the present context, and if Edward Thompson implies that Tagore took over from Vaisnavism some kind of Krishna-doctrine, he is certainly mistaken. Moreover, Tagore never studied Vaisnava poetry from any theological standpoint. His was the enjoyment of a poet, not the approval of a philosopher.[55]

One of the most persistent ideas in Vaisnavism is that of the possibility of transforming human love into divine love. *Dr. S. N. Das Gupta* says: "We find that our old Vaisnava poets spoke of eternal, divine love, though the language they used was the language of earthly love

....Very often we find in Rabindranath's poetry a reflection of the Vaisnava poets, and in his romantic descriptions of love we get glimpses of what Jayadeva, Vidyapati and Chandidas must have felt.[56] There is nothing 'Platonic' about the love-poetry of Rabindranath, and the sensual imagery of the Vaisnavas does not seem to have frightened him in the least. As he wrote in one of his later essays: "The Vaisnava poets *were* erotic, but their breath, heavily laden with voluptuousness, did not distract me".[57] As the the poems in "Kari o Komal", "Manasi" and "Mahua" bear out, Tagore's love-poetry often has the effect of suggestives of divine love through the symbolism of human love [58],

In Tagore's philosophy, Love and Bliss are almost interchangeable terms. His utterances about Bliss and Joy are reminiscent of the Vaisnava stress on the 'Hladini Sakti'. It has been said that the figure of Nandini in his play "Raktakarabi" symbolizes the 'Hladini Sakti'. In Tagore's humanism too we find a clear reflection of the humanism of Chandidas, and we shall later on have to consider this affinity in somewhat greater detail. For the present, we conclude this brief account of the Vaisnava influence on Tagore with a few lines from his poem "Vaisnava Kavita" in which he shows the deep connection of Vaisnavism with human affairs :

"Did the Vaisnava poets sing only for the dwellers of Vaikuntha ? All these subtle emotions of love—these courtships, separations and reunions, these stories of Vrindavana and of the lonely nights of Sravana—do all these relate only to the gods in heaven ? Are these poems not meant to quench the desires of the poor mortals on earth ?....

"When I hear these songs, I can see and

enjoy with redoubled sweetness our own good earth. The heavenly notes have laid a charm over our own rivers, trees and flowers. In the love-sick tunes of Radha, our earthly lovers and beloveds find their language.....

"Confide in me truly, O Vaisnava poet ! Where did you see these visions of love, where did you learn these burning love-songs ?

"This garland of songs that you have woven can be offered to our dear ones no less than to God...."[59]

We have said above that in Vaisnava poetry Tagore found a 'transfiguration' of human into Divine love. But from this it by no means follows that he regarded these poems mystical outpourings. The lines quoted above show that he was not unaware of the human element in Vaisnavism.

Tagore and Buddhism

Although Buddhism as an organized religion had ceased to be a force for centuries, in Bengal Buddhistic ideas persisted ; erhaps more than in other parts of the country. They continued to exercise influence on literature, folk-lore and philosophy ; in a sense Vaisnavism itself had within it a good deal of Buddhism in latent form.

For Tagore, Buddhist metaphysics does not seem to have held much appeal. But the personality of the Buddha himself impressed him remarkably and many of his works indicate the effect upon his thought of Buddhist utterances.

Prasanta Mahalanobis says : "The meditative rather than ecstatic temperament of Tagore draws him more towards Gautama than towards Chaitanya".[60] And even foreign critics have seen that Tagore was more attracted by the ascetic-

prince than is usually recognized." What appealed to him, in his own words, "was the Enlightened One's strength and supreme calm, no less than his gentleness."

In Tagore's Ethics we find the influence of Buddhism more pronounced than in his theory of Reality. In fact, *Edmond Holmes* says: "The Ethics of Buddhism has to be affiliated to the Metaphysics of the Upanisads."[61] The teaching of Buddhism, Tagore insisted, must be utilized "to cultivate moral power to the highest extent, to know that our field of activities is not bound to the plane of our narrow self. This is also the vision of the Heavenly Kingdom of Christ."[62]

Tagore has scrupulously avoided the controversy whether Buddha accepted God's existence or not. But in any case ultimate reality, as conceived by Buddhism, was not an abstract, impersonal one. The absolute of Buddhism, if at all we can use such a word, was not an Absolute which would terrorize rather than befriend humanity. Tagore says: "Buddha's Infinite is not the spirit of an unbounded Cosmic Activity, but an Infinite whose meaning is in the positive Ideal of goodness and love. The ways of attaining Nirvana are *positive*. That is why, asked about the original cause of Creation, Buddha said that the question itself was futile".[63] Again and again, Tagore draws our attention to the positive aspect of Buddhism and asks us to overlook the negative, world-denying attitude which undoubtedly lurked within it. In one of his "Santiniketan" sermons he says: "At the root of Buddhism there is certainly a rigid metaphysical theory, but it is not this that has united people under its banner. Its Friendship, its Pity and Mercy and the Universal Love preached by Buddha have destroyed

the barriers that separate man from man."[64] Moreover, just like the Upanisads, Buddhism itself "has generated two divergent currents of thought ; the one impersonal, preaching abnegation of self through discipline ; and the other personal, preaching the cultivation of sympathy for all creatures and devotion to the Infinite truth of Love. The latter which is called the Mahayana had its origin in the positive elements contained in Buddha's teaching which is immeasurable love. It could never, by any logic, find its reality in the Emptiness of the truthless abyss."[65]

This emphasis on love is something which Vaisnavism and Buddhism hold in common, for the love preached by Buddha did not consist of merely abstract feeling. It had for its context practical service of mankind and the 'removal of sorrow' did not exclude the alleviation of the material sufferings of the people. Buddhism like medieval Vaisnavism had within it germs of a vigorous social consciousness. It was this practical and democratic spirit of the Buddhist Ethic which Tagore admired. Buddha said: "Cherish towards the whole Universe immeasurable 'Maitri' (Friendship). In this lies Brahmavihar". [66] The universality of the moral Law was for Buddha a self-evident truth, and he proclaimed it as such. "Buddha was the first of those who declared salvation to *all* men, without distinction, as by right man's own".[67] It is not true therefore that the moral code of Buddhism is inflexible and exalts asceticism to an impossible level. This wrong impression about Buddha's teachings is held not only by the layman, but sometimes even by eminent philosophers. *Bergson*, for instance, in his "Two Sources of Morality and Religion" makes a

division between active and contemplative types of mysticism and says that Buddhism represents the purely contemplative type which excludes action altogether.[68] Tagore tried to correct this error about Buddhism. In 'Sadhana' he quotes from one of Buddha's sermons wherein the latter says that he denounced activity only if it led to evil in thought, word or deed ; and that he preached extinction not of the active self but only of pride, ignorance and lust.[69]

Tagore did not see in Buddhism a call for the annihilation of human personality. In his essay on 'The Problem of Self' he compares the deliverance of Buddhism with that of Christianity. "Christianity uses the symbol of death to express the idea of Man's deliverance from a life of untruth. This is the same as Nirvana, the symbol of the extinction of the lamp."[70] Thus Freedom is not freedom from action but from untruth and ignorance ; it is "freedom from the thraldom of Avidya, the ignorance that darkens our consciousness and tends to limit it within the boundaries of our narrow personal self....Avidya is a spiritual sleep, in which man knows not the reality of his own Soul. When he attains Bodhi, that is, the awakenment from the sleep of Self to the perfection of consciousness, he becomes Buddha".[71]

TAGORE AND CHRISTIANITY

It has been noticed above that Tagore found in Buddhism many associations with Christianity. We must now examine the Christian influence on Tagore in some more detail. Traces of Christian Theism are distinctly visible in his philosophical writings, no less than in his poems. As a man of letters he had absorbed this influence in a manner which made itself felt to many of his western readers. Hegel has said:

"The God of Romanticism is the God of Christianity". And much of the quiet Romanticism of Rabindranath is Christian in spirit. Many of the songs of 'Gitanjali' testify to this. In a review of 'Gitanjali' in the 'Times Literary Supplement' a critic says: "As we read these pieces we seem to be reading the psalms of a David of our own times."[72] Like Keshab Chandra Sen, Tagore found much in Christianity that could, with some modifications, satisfy the religious requirements of India. His own theory of a personal God also attracted him towards Christianity. "The Idea of abstract transcendence," he says, "is certainly not that which Christ preached, nor perhaps the idea of the Christian mystics."[73] He thus wished to approach Christanity in its purer form, being convinced that its ultimate truths were not in conflict with Eastern religious ideas. In fact Christianity itself, as has often been pointed out, is an Asiatic creed. A writer in an American journal has declared that "Tagore is not a Christian, but his attitude reminds us that there was a time when Christianity was an Asiatic creed.. Again and again he has seemed to be more Christian than the Christians."[74]

Tagore compares many of the features of Vaisnava religion with the freshness of early Christianity, which was, like Vaisnavism, intensely humanistic. He says : "Nobody has exalted man more, in every sphere, than Christ has done" The 'divinity of man' is stressed as much by Jesus as by the Vaisnava saints. Consequently Tagore sees in Christianity a 'message of the friendly union between God and man, "Jesus said so-ham'. 'I and my Father are one'. In the light of love for all, he realized his unity with the Supreme Man."[75] It has therefore

been said that the God of 'Gitanjali' is a 'Christ-like God'.[76] And a writer in a Christian journal says : "We have been waiting for some indication of the effect of Christian ideas on a representative Hindu mind. Here surely is the person we have been looking for".[77]

It must be noted, however, that western critics have tended to overestimate the parallelism between Tagore's writings and Christianity. If he was attracted towards Christian Theism, it was only in so far as it confirmed the ideas which he had already absorbed from the Upanisads. This is evident from the 'eastern dress' in which he invariably wrapped up Biblical sayings.[78]

To a certain extent, the intellectual life of Bengal, and especially of Calcutta, throughout the nineteenth century was permeated by Christian ideas, and as such Tagore could not possibly have escaped a certain 'unconscious assimilation' of Christian ideas. Ram Mohan himself had studied Hebrew and Greek in order the better to understand the Bible, and had published his appreciation of the 'Precepts of Jesus'. Through the efforts of able men like Dr. Richardson, Derozio, and Dr. Alexander Duff, Christianity had made much headway. Important conversions had been made, among them Lal Behari De, Kalicharan Benerji, and the great poet Michael Dutt himself. Keshab Chandra Sen gave even more serious thought to Christian Philosophy and Theology, and sought to reinterpret Christianity in terms more congenial to the Indian imagination. Keshab boldly asserted that Europe had understood Christianity but partially. It had grasped Christ's unity with God, but not his unity with humanity. Keshab therefore demanded through his 'Nava-Vidhan' a rejuvenated Christianity, admitting of a 'humanized God',

a conception, which was later to find such brilliant advocacy in Tagore's "Religion of Man".

'WESTERN INFLUENCE' ON RABINDRANATH

The subject of the relation of Christianity to Tagore brings us to what has been termed, with doubtful accuracy, as the 'Western influence on Tagore'. Perhaps the first attempt to assess his influence of European thought on Tagore is to be seen in *Priyanath Sen's* "Western Influence on Bengali Literature". A similar attempt has been made by a writer in the Calcutta Review who, starting with the influence of the West over the Tagore family, has proceeded to discuss many of Tagore's poems and play in relation to European literature.[79]

It must be mentioned at the outset that we cannot with justice speak of a Western influence on Tagore in the sense that he consciously borrowed anything from the West. Nothing in the West ever affected him except as modified by his own essentially Indian genius. "The work of Rabindranath Tagore", says *Ananda Coomaraswamy*, "is essentially Indian in conception and appeal."[80]

Tagore, however, showed remarkable familiarity with trends of thought in the West. As a French critic says: "Nothing in our European culture—our poetry, philosophy, art—is unknown to Tagore. If his taste has nothing to gain in refinement from contact with us, his sensitiveness has become broader through his gleanings from European authors."[81] Tagore did not look to the West for intellectual succour, but he *understood* the West sometimes better than the Westerners themselves. *Gilbert Murray* has admired Tagore for his success "in saying

things that are in our minds, but which we cannot quite bring out."[82]

The real justification for speaking of a Western influence on Tagore lies in the fact that he strove all his life for a synthesis of the East and the West. We have seen above how a similar attempt made by Ram Mohan Roy had evoked the greatest admiration from him. In art, philosophy and religion, Tagore saw the "possibility, nay, the urgent necessity of a union between the Orient and the Occident".[83] That is why *Romain Rolland* has spoken of him as "having contributed, more than anyone else, towards the union of these two hemispheres of spirit."[84]

In a lecture on "East and West", Tagore has given a call for such a synthesis. In his youth he had pointed out that Europe was a victim to the tyranny of the machine, just as India was to the tyranny of convention. But while retaining all his distrust of mechanism, he saw as he came in closer touch with the West, that Science was not a force for evil but was really "Europe's greatest gift to humanity"[85] That force, however was not being used for the elevation of mankind, but was leading to an ever-increasing stratification in human affairs. The 'collective idea' of the West, though admirable in many ways, needed to be supplemented by the 'creative idea' of the East.[86] And the extreme spirituality of the East also required a restatement in the light of the success which the West had achieved in social organization."[87] We must not therefore shun Western culture and philosophy as something alien. The spiritual progress of mankind is indivisible, and if it suffers a setback in the West, the East too must falter. "....If the great light of culture be extinct in Europe, our horizon in the East will mourn in darkness."[88]

TAGORE AND WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

It seems permissible to look for some factual evidence as to Tagore's familiarity with Western philosophical literature.

Tagore had read the works of Spencer, Leslie Stephen and other evolutionists in his youth. Some of his remarks in "Religion of Man" testify to his having read Darwin and Lamarck as well. In his autobiography, he explicitly mentions having read Spencer's 'Data of Ethics'.[89] From the internal evidence of his views about the 'Play-element' in Aesthetics, we can safely conclude that he had read Spencer's "Principles of Psychology".[90] It is well known that Tagore was thoroughly familiar with the works of T. H. Huxley.[91] In his works we also find quotations from and references to Mill, Green, Caird, and William James.[92]

Among eminent Western thinkers with whom Tagore was in personal contact, we might mention the names of Bertrand Russell, Bergson, Croce, Gilbert Murray, Einstein and Stopford Brooke[93] .Tagore has mentioned Russell's view about the objectivity of art-value.[94] And Russell himself has given an interesting description of his conversation with Tagore during which,[95] he tells us, he 'passed into a higher state of consciousness'.

Bergson was probably the only modern thinker who had exercised some direct influence on Tagore. The latter has made some veiled references to Bergson's theory of Change.[96] Reports also exist of the conversation between Bergson and Tagore, when they discussed, among other things, the role of intuition and intellect in Eastern and Western philosophy.

Tagore had a long interview with Croce. Philosophical problems were discussed. In 'Sadhana'

and 'Santiniketan' we find references to the doctrine of the evolving Absolute. This shows that he had read the works of Croce and Gentile.[97] During his talk with Einstein, Tagore raised the question of the objective validity of Truth and Beauty.[98] Keyserling was another philosopher with whom he was in personal contact.[99]

From the above brief account of his relation to Western philosophical literature and personalities, it can be easily seen that he was not at all ignorant of, much less 'indifferent to modern philosophical trends' as alleged by hostile critics in England.

SOME LITERARY INFLUENCES ON TAGORE'S PHILOSOPHY

A detailed examination of the literary influences which determined Tagore's ideas naturally falls outside the scope of this book, but since he was primarily a man of letters we have to take into account some of the major literary figures which influenced his philosophic outlook.

We begin with ancient literature. It has been said that Tagore looked to *Kalidasa* for inspiration much in the same way as Dante looked to Virgil and Spenser to Chaucer. The most vital idea which he took over from Kalidasa, and from classical Sanskrit literature as a whole, is the idea of the unity between man and Nature, between Self and Not-Self—a kind of unity which does not conflict with man's union with the Divine as well. In "Sakuntala", "the hermitage overshadows the play, it overshadows the king's palace itself." The idea running through the drama is "the recognition of the kinship of man with conscious and unconscious creation alike."[100] Nature, in Kalidasa, 'stands on her own right'.

Historically, moreover, Kalidasa represents a 'synthesis of cultures' and in poetry as in philosophy Tagore was attracted towards all synthetic endeavours. In Kalidasa's poetry he found that perfect harmony between the human and the Divine which he missed in most modern poetry. A Bengali critic speaks of "the blending of Classicism and Romanticism in the poetry of Kalidasa" which appealed to Tagore.[101] In the latter's poems we frequently get unmistakable echoes of "Sakuntala"; of the 'love', terrestrial in itself, which demands a 'heavenly transformation' before it can obtain fruition. And in "Kumarasambhavam" Tagore saw, as he has himself stated, 'a message of the union of the Good and the Real'. Ultimate reality is not and cannot be dissociated from the human category of Goodness. Both these ideas, of human love as a symbol of divine love, and of reality as being bound up with the ethical life of man, are to be met with in the works of Kalidasa.

Following *Nalinikanta Gupta* therefore we might say that there is a 'Pagan element' in Tagore which he owes mostly to Kalidasa. Nor has he omitted to acknowledge this debt. In "Prachin Sahitya" he has given us some remarkable appreciations of Kalidasa's works. The poem 'Sekal' is a tribute to the universality and modernity of Kalidasa's appeal. In another poem, 'Meghadoot', Rabindranath speaks of the richness of the ancient poet's imagination.[102]

Apart from the works of Kalidasa, there are two other types of ancient literature which influenced Tagore. These are: (1) The Epics, and (2) Aesthetic writings. Towards the first his attitude was one of reverence but not unthinking adulation. The influence of the 'Rama-

yana' and the 'Mahabharata' over him was primarily ethical. He admired the ideal of duty and self-realization which emerged from them. In the characterization of the two saints Visvamitra and Vasistha he saw the symbol of the interdependence of the active and the contemplative side of human nature respectively.[103] The influence of ancient aesthetic writings on Tagore will be discussed in a later Chapter.

BENGALI LITERATURE

Among the figures that influenced Tagore we shall consider here only the names of Bankimchandra and Behari Lal Chakravarty. In his reminiscences, Rabindranath has mentioned how the journal 'Bangadarshan' "took the Bengali educated classes by storm."[104] He was very much under the spell of Bankimchandra in spite of deep ideological differences with him, as can be seen from his essay on Bankim in the 'Sadhana' Magazine.[105] In his later years Tagore admitted that he was deeply impressed by the literary revolution introduced by Bankimchandra, a revolution which 'freed language from empty rhetoric'[106] and made it more natural.

As for Behari Lal, the influence exerted by him on Tagore's thought was more permanent and its secret lay in the fact that he combined in himself the best that Bengal had produced before him in the field of literature. Prabhat Mukherji, in his life of Tagore, says that Behari Lal brought about a synthesis between two opposite tendencies in Bengali culture represented by Michel Madhusudan's Westernism and Bankim's glorification of Hinduism.[107] It has also been pointed out that the musical quality of Behari Lal's Nature-poetry has left subtle marks on Tagore.[108] Dr. Sachin Sen and others have

also indicated interesting parallels between Rabindranath and Behari Lal.[109]

In conclusion it must be mentioned that Tagore was surprisingly familiar with the popular folk literature of Bengal. Even before modern Bengali language developed there existed an incredible amount of folk-literature in Bengal, innumerable folk tales which Rabindranath had read.[110] There were also the Bauls and village poets or 'Kavi-wallahs' who, like the troubadours of Europe, made poetry a medium of expression for the masses. Tagore was deeply interested in this form of literature as can easily be gathered from his essays entitled 'Loka Sahitya' and from his collection of popular sayings.[111]

EUROPEAN LITERATURE

The English poets who influenced Tagore most were Shelley, Wordsworth and Browning. In later years he was also affected by two American writers, Walt Whitman and Thoreau. Tagore in his youth was known as 'the Shelley of Bengal' and from Shelley he first seems to have taken that faith in the spirituality of love which found independent support from other sources later on. Wordsworth affected him primarily as a Nature-poet. The vigorous optimism of Browning finds its reflection in Tagore's 'Phalguni' and other plays and in many of his poems. In Whitman, Tagore admired the healthy humanism which he had himself developed.

Much has been written about the influence of English writers on Tagore, especially of Browning and Shelley. We have mentioned, however, only what is of interest for an understanding of Rabindranath's philosophy.

REFERENCES

(CHAPTER I)

1. Kalidas Rai: *Rabindra-Kavya Vicharer Bhumika*
2. Letter to Dr. Amiya Chakravarty. See *Kavita*, Vol. 9, No. 3, p. 136
3. *New Essays in Criticism* by Brojendranath Seal
4. Edward Thompson: *Life and Work* p. 5
5. *Pathe O Pather Prante*, p. 13
6. *Ibid.* p. 35
7. *Golden Book of Tagore*, p. 92
8. Address at Santiniketan, 1931. See *Atma-parichaya* p. 104
9. *Golden Book of Tagore*, p. 127
10. *Religion of Man*, p. 163
11. Santiniketan Fifth Series. "..seikhane gyaner sthane vakya karmer sthane abhyasta achar. Sekhane dware ekjan bhayankar "na base achhe."
12. Utsarga no. 21: *Bahir ha' ite dekho na eman kare, Amay dekho na bahire*
13. Dr. Amiya Chakravarty's phrase
14. *Religion of an Artist*, being Rabindranath's contribution to *Contemporary Indian Philosophy* (Edited by S. Radhakrishnan)
15. Nalinikanta Gupta: *Rabindranath* p. 10
16. See *Kavita* (Poush; 1350), p. 139
17. *Religion of Man* p. 92
18. *Jibansmriti*, p. 92
19. Edward Thompson: *Life and Work*, p. 7
20. 1839 to 1905 A. D.
21. *Reminiscences*, p. 96
22. *Cultural Heritage of India* Vol. 2, p, 413. Article on the Brahma Samaj by Dr. Kalidas Nag
23. See *Cultural Heritage of India*, Vol. II, p. 405
24. Nicol Macnicol: *The Making of Modern India*
25. *Purva o Paschim* (from *Samaj*, 1938)
26. This article was published in the Journal *Bharati* (*'Magha'*, 1291). Also cf. *Dharmer Navayug* (from *Sanchaya*,1916)
27. Edward Thompson: *Rabindranath—Poet and Dramatist*, p. 13
28. *Shastra o ek samayer lokachar*.....(*Samaj*)
29. *Golden Book of Tagore*, p. 48
30. Prabhat Kumar Mukerji: *Rabindra Jivani* Vol. I, Ch. II
31. The poem *Hing Ting Chhit* from *Sonar Tari* Also

cf. the poem *Unnati Lakshana* from Kalpana

32. Cf., for instance, his discussion of the terms *vyadadhat* and *paryagat* in Santiniketan—(Fourth Series.)
33. Introduction to *Philosophy of the Upanisads* by S. Radhakrisnan
34. V. Lesny: *Rabindranath—His Personality and Work* p. 174
35. *Agnite Jalete ei viswa-charachare*
Vanaspati ousadhite e debatar
Akhanda akshay aikya (*Naivedya*, no. 57). For other parallels see *Tagore as Vedantin* by Hirendranath Dutta and *Tagore as Seer and Prophet of Aryadharmo* by Dr. S. K. Maitra, both articles published in Vishwabharati Quarterly.
36. *Svetasvatara Upanisad*—II, 17.
37. *Tamisvaranam paramam mahesvaram* cf. Naibedya, No. 57.
38. *Naibedya*, No. 58. Cf. Kathopanishad, VI, 3:—
Bhayadasyagni stapati bhayattapati suryah
Bhayadindrasca vayusca mrtyurdhavati pancamah.
39. *Mahadbhayam vajramudyatam*
40. *Kheya* (Tagore's own translation)
41. *Gitali*: *Ek hate or kripan achhe*
42. *Gitanjali*, No. 47.
Ar ek hate har
43. *Stray Birds*, LXIII
44. *Sadhana*, p. 16
45. Ibid., p. 17
46. Introduction to *Philosophy of the Upanisads*, by S. Radhakrisnan
47. *Yato vaco nivartante aprapya manasa saha*
Anandam brahmano vidvan na vibheti kadacana
48. *Naibedya* No. 60
49. *What shall I do with that which does not lead me to immortality*
50. Prabhat Mukerji: *Rabindra Jivani*, Vol. I, p. 32
51. Dr. Nihar Ranjan Rai *Rabindra Sahityer Bhumika*, Vol. I, p. 223
52. The writer has been unable to find any evidence to show that Rabindranath had read the works of Jiva Goswami, but it seems certain that he had at least dipped into the aesthetic writing of Roopa Goswami.
53. *Reminiscences*, p. 137
54. *Golden Book of Tagore*, p. 89
55. To quote his biographer: *Rabindranath ....Vaisnava sahityer upabhog kariten raser dik ha' ite,*

tattver dik ha'ite nahe, (Prabhat Mukerji: *Rabindra Jivani* Vol. I, p. 165)

56. Dr. S. N. Das-gupta: *Rabi-Dipita* p. 18
57. *Religion of an Artist* (From Contemporary Indian Philosophy)
58. The first poem in *Kari o Komal,* (*Deher Milan*) is definitely inspired by a poem by Jnandas, written in 1530 A. D.
59. The translation of these lines is not altogether literal)
60. *Rabindra Parichaya,* from "Prabasi"
61. Preface to *Philosophy of the Upanisads* by S. Radhakrisnan.
62. *Sadhana* pp. 57-58
63. *Religion of Man* p. 70
64. *Bouddha-dharmer mule ekti kathor tattvakatha achhe, kintu sei tattva-kathay Bouddha-dharma manush ke ek kare ni. Tar maitri, tar karuna, evam Buddhadever viswa-vyapi hrdaya-prasar i manusher sange manusher prabhed ghuchiye diyechhe* (*Raser Dharma* from 'Santiniketan'—Eleventh Series)
65. *Creative Unity* p. 71
66. *Man* (Andhra Lectures) p. 52
67. *Creative Unity* p, 69
68. Bergson: *Two Sources of Morality and Religion* p. 191
69. Quoted also in *Santiniketan Thirteenth Series.*
70. *Sadhana* p. 72
71. Ibid. p. 32
72. *Times Literary Supplement* 7th. November, 1914.
73. *Sadhana* p. 154. Cf. *Creative Unity,* p. 129.
74. Quoted in Dr. Aronson's *Rabindranath Through Western Eyes* p. 85.
75. *Man* p. 52
76. Quoted by S. Radhakrisnan from Rev. Saunders.
77. *The Baptist Times* February 13, 1914.
78. Cf. W. S. Urquhart's article on *The Philosophical Inheritance of Rabindranath Tagore.*
79. *Calcutta Review* April, 1933. The article is by Mr. J. K. Das-gupta
80. Quoted in Radhakrisnan's *Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore.*
81. *Modern Review,* June, 1918
82. *Letter from Gilbert Murray to Rabindranath,* dated 9th May, 1937
83. *Two Open Letters on International Problems* 1935.
84. *Modern Review* Vol. 26, p. 80

85. *Creative Unity*, p. 193
86. Ibid. p. 99
87. *Purva o Paschim*
88. *Creative Unity* p. 98
89. *My Reminiscences* p. 172
90. Cf. the Chapters on Aesthetics below. Also, *My Reminiscences* p. 194
91. In *Santiniketan*, (Third Series), there are a number of references to, and even direct quotations from, T. H. Huxley.
92. Cf., for instance, Rabindranath's reply to D. L. Roy, in which he has quoted a long passage from Caird.
93. For an account of Rabindranath's conversation with Stopford Brooke, and other Unitarians, see Willim Rothenstein's *Men and Memories.*
94. *Man* (Andhra Lectures) p. 32
95. *The Nation*—18th July, 1925.
96. *Personality*, p. 61. ("What the modern thinker says about movement is correct....")
97 Cf. *Sadhana*, p. 126 *Western metaphysics has now begun to talk of the evolution of God himself.*
98. See Appendix. II, *Religion of Man.*
99. Rabindranath's conversation with Keyserling is described by Dr. Aronson: *Rabindranath Through Western Eyes*—Ch. IV.
100. *Creative Unity*, p. 50
101. Atulchandra Gupta: *Rabinaranath o Sanskrit Sahitya* (From *Jayanti Utsarga*—p. 18)
102. The poem *Meghadoot* from *Manasi.*
103. *Prachin Sahitya*
104. *My Reminiscences* p. 101
105. *Sadhana* (Journal, Vaisakh, 1301)
106. Religion of an Artist—from *Contemporary Indian Philosophy*
107. Prabhat Mukerji: *Rabindra Jiwani* Vol. I, p. 24.
108. Vishwapati Choudhury: *Kavye Rabindranath*—Chapter One
109. Sachin Sen: *Rabindra Sahityer Parichaya*, Priyalal Das: *Rabindranath*, Arun Kumar Mukerji: *Rabindra Kavya Jijnyasa* (from Jayanti Utsarga)
110. Cf. Dinesh Chandra Sen's *History of Bengali Literature* p. 9.
111. *Chhele-bhulano Chhara, Grama Sahitya and Loka Sahitya*

Chapter II

THE DEVELOPMENT

This brief chapter has been devoted to a rapid survey of the writings of Tagore from the philosophic angle. Very few of his writings can be called purely philosophical, and all that has been attempted here is to re-emphasize certain aspects of his work so as to facilitate an understanding of Tagore as a philosopher.

To begin with his prose works, the variety of subjects on which he has written and the elevated, even didactic, tone of some of his most youthful essays make his later achievements in philosophic prose look quite natural. The collection of essays 'Vividha Prasanga' was published on 11th September, 1883, i. e., in the poet's twenty-second year. Most of the essays were written much earlier, dating back to 1881. In these essays, Bacon-wise, the poet speaks of 'Ideal Love', of Friendship, of Human Rights, of Birth and Death of the Universe, of Prakriti and Purusa, and of diverse other matters. In one of these, he even speaks of the development of the Human Race and quotes Mathew Arnold![1] and in another he discusses Evolutionism, which he translates as Abhivyakti-wada. The essay 'Prakriti-Purusa' shows his remarkable interest in philosophical matters even at this early age.

Four years later, a collection of brief essays was published under the title "Alochana". The interest in philosophy is here seen to have found more definite directions. He writes now of "Novelty of the Old" (Puratanер Nutanattva), of Equality, (Samya) of the Falsehood and the Reality of the World, (Jagatmithya, and Jagatsatya) of Unconsciousness, (Achaitannya), of

Virtue and Vice, of Matter and Spirit (Jada O Atma). The tone is more serious, and the thoughts are gradually taking shape. Tagore also discusses here the meaning of Beauty, so that these writings are the first indications of his aesthetic views. Of special interest for a study of his aesthetics are the essays, 'Saundaryer Karan', 'Saundarya Vishwapremi', 'Kavita o Tattva', and 'Saundaryer Upayogita'. In his Autobiography, Tagore writes that in this book, (Alochana), he had "tried to give a philosophical definition of the Truth of Nature", and to show "that Limit is not mere Limit, it only reflects an infinitesimal part of Reality"[2] We must not therefore dismiss these essays as insignificant; the author continued to take them seriously. In fact some of these are about purely philosophical problems of Nature and the Human Self.[3] The last part of "Alochana" is called 'Vaisnava Kabir Gan' and deals with various aspects of Vaisnavism which even then had impressed Tagore.

The next important prose work is 'Samalochana'. The interest here is mainly aesthetic, and centres round the essays on 'Satyer Ansha', 'Sangit-o-Kavita', and 'Vastugata-o-Bhavagata Satya'; the last named gives us an inkling into Tagore's later views about romanticism and realism in poetry. The Vaisnava influence is seen to have persisted, as evidenced by the two essays, 'Chandidas-o-Vidyapati', and 'Bauler Gan'.

In the next two important philosophical works we find a sudden return of Vedic and Upanishadic influence. From these works, 'Brahma Mantra' and 'Upanisnad Brahma', we get an idea of Tagore's solid grounding in the Vedas and Upanisads. Many of the 'slokas' quoted in these books recur again and again in later

works and even their interpretations are very often the same. Perhaps the fact that he spent these years in the company of his father at Santiniketan explains this spell of Upanisadic influence. A short 24-page tract on 'Brahmopanisad' also belongs to this period.

After this there is nothing to hold our attention,[4] till we come to 'Panchabhut' published in 1896. This book, which is in the form of a half-serious, half-jocular conversation between 'elements', is the earliest of Tagore's works from which passages might safely be quoted as illustrating his philosophy. In this conversation the 'elements' have their distinct roles. Air represents Idealism, Earth a kind of opportunism, Water self-sacrifice, and so on. The poet himself plays the part of a Greek Chorus, a sort of ideal mediator between the elements.[5] Here we have an example of that healthy scepticism about all extreme and one-sided doctrines which, as we shall see later, constitutes one of the chief features of Tagore's philosophy. In this book he appears for the first time as a thinker with his own views about vital problems and determined to reconcile conflicting aspects of truth. Some of the more important sections of 'Panchbhut' are:—'Manushya', 'Mana', 'Akhandata', 'Kavyer Tatparya' and 'Saunderyer Sambhandha'. the last two being particularly significant for his aesthetics.

The period from 1901 to 1909 is one of political, educational and literary prose with which we are not directly concerned here. The poet's educational philosophy can be obtained from 'Siksha' and his political philosophy, if we can speak of such a thing, from various essays grouped in "Atmasakti", "Swadesh" "Vichitraprabandha", "Samaj", and "Raja Praja". The

four books of literary criticism, namely, "Sahitya", "Prachin Sahitya", "Loka Sahitya", and "Adhunik Sahitya" were all written in 1907. Some of them are of enduring significance especially "Prachin Sahitya" where Tagore has given us his theory of drama and his criticism of poetry. To this period also belongs the essay 'Baul' which indicates Rabindranath's affinity with the Sahajiyas and their "Philosophy of the Body" and is of therefore some philosophic interest.

The year 1909 is perhaps the greatest landmark in the philosophic development of Rabindranath. In this year were published "Dharma" and the first eight parts of "Santiniketan"; and these books constitute the basis for Tagore-criticism so far as his philosophy (especially Ethics) is concerned. Many of the later essays in "Sadhana" "Creative Unity" and "Personality" are only adaptations from passages originally printed in "Dharma" and "Santiniketan". Since these books have been extensively quoted in subsequent chapters any discussion of them is out of place here. Some important points must, however, be mentioned. Although both Dharma and 'Santiniketan' were published in 1909, there is a distinct difference of outlook between the two.[6] In the former the influence of the Upanisads is predominant while in the latter the attitude is modified by Vaisanava influence. Both books contain numerous citations from the Upanisads and therefore at first sight, both seem to reflect Upanisadic influence. But closer analysis reveals that in the latter book, the interpretation is made from the standpoint of 'love', while in "Dharma" Rabindranath follows the orthodox line of interpretation. A remarkable instance of this diversity is the interpreta-

tion of Maitreyi's words : "Yenaham namrtasyam kimaham tena kuryam".

"Dharma" was published only one or two months before the first part of "Shantiniketan", and even in the first part the shifting of the emphasis is already seen. This change in so short a time is remarkable, and an investigation into the poet's life and environment might reveal an interesting subjective crisis throwing some light on this matter. Such an investigation, however, is beyond our scope.

In the following two years, five more parts of "Santiniketan" were published. 1912 is another important year. Apart from the religious writings, "Dharma Shiksha" and "Dharmer Adhikar", Tagore gave to the world in this year his most important autobiographical work "Jibansmriti". A volume of letters, "Chhinnapatra" was also published. These books are indispensable for an appreciation of Tagore's thought ; especially the former, in which he gives his own authentic reading of some of his poems, thus saving us from the dangers of guesswork.

In 1912-13 Tagore delivered a number of lectures at Harvard University, and these were collected under the title of "Sadhana", or the realization of life. This is the chief philosophic work of Tagore in English and deals with Self, God, Man's relationship with Nature, the problem of Evil, Love, and the philosophy of action. Although many of the ideas from 'Santiniketan' are repeated in "Sadhana" the latter serves as a surer guide to his philosophy ; in the first place because maturer thought and careful revision have gone into it and in the second because these lectures were delivered before western audiences and have therefore naturally a more

modernized accent without yet losing any of their spirituality.

In 1916 the last three parts of "Santiniketan" were published. These bear distinct traces of the gloom of war and our admiration for Tagore as a philosopher increases when we find that in spite of this gloom his faith in humanity remained unshaken. If ever Tagore was in danger of sinking into pessimism it was now; but he got over this phase and the last part of "Santiniketan" ends on a note of ennobling optimism.

This year, 1916, also saw the publication of two volumes of essays, "Sanchaya", and "Parichaya." Of these 'Roop O Aroop' from the former and "Chhabir Amga" from the latter are purely philosophical in import.

"Personality" was published in 1917. In this collection of essays we find the underlying idea of the "personal element" in Reality, and also in art and ethics, which Tagore later developed in many of his poems and plays. Of special significance are the essays "what is art" "The World of Personality", and "the Second Birth". Other prose writings in Bengali after 1917 deal mostly with his political and educational philosophy. In 1930 the "Letters of Bhanusingh" show a recurrence of Vaisnavism, and another essay on Rammohan was published in 1936.

"Creative Unity" was published in 1922. In this book Tagore has re-emphasized some of his aesthetic views and has extended his concept of creativity from the human imagination to Reality as a whole. This concept is more markedly present in this book than in earlier philosophic writings. Tagore's favourite theme of "reconciling" the Infinite with the finite—reconciling,

in fact, all that is 'apparently exclusive'—finds expression here. In "Creative Unity" he again pleads for a synthesis of Eastern and Western thought and renews his warning about the danger of dogmatizing in philosophy.

We next come to "Religion of Man".[7] In this book Tagore seems to have summed up his entire philosophy. The Upanisads are here, and the Vaisnava poets; Spencer's evolutionism, biological doctrines, mysticism, history of religions, the psychology of aesthetics, all are touched upon. Above all, Tagore gives us here his own 'world-view' and relates his views about personality with his theory of the Absolute. An elevated humanism which does not exclude the divine, a rational system which leaves ample room for the fortuitous and the unpredictable, such is the all-embracing nature of the philosophy of "The Religion of Man".

The last important philosophic work of Tagore is a collection of lectures delivered at the Andhra University and published under the title "Man". Here, he elaborates his humanism and develops a theory of the super-person. He also gives an original interpretation of the Upnisadic dictum "I am He".[8]

We now come to a brief review of the poems of Tagore in so far as they reflect his philosophy and indicate the general trend of his thought as it took shape from time to time. Being primarily a poet, his deepest thoughts found expression in poetry. Moreover, we find in Tagore the habit of repeating the same idea in different literary media. The poet sees something striking in Nature, or history, or human conduct and writes a poem about it. Then perhaps he takes the main idea and weaves around it a short essay. After some years he writes a story, a

play, or even a novel starting with the same theme. No student of philosophy therefore can afford to confine his attention to his prose writings ignoring his poems. It is true that Tagore has probably written more serious prose than any other poet of his stature. Nevertheless, to confine ourselves to it would be like writing a philosophy of Wordsworth without a single reference to the "Prelude".

Leaving out his youthful creations[9] we find the poet starting as a young poet ought to start in the correct Shelleyan fashion, namely, with Melancholy. In Sandhya-Sangeet therefore the main themes are transiency of things earthly, and meaninglessness of life. But the spell is soon broken ; and in "Prabhat Sangeet" we not only get "glimpes of liberation from sorrow", but a wonderful description of the poet's feeling of solidarity with his environment in the poem 'Awakening of the waterfall' (Nirjharer Swapnabhanga"). It has been said by no less a critic than Ajit Chakravarty that in this volume we get the germs of all later poetic ideas.[10] Even if this be an exaggeration, the poem 'Nirjharer Swapnabhanga' is very significant and embodies two important ideas, namely, that it is in communion with Nature that the mystery of Reality can be fathomed ; that such communion does not imply solitary meditation but a healthy, living contact with the world :

"My heart has opened out to-day,
The world comes close and whispers to me".[11]

and finally that such an experience must change our outlook on life entirely:

"Sahasa aji e jagater mukh
Nutan karia dekhinu keno?

The poems of "Bhanusingher Padavali" indicate Tagore's preoccupation with Vaisna-

vism, but contain no original philosophy and are admittedly imitative. In "Kari O Komal" the faith in man's unity with world, which we noticed in "Prabhat Sangeet," is deeper and the ascetic ideal is entirely rejected. The lines which supply the key to this book are:—

"I do not want to die in this beautiful world" In the midst of mankind I long to stay on.[12] There is also in "Kari-O-Komal" a deepening belief in 'love' as the reconciler of all opposites, a belief which comes out even more clearly in "Manasi," the predominantly imaginative atmosphere of which, however, prevents the concept from attaining clarity.

In "Sonar Tari", as many critics have pointed out, we have the first glimpses of the 'Jibandebata' idea in the poetry of Tagore, an idea which, in one form or another, recurs in this poetry from now onwards. The very first poem in this volume has been a subject of controversy. Various interpretations have been given [13] some of them highly mystical. The poet himself seemed inclined to explain it in ethical terms. "The true immortality is that of deeds, not of an abstract self. The Golden Barge has no room for individuals but only for their actions."[14]

"Chitra" shows Tagore's spirituality taking a definite turn in the direction of the esoteric. Even the worship of Beauty, which has made the poem Urvasi so famous, is on the level of the pure abstract.[15] In 'Antaryami' and 'Jivandevata' we get a more vivid insight into Tagore's conception of the Deity at this stage.

In "Kalpana" we find that the new century has brought into the poet's mind a sense of duality ('dvaitanubhuti') which manifests itself through a conflict of the human and the divine, the individual and the social, the rational and

the intuitional; and a resolution of these conflicts appears henceforth to be the main endeavour of his philosophy.

"Naivedya", published one year later, marks one of the periodic returns to ancient Indian Philosophy. The Upanisads dominate this volume, which contains not a little moralizing. "Kheya" as the very title indicates, signifies a 'crossing over' of the poet's mind to a new level of thought. The dual experience—of the world and of God—is still there; but each is now on a higher plane. The initiation has already taken place into a personal method of approaching Reality which characterizes the poems of "Gitanjali". This famous book is more religious than philosophical; but so are, to a degree, many of those mentioned above. The duality we referred to above here takes the form of a dual relationship of subservience and comradeship between man and God. The mood and the atmosphere of "Gitanjali" are carried over into "Gitimalya" and "Gitali".

A departure is visible in "Utsarga" where the conflict recedes into the background and the harmony emerges. The key poem in this volume is poem No. 17, where Tagore explicitly proclaims his faith in the unity of all opposites. We shall discuss this poem in detail in a later chapter.

The next philosophic milestone in the development of Tagore as a poet is reached when we consider "Balaka" which is undoubtedly one of the highest peaks of his poetry. It has been said that the author of 'Balaka' is a pure lyricist, and that no philosophic meanings should be read into it. But this is not true, for 'Balaka' simply bubbles over with philosophic ideas, and what is more important, there seem to be defi-

nite lines along which these ideas are developed. In its historical setting the value of 'Balaka' lies mainly in the fact that while even in his earlier works Tagore had dealt with the problem of transiency and of the 'impermanence of all things earthly', in this book he boldly grapples with the fundamental problem of Becoming and declares that change and movement are the very foundation-stones of reality.

"Purabi" brought into Tagore's work a fresh flavour of Nature. He listens now to the 'Call of the earth' (Matir Dak') and his response shows neither the impetuosity of the mere poet nor the mechanical approach of the scientist but the measured understanding of the philosopher. In "Bana-bani," the consciousness of union with Nature acquires a deeper hue and the emphasis is placed on the common features between Nature and Spirit—'Life' and 'Joy'—rather than on the superiority of Spirit over Nature. Meanwhile, in 1931, Tagore had also published "Mahua" in which the emotion is strong, even pungent, and in which, while the poet still deals with love, it is the strength and compelling power rather than the tenderness of love that seem to impress him.

After this depth of emotion, there is small wonder that Tagore tends to become introspective, even autobiographical, in "Parisesh". This is one of those poetical works in which he does not hesitate to individualize, in terms of his own spiritual life, the higher reaches of human experience. He does so with the profound awareness that his own life represents, in a fashion, the struggle and achievement of all men. Consequently, the reminiscent, personal mood yields to one in which Tagore speaks as a humanist, as one who sees in human life the

highest significance of the universe. This is the mood of "Punascha" "Patra-put" and "Sesh Saptak" especially the last-mentioned, in which Man is described as the 'ever-lasting speech of the world-worker' ('Vishwakarmer nitya-kaler sei bani, ami acchi').

Tagore continued to write serious poetry even in his very last years, but for Philosophy the value of these last poems is very unequal. In "Akash-Pradip" he speaks primarily as an artist, while in "Navajatak" we find a deepened social consciousness, and a reassertion of his faith in human personality in more concrete terms. "Rogashajjay", "Arogya" and "Janmadine", all published in the last year of his life, he was preoccupied with the problem of Immortality.

It now only remains to notice some of Tagore's plays. We shall omit from our brief review not merely the comedies but also most of the lyrical and musical plays or 'dance-drama' and even those plays in which the interest is mainly social or sociological. We shall confine our attention only to those in which some philosophic idea is the centre of interest.

The first play of this kind is "Prakritir Pratisodh". The importance of this play for Tagore's philosophy can be judged from his own words: " 'Nature's Revenge' may be looked upon as an introduction to the whole of my future work.... This has been the subject on which all my writings have dwelt—the joy of attaining the Infinite within the finite."[17] From the ethical point of view also the play is a landmark in Tagore's thought for it signifies a bold rejection of the ascetic ideal of life. The hero, "a sort of Indian Paracelsus", tries to subdue Nature by cutting away all worldly attachments, all bonds of desire. But a little girl brings

him back from his solitary musings intothe joyous world of human affection. On coming back, the Sannyasi realized that the great is to be found in the small, the Infinite within the bounds of Form, and the eternal freedom of the soul in love.[18]

"Visarjan" or 'The Sacrifice' has for its main theme the dispute between divine and human law, between spiritual and secular power. This drama, again, deals with the moral foundations of human actions. Its conclusion is profoundly elevating inasmuch as the idea conquers even though at the cost of a human life.[19]

"Malini" and "Natir Puja" are significant as indicating the fascination which Buddhism always had for Tagore. "Saradotsav" is a ceaseless hymn to life. Here we have the first glimpse of the Bergsonian 'Life-force' in his works. The theme of 'Saradotsav' is developed more forcefully in "Phalguni". In the former life alone was eulogized, but in the latter death too is taken into account. The play is a fantasy of the departure of Winter and of the arrival of Spring as a symbol of the eternal cycle of life on earth. The departing leaves of Winter proclaim that destruction is only the harbinger of new forms of life. The idea of "Phalguni" is the same as that of most of the poems of 'Balaka'. The advent of the new when the old recedes into the background is with Tagore, as with Shelly, a favourite theme. The motif of 'Phalguni' is the necessity of struggle to keep the life-stream moving. To know Life properly one must know it in the context of death.[20]

In 1910 Tagore had written "Raja" one of his greatest plays. This is also, probably, the only play in which the philosophic idea domi-

nates throughout and the characters are *merely* symbolical. Even the lyrical element, so inseparable from Tagore's art, is definitely subdued here, and everything centres upon the mystery of the Great King who symbolizes Ultimate Truth, or Reality, or God. Trying to see the King externally, (that is, as an 'object'), Queen Sudarsana is baffled. But her chamber-maid, simple and unsophisticated, has understood that the Queen can truly 'see' the King only through her innermost love. The King is ugly in external form, but he is all Beauty when seen by the Queen within heart: (the Great Truth is within us, to see it without us is to distort it).

In order to heighten the effect of this idea Tagore works out a contrast between the Real King and a puppet King, Subarna, who tries to dazzle the Queen by his splendour and pomp. For a moment the Queen falters, and allows herself to be deceived; she even gives the puppet King her wreath. But she soon corrects her mistakes and at last sees the Real King "by the light of her self", so that the gate of the dark chamber is thrown open. There have been many interpretations of this play but, if it has to convey any Philosophy, there is little doubt that the Queen stands for the human Self and the King for Absolute Reality. The suffering which the Queen has to undergo is really the suffering which is inevitable for a knowledge of the Ultimate. Have not the Upanisads told us that the Path of self-realization is beset with difficulties—'durgam pathastat kavayo vadanti'!

In "Dakghar", "Muktadhara", and "Raktakarabi" Rabindranath tackles the problem of personality. In the first, this idea is in a

germinal state. ("Amal personifies man's longing for free and natural development. This longing is fettered by external trivialities".[21] But, as his biographer points out, "Dakghar" reflects Rabindranath's own experience of bondage as a child, more than a nything else.[22] In 'Muktadhara' he consciously attacks the dangers of mechanism which modern civilization brings in its wake and in 'Raktakarabi' he protests, on behalf of Human Personality, against such a mechanization.

REFERENCES
TO
CHAPTER II

1. Cf: *Manoganit*
2. *Jibansmriti* (First Edition) p. 171
3. *Atmar Sima, Nishphal Atma, Atmar Amarata,* and *Sthayitva*
4. The only exception being a short pamphlet on Ram Mohun Roy, published on 18-3-1885 A. D.
5. V. Lesny: *Rabindranath Tagore—His Personality and Work* p. 109
6. This distinction has been brought out by Dr. S. K. Maitra, in his article: *Tagore as Seer and Prophet of Aryadharma.*
7. The only other philosophic work between 1922 and 1930 being as essay entitled *The Meaning of Art*
8. In 1935, two open letters on international affairs, by Rabindranath and Gilbert Murray, were published under the title: *East and West.*
9. *Kavi Kahini, Bana Phul, Shaishava Sangit.*
10. Ajit Chakravarty: *Rabindranath* p. 21.
11. *Hridaya aji mor kemone gelo khuli*
    Jagat asi setha karichhe kola-kuli—from *Prabhat Sangit.*
12. *Marite chahi na ami sundara bhuvane*
    Manaver majhe ami banchibare chahi.
13. By Sir Jadunath Sircar, Ajit Chakravarty, Mohit Sen and others.
14. Charuchandra Banerji: *Rabi Rasmi* Vol. I, p. 228.
15. Cf. Thompson's statement: *Urvasi is the most unalloyed worship of abstract beauty in world literature.*
16. *Shesh Saptak* poem No. 36
17. *My Reminiscences,* p. 238.
18. Ibid., p. 237
19. Cf. V. Lesny: *Rabindranath Tagore-His Personality and Work* p. 75
20. *jiban ke satya bale jante gele mrityur madhya diye t'ar parichaya chahi*
21. V. Lesny: *Personality and Work* p. 171
22. Prabhat Kumar Mukerji: *Rabindra Jivani* Vol. I, p. 497

Chapter III

ON ULTIMATE REALITY

We have seen in the last two chapters the various influences that have left their imprints on the vast mass of serious literature produced by Tagore. Our aim so far has not been to discuss in detail his own views about the fundamental problems of Philosophy, but rather to study the genesis of his ideas, and to bring out his "philosophic personality" in clearer relief than has been done by critics who have approached his work from a purely literary standpoint.

It was also noticed in passing that there is a good deal of controversy regarding the extent to which a philosophic treatment of Tagore's work is permissible at all. Before attempting an exposition of his philosophy, a few words on this subject are called for.

Tagore was of course primarily a poet and an artist. But it is sometimes held that he was only an artist, and that we cannot possibly find any philosophy in his writings unless we distort them. *Dr. Nihar Ranjan Ray*, for instance, maintains that Tagore's ideas about Religion, Philosophy, Educational Theory, and even about social and political organization, can only be treated as offshoots of his aesthetic experience. "Apart from all these, beyond all these, at the root of all these, we find Rabindranath the poet".[1] Dr. Nihar Ranjan does not deny that the poet "has caught glimpses of many great and vital truths", but he has done so, the author continues, "not by following any definite trends of thought, not by weaving the web of theory,

not by traversing the difficult road of knowledge, but by simple experience".[2] While containing an element of truth, this characterization of Tagore's thought cannot be accepted in its entirety. Tagore might not have 'woven a web theory', but no serious writer can completely eschew theoretical problems; nor can we say with justification that he "avoided the difficult road of knowledge". Dr. Nihar Ranjan adds that Tagore's urge is the 'urge of expression, not of purposive thought". It is difficult to accept, however, that in "Sadhana" and "Religion of Man", there is no evidence of purposive thought.

Another critic who was sceptical about the philosophic value of Tagore's works was Edward Thompson, who went to the extent of accusing Tagore of intellectual weakness and vacillation. "There goes a certain mental laziness about him... We often feel that there is slackness somewhere probably at the very springs of thought and conception... He has been embroidering the margins of truth". What Thompson mistook for vacillation is really breadth of vision and tolerance of outlook.

On the other hand, some writers, in their zealous attempts to read philosophy into Tagore's works, have gone to extremes which cannot be justified. Some typical examples might be found in *Charuchandra Banerji's* "Rabi Rasmi". While discussing, for instance, one of the poems in "Sonar Tari",[3] this writer says : "In this poem we find a mixture of the platonic doctrine of Reminiscences, the Neo-Platonic theory of a Soul in inanimate objects, and Schelling's doctrine of Identity".[4] The poem in question is really a description of the sea as seen from the beach at Puri. Such examples are scattered throughout the book.

Even so keen a critic as *Ajit Chakravarty* has often slipped into remarks about Tagore's affinity with the Evolutionists which cannot but be regarded as far-fetched attempts at comparson. The author, whose "Kavya Parikrama" is rightly regarded as a landmark in Tagore-criticism, begins in a restrained manner. He seems to recognize the limits of a purely theoretical interpretation of the poet. His defence of such an interpretation is also admirable. "Poetry is not just expression", he tells us, "but the expression of truth",[5] and consequently it is not merely permissible but even necessary to treat a great poet like Tagore as something of a philosopher as well, for his poems are more than the effusions of a lyricist. Nevertheless, we cannot accept the comparson made by Ajit Chakravarti between Rabindranath's 'Jibandebata theory' and the evolutionary theories of Darwin, Samuel Butler and Fechner. One cannot, except in a rather arbitrary manner, relate Tagore's views with the latest researches in Embryology, as Ajit Chakravarty has done. And when the author tells us that there is not merely similarity but "complete agreement"[6] between Rabindranath on the one hand, and Darwin and his disciples on the other, we cannot but consider his procedure as being unfair to the poet.

On this point, some reference is necessary to the view of Dr. Radhakrishnan, Dr. S. N. Das-Gupta, and Dr. S. K. Maitra, all of whom are agreed in treating Tagore as a philosopher without doing violence to the essentially poetic quality of his thought. Radhakrishnan admits that "we cannot find any systematic exposition of Rabindranath's philosophy in any of his writings".[7] Even "Sadhana", he says, is a book of meditations and sermons rather than a philosophical treatise." It is a sigh of the soul rather than a

reasoned account of metaphysics, an atmosphere rather than a system of philosophy". But, Radhakrishnan continues, "we feel that the atmosphere is charged with a particular vision of Reality".[8]

Dr. Das-Gupta, unlike Radhakrishnan, (whose book was published as early as 1919) had the advantage of consulting some of the later writings of Tagore, on the basis of which he has given us some truly philosophic interpretations. He has, (to use his own words), "tried to bring out, from the different poems of 'Balaka' arranged in philosophical order, the inner religious consciousness of Rabindranath".[9] He has rightly pointed out that "although Rabindranath is no metaphysician, his poetry has gained in flesh and blood on account of his philosophic experience. Anyone who has read the works of Pringle Pattison, Bosanquet and Bergson will find striking similarities between many of the ideas of Rabindranath and those of the above-mentioned authors".[10]

Dr. S. K. Maitra, too, like Radhakrishnan and Dr. Das-Gupta, is of the opinion that there is in Tagore's works a good deal that is of genuinely philosophic interest. No defence, he says, is required for writing about the Philosophy of Tagore, because the tradition of Indian culture is such that there is no incongruity in talking of a poet's philosophy. "We never thought that there was any anomaly in a poet being a philosopher or a philosopher being a poet....Rather, we should hesitate to call anyone a poet if he had no Philosophy. The word 'kavi' has much deeper significance than the English word 'poet'. A kavi is a poet, philosopher and prophet rolled into one. Tagore was a kavi, and therefore it is most befitting that we should speak of his Philosophy."[11] Dr. Maitra also points out that Rabindranath had

a world-perception, a 'Weltanschauung'. "Our Indian word for Philosophy is Darshana or vision, and Tagore certainly had a Darshana, so that it does not matter very much whether or not he had a Philosophy in the technical sense. For the really essential part of Philosophy is not its logical superstructure, but its inner core of experience upon which that logical structure rests.[12]

Thus we see that the poetic and the philosophic aspects of Rabindranath's personality do not conflict with each other ; on the contrary, they complete each other. "There is a philosopher and a poet in Rabindranath. The one clears the path, and the other treads it.[13] His philosophy itself was for him a 'rasavastu',[14] a thing to be enjoyed and not a theory to be propounded. "In philosophy," says *Ramananda Chatterji*, "Tagore is no system-builder. He is of our ancient religio-philosophical teachers, whose religion and philosophy are fused components of one whole."[15]

It is pertinent to ask what view Tagore himself takes of the matter. It is true that on a number of occasions he has disclaimed philosophic originality.[16] In one of his most important addresses he says: "I have no right to speak as a metaphysician. Regarding the controversy between Monism and Dualism, I can only keep silent. From immediate experience alone can I say that within me is expressed the joy of my inner Divinity."[17]

It is evident, however, that Tagore *did not* always keep silent about Monism and Dualism ; and that he had very considered opinions about these fundamental problems of philosophy. On one occasion he declared: "I know that poetry is not my sole religion ; there is something

beyond it." Tagore often felt that there was some fundamental philosophic truth which ached for expression through his poems, and of which he was himself unaware. As early as 1886 he had written in one of his poems : "I feel as though there is some ultimate truth in my mind which sums up all that I feel. It is this truth that my imagination pursues, though in vain":[18]

We certainly find in has work therefore the 'raw material' of Philosophy. The finished product in the shape of a clear-cut theory is not there, but he has given his readers many broad hints and suggestions on the basis of which a theistic philosophy can be worked out. But before we do so we must accept that we are dealing with a philosophy of a special type and hence our method of approach must not be as though we were examining the views of a Russell or a Whitehead. Not being a philosopher like them, Tagore had his peculiar ways of philosophic expression which must not be lost sightof. The subtle nuances which are inevitable in the thought of an artist-philosopher extort from the student adequate consideration for the special features of his philosophy. These latter may be summed up as (a) emphasis on personal experience and (b) a desire to reconcile all extremes and to harmonize all contradictions.

(a) As for the first, Tagore, who shirked from overmuch 'objectivity', is naturally seen to have followed the dictates of personal experience as a means of attaining truth. To say this is not to imply that he asserted certain doctrines adducing in their support no other proof than that it was *he* who experienced their truth. This would be downright solipsism. By his stress on experience, he only sought to warn his readers against an abstract and wholly impersonal method of looking at fundamental pro-

blems, a method which ignores the emotional side of human nature altogether, and caters only to its cognitive needs.

The second feature mentioned above in a manner follows from the first. Experience is the greatest synthesizer, while discursive reasoning is predominantly analytical. The most striking characteristic of Tagore's philosophical writings is the fact that they are conspicuously free from one-sided theorizing. We have seen in the preceding chapters how diverse and many-sided were the impressions which Tagore had assimilated. It is not to be wondered at, then, that he appears in almost every sphere of thought as the peacemaker between contending 'schools', rather than as the champion of one school against another. Creation, he says, consists in the harmony of contrary forces,[19] and truth lies primarily in relatedness.[20]

This mediating quality of his philosophy is all-important inasmuch as it supplies us with the key to his real opinions in every department of knowledge. To ignore this is to miss the historical significance of his philosophic achievements and to relapse into one-sided, and therefore arbitrary, 'interpretations' of his writings.

Thus, in his views about God and the relation of God to Man and Nature we find that he tried to reconcile the extremes of Transcendence and Immanence ; of Humanism (which exalts man too much) and 'Prapatti' (which proclaims man's insignificance) ; of one-sided naturalism which makes of man a mere product of Nature and extreme spiritualism which cuts man off from nature altogether.

In Ethics too the same under-current is visible. Tagore condemns Hedonism without losing

his faith in the joy of life ; he reconciles one-sided tendencies of individualism and universalism in social life ; he shows how Freedom and Determinism both hold their sway in human affairs; he condemns both Asceticism, and the egoistic ideal; he upholds an activistic ethics without worshipping the "mechanical whirlpool of activity which is sometimes wrongly confused with progress."

In Aesthetics, his guiding principle is the same. External harmony, which he calls proportion or 'Pramana', and internal harmony—grace or 'Lavanya'—are the two criteria of great art. With the aid of these two principles Rabindranath tries to synthesize the human and the divine elements in Art and, prevents Art from falling into a worship either of pure Expression or of pure Emotion. He establishes peace between Romanticism and Realism, and indicates the proper limits of Beauty and Ugliness.

Thus the entire philosophic attitude of Rabindranath may be summed up as one gigantic effort to soften the edges of intellectual preconceptions, to smooth out the sectarian limits of thought, and to preserve the elements of truth and value in each theory while accepting none in its entirety. In his poems this quest after the 'golden mean' is fondly conveyed. Again and again we come across such lines as the following (from "Purabi").

"In my heart is a stream of Darkness
But a stream of Light is in my eyes.
My Song rises up to the Heavens,
But my Dance is on this mortal Earth.
.....
On my left, and on my right,

Are the two streams of Joy and Sorrow.
In the ocean of Rest
The wave of Movement doth merge."[21]

Even in poetry, as the above lines show, Tagore preached restraint and was not carried away by the luxury of feeling. One of his early poems bears quotation in full because through it he seems to have deliberately given us his credo:

..." Tune wishes to hold on to Metre,
And Metre strives to break out into Tune;
Feeling wants to embody itself in Form,
And Form, likewise, abandons itself to Feeling.
The Infinite craves for the Finite's intimate companionship,
But the Finite ever desires to be lost in the Infinite.
"In Creation and Dissolution, I know not through what contrivance,
There is eternal going and coming between Form and Feeling,
Bondage is in search of its own Freedom,
And Freedom begs for a dwelling-place within Bondage."[22]

PROOFS FOR GOD'S EXISTENCE

In the present Chapter we shall discuss Tagore's view of God. For an exposition of Tagore's metaphysical views, a certain amount of isolating and sorting out is inevitable. It must be remembered, however, that the poet himself never attempted to classify his doctrines. "I have never looked at God, Man and Nature as problems which can be considered in isolation from each other. I could never conceive of their

occupying watertight compartments."[23] His philosophy presents an integral picture of God, Man and Nature. "My mind", he says, "is used to look at reality as an integral whole, it being understood, of course, that I am referring to the wholeness of spirit, and not to material Unity."[24] He does not 'argue downwards' from God to Self nor upwards from Self to God. For a philosophic interpretation of his writings, however, we shall have to consider his views piecemeal to a degree.

In the philosophy of Tagore, God is regarded as a postulate, an axiomatic reality. He does not, therefore, advance any of the traditional "proofs" for God's existence. Theism in its higher forms always regards experience to be above proof so far as God is concerned, and Tagore too seems to have held that there was little scope for logical demonstration in this sphere. We must 'feel God' as we feel light, as he put it.[25]

Nevertheless, the idea of God can be made more concrete if we point to some of the considerations which make his existence undeniable. As a recent writer says, "The three old-fashioned theistic proofs (Ontological, Cosmological and Teleological) have their use, but it is not that of a logical proof of Divine existence. They are all attempts, each in its own way, to fill in with content the conception of God whose existence is already presupposed."[26]

Rabindranath also, while regarding God as a 'primary datum of our Nature', does try to fill in this idea with content. He points to the ceaseless activity going on in the Universe which cannot be understood in the absence of an Infinite. In '*Dharma*' he writes, "When I try to get a larger vision of this world with all its cons-

tant activity, I find that it is ever unwearied, peaceful and beautiful. Through so much of movement and endeavour, through the cycle of life and death, joy and sorrow, it does not seem over-burdened.....How is it possible for peace and beauty to reside in the midst of such diversity and striving ? Why is it that all this is not just noise, but there is music in it ? The only possible answer is : 'There He stands, silent like a tree'.[27]

Dr. Radhakrishnan has pointed out that Tagore in one of his plays unconsciously makes use of the old "argument from design" to prove the existence of God. The complexity and purpose of the cosmic order suggests a Regulator. In "The King of the Dark Chamber" one of the characters asks : "How can you explain all this order and regularity if there is no God ?" and in 'Personality' Rabindranath says, "World movements are not then blind movements, they are related to the will of God."[28]

He also speaks of the necessity of a World Mind to account for the fact of Knowledge. During his conversation with *Einstein* the latter asked, "Does the table exist in some one's mind when there is no one in the room ?" Tagore gave the Berkelean answer, "Yes, it does. The table at such a moment exists in the Universal Mind, though it is non-existent for any individual Mind."[29] And in one of his lectures he made the point that there must be a Universal Mind to apprehend all objects, since every object demands a subject and no human mind can possibly act as the subject of *all* the objects.[30]

It is from the facts of human life, however, that Tagore argues most effectively for the existence of the Infinite, the best proof for which, he says, consists in the insufficiency of the finite

self and the phenomenal world. "The mere finite is like a dead well obtruding the beyond. The knowledge of the mere finite only accumulates, but does not illuminate. It is like a lamp without its light, a violin without its music.[31] Just as a book 'cannot be known by counting its pages', a survey of all the finites cannot exhaust Reality.

The homogeneity and heterogeneity of life can only be explained through God. It is because the finite facts, 'in their dispersedness and mutability', seem unable to stand alone, to have nothing stable about them, and to be 'riddled with discord and contradiction' that the mind seeks to pass beyond them to an Infinite Reality which it 'conceives as an abiding and harmonious whole.' This argument from imperfection to perfection has been described by Bosanquet as the essential argument of metaphysics, and the same is offered by Tagore, though it does not clothe it in metaphysical terms.

Man's daily actions, his union with Nature and with his fellow-men, his moral consciousness, his aesthetic urge, his craving for all-round progress, all these point to a principle more than human. Man cannot "for ever remain occupied in the satisfaction of his own needs" without feeling a 'strange sense of frustration, an unconscious recognition that there is something lacking'. To a certain extent man seeks to remedy this incompleteness by communion with Nature. But his success is limited. "Our satisfaction in Nature, though real, is still incomplete. It is a satisfaction only of our empirical ego. But we have our higher Self which finds contentment only in the Infinite".[32] Moreover, our solace in Nature itself raises the question 'how came this union about?' In an old letter

'Rabindranath writes, "....I began to ask the question: "Who is he that attunes my ears to the universal music? Who has made me conscious of the subtle links that bind me with every object of Creation?."[33]

Altruism presupposes man's faith in God. Altruism has its basis in social life and "in this large life of social communion man feels the mystery of unity. From the sense of that unity men come to their sense of God."[34] The history of Religion shows us that any degree of social consciousness brought in its wake, even in tribal life, a "sense of the Infinite".[35] Tagore, like Kant, attached great emphasis to this "moral argument" for God's existence.

It must be emphasised once more, however, that Tagore did not attach much importance to any 'proofs for God'. What really matters is the nature of God and his relation to us.

ARGUMENT FOR A PERSONAL GOD

First, as to the nature of God, Tagore did not accept the impersonal Absolute of Samkara-Vedanta. His inclinations were distinctly theistic, and for Theism, whether considered in the light of Religion or of philosophy, personality, in one sense or another, is indispensable. Tagore believed that absolute Monism of the type of Samkara-Vedanta does not satisfy the moral, religious or aesthetic requirement of mankind. Like the Vaishnava theists he accepted a God "who is near to us" and who is interested in our actions and thoughts. In other words he believed in the possibility of personal relations between God and men. A 'Brahman' who "stares at us with frozen eyes, regardless of our selfless devotions and silent suffering" is not the God with whom religious relation is possible. That is

why, Tagore says, "Dualistic philosophy in India has sought to supplement the idea of an impersonal *Brahman* by that of a personal *Iswara*."[36]

The concept of personality is strikingly modern and we shall see later how Tagore elaborates the the idea of personality in the context of man's ethical and artistic life. In the Upanisads and writings of the Vaisnavas the problem of the personality of God in the form with which we are familiar to-day does not come up for discussion. Nevertheless, we get glimpses of personalistic description of the absolute in the Upanisads. In the Brhdaranyaka Upanisad,[37] Prajapati is described as a personal God who being 'tired of solitude' draws forth the world. Tagore has quoted many passages from the Upanisads to show that they do not exclude the idea of a personal God. "It has been said by some that the element of personality has altogether been ignored in tha Brahma of the Upanisads, and thus our own personality, according to them, finds no response in the Infinite Truth. But then what is the meaning of the exclamation; 'Vedahametam Purusam mahantam'. I have known him who is the Supreme Person ?"[38]

It is significant that we rarely find the word 'Absolute' in the writings of Tagore. Very often he speaks not even of God so much as of the 'Supreme Person', Universal Person or Supreme Man. He attributed personality to God, however, not in the sense of bringing him down to the level of humanity but of proclaiming him to be at the root of the highest and best that humanity strives for but never attains. If it is accepted that personality necessarily implies finitude, Tagore would not attribute it to God. He has openly ridiculed the idea of a finite God, as put forward by modern Italian idealists. But he did

not think that personality does really make God limited. The contrast between Tagore and Bradley is here apparent. The latter says that it is misleading to use the word personality in the infinite sense while retaining all the associations of finiteness which are inseparable from that word. "Most of those who insist on what they call the personality of God are intellectually dishonest. They desire one conclusion and in order to reach it they argue for another.... The Deity which they want is, of course, finite, a person with thoughts and feelings limited and mutable... Once give up your finite and mutable person, and you have parted with everything which makes personality important."[39] Again, "The Absolute is not a finite person. Whether personality in some eviscerated remnant of a sense can be applied to it is unimportant". Here Bradley's basic assumption is that the two concepts of infinity and personality are mutually exclusive. But Tagore has emphasised that reality can be personal and yet above the relational and the conditioned. The phrase infinite personality is not only not self-contradictory, it is in fact the most suggestive description of Reality which is possible. Rabindranath says: "The relational world is for me both individual and universal. My world is mine, but it is also yours... It is not in my own individual personality that Reality is contained, but in an Infinite personality".[40]

The question of personality is linked up with that of Individuality. It is sometimes maintained that the two are inseparable. Dr. Merz, for instance, says that "Personality always impresses us as the most powerful instance of individual existence."[41] Nevertheless, philosophers are not at all agreed whether Personality is higher than Individuality or vice versa.

According to Bosanquet, 'persons' fall within the Absolute and therefore, the latter, to whom Individuality in the full sense is predicable, cannot be described as personal.[42] Lotze, on the contrary, says that personality can properly be attributed to God alone and not to "human individuals."[43] Tagore does not seem to have gone into the logical meanings of the respective terms, and seems to contrast Individuality with Universality rather than with personality. Here, as elsewhere, Tagore is swayed by moral and aesthetic considerations; we find him speaking of the "Parama Purusa" but never of the "Parama Vyakti." According to Christian theology we can accept the notion of personality *in* God but not that of the personality *of* God. This in effect means that personality can be included within the nature of the Absolute but cannot be predicable of it as a whole. Tagore has not given us an analysis of the meaning of the word personality. He does not refer to the personality *of* God but speaks generally of a 'personal God' and the latter phrase, it must be confessed, does not tell us whether personality is a quality of the Absolute or constitutes its inherent nature.

We can be quite certain, however, that personality as conceived by Tagore does not imply a finite God. Unlike personal idealists like Howison, Tagore makes it amply clear that God is not a 'Primus inter pares', not a 'first-born among many brothren' to use a Biblical phrase. There is no contradiction between calling God personal and the Supreme Person at the same time. God, says Tagore, is the perfect Person, while human beings are personal in an imperfect manner. The word personal does not, as Bradley apprehends, exclude all that is higher than

as well as all that is lower to personality. Bradley says, "By 'personal' we exclude what is above as well as what is below personality. The super-personal is regarded as impossible... In this sense the Absolute is not (merely) personal. It is not personal because it is personal and more. It is, in a word, super-personal."[44] To this Tagore might well reply that God is personal and more than personal. To accept personality of God does not compel us to restrict the implications of personality to all that we experience on the phenomenal level. Perfect personality, as Lotze says, 'is in God only'; and personalities are the manifestations of the Divine. "Reality," Rabindranath maintains, "can be regarded as Personality acting upon personalities through incessant manifestations."[45]

In fact, as we saw above, the idea of a personal God is for Tagore primarily a religious idea—an idea which derives its strength from the necessity which religion labours under of explaining the relation between finite persons and God. Such an explanation is found to involve the acceptance of God as a personal being. Religious enthusiasm demands that reality must give us "the touch of personal companionship". If personal relations with God are excluded, the latter would be reduced to an abstraction. He would, in Tagore's own words, remain a God of metaphysics and would cease to be "our God."[46] Religious experience demands a conservation of the finites and an acceptance of the Infinite as a personal one. The facts of human life proclaim to us: "My world is given to a personal 'me' by a personal being. It is gift of soul."[47] Rabindranath does not regard the personal God of religion as a lower 'mode' of the Absolute of philosophy. For him God or the

Absolute is a philosophical generalisation of the highest in human experience. This experience itself tells us that "our personal 'I' must have perfect relationship with the Infinite personality."[48] At its highest reaches, human experience gathers in itself the conviction that "if the Universe is not the manifestation of a Person then it is a stupendous deception."[49] From the point of view of life itself, therefore, the idea of the human God of personality is superior to that of the impersonal Absolute.[50] The relation of God to Man is not the mechanical relation of Power but the personal relation of Love and Joy. There is no meaning in preaching devotion to a God to whom nothing can be attributed except sheer existence. Tagore cannot accept an Absolute who does nothing, desires nothing, feels nothing, but simply 'is'. To demand such an impersonal existence is a demand not for God but for the Indeterminate.

Tagore urges from the side of Morality the same considerations as he puts forward from the view-point of Religion. Personality is an essentially ethical category. God is a person as *Royce* says, "because he is self-conscious and the Self of which he is conscious is a self whose eternal perfection is attained through the totality of our *ethically significant* temporal strivings."[51] Goodness, or moral value, is not an 'appearance' which must be submerged in the Absolute. All thought of Good and Evil would vanish unless there were at the root of reality itself a Being for whom these distinctions are eminently real. Our higher ethical life is reinforced by "the energy of the immortal Purusa within our soul."[52] Tagore affirms the personality of God because otherwise we cannot explain our pursuit of the Good. To quote

Lotze again, "The longing of the soul to apprehend as Reality the highest Good which is able to feel cannot be satisfied by, or even consider, any form of the existence of God except Personality."[53] The same applies to our aesthetic sense as well. "In Art," says Tagore, "the person in us sends its answers to the Supreme Person."[54] All creation reflects, directly or indirectly, men's lavish desire for the manifestation of the Person.[55]

The fact of knowledge, far from conflicting with our moral or aesthetic demands, gives additional support to the notion of a personal God. The stress on 'experience' does not imply that personality conflicts with rationality. On the contrary, our desire to *know* reality is the strongest argument for a personal God rather than for an Abstract Unknowable.[56] Our knowledge of the world around us is perhaps the starting point of that process of reflection which leads to the idea of a Supreme Personality. "The original source of our knowledge of God", as a modern writer says, "is an experience of not being alone in *knowing* the world".[57] The Supreme Person is also for Tagore the Supreme Mind, the Supreme Consciousness. Referring to one of his poems, 'Vishwa Nritya' Rabindranath says: "Here I speak of the Conscious Person (Chinmaya Purusa) who steers the ship of humanity in the midst of obstacles and turmoils".[58]

THE IMPERSONAL ASPECT OF REALITY

Tagore did not, however, reject altogether the impersonal aspect of the Absolute. While maintaining that Reality is predominantly and essentially personal, he never claimed that the idea of personality exhausts its nature. To say that Religion has no use for a God who does not "appear", to say that personal relation between

God and the finite minds is a postulate of religion, is not to maintain that there is in God nothing beyond his relations to us, nothing over and above what he shares with us. That is why, Tagore unlike many of the Vaisnava exponents of theism, desists from dogmatically rejecting Advaita Vedanta. Personality is only an aspect of Reality, though it is the most important aspect. As he says in 'Religion of Man', it will not do to reject the impersonal aspect of truth altogether.[59]

QUALITY IN RELATION TO GOD

Here we must consider for a while the attitude of Tagore towards the much-debated question of the applicability of Quality to the Absolute. The controversy about Saguna and Nirguna is a typical feature of Indian Philosophy, just as the question of personality is a typically modern one.

Tagore does not enter into all the metaphysical subtleties about Nirguna Brahma which we find in the writings of the different schools of Indian Philosophy. Just as he does not reject as false the notion of an impersonal God, similarly Rabindranath says that Nirguna and Saguna should be regarded as only aspects of God, the latter, however, being a more satisfactory aspect for our religious requirements. "In metaphysics," he says, "there is a mighty discussion going on about the question whether God is personal or impersonal, whether he has qualities or is qualityless, whether or not form can be attributed to him. But in Love, 'Yea' and 'Nay' are held together. Love has Nirguna at one end and Saguna at the other end .....The discussion about quality remains at the level of speculation only. It is a discussion which does not touch God himself".[60]

Nevertheless, the general philosophical out-

look of Rabindranath inclines him naturally towards the Vaisnava view of Saguna Brahma. In one of his Santiniketan sermons he quite clearly says. "Dualistic philosophy in India proclaims a God who has his qualities and forms. Man's deliverance depends upon the fulfilment of his knowledge, love and strength. Such a fulfilment is precluded by a Nirguna Brahma".[61] In another lecture he says, "The Saguna Brahma reflects all good qualities. He is 'Sarvendriya-guna-bhasam'."[62]

If, as we saw above, all that is highest and best in our own experience must be preserved in God, it must be accepted that all the qualities of the Human Self must subsist in Him in a more perfect form. Consequently, Tagore claims that 'all human qualities find their suggestion in God.'[63] It is in this sense that we must interpret the lines of Gita : "Glory, Wealth and Power emanate out of my spiritual energy".[64] Tagore also quotes the Upanisadic dictum: "The qualities of knowledge, power and action are natural to God" (Swabhawiki jnana bala kriya ca). Action is regarded by Rabindranath as one of the qualities of God. 'God is of such qualities, that He acts'[65] and again, "Action must be attributed to him, otherwise how could he give himself"?.[66] In Vaisnava philosophy the idea of quality is supplemented by that of Energy or Sakti. Instead of saying that God has the quality of blissfulness, the Vaisnavas speak of the Blissful Energy ('Hladini Sakti') of God. They also refer to the energy of existence, the energy of knowledge, and so forth. It is interesting to note that Rabindranath also sometimes used the word energy instead of quality. In one of his lectures he said: "Through his many energies, God realises Himself. The Upanisad says: 'Varnan anekan nihi tartho

dadhati'. God gives himself in various forms through the various channels of his energies."[67]

As for the question of Form, it must be pointed out that Tagore carefully distinguished between the aesthetic and the religious association of the world. The essay entitled "Roop o Aroop" is significant in this connection. In this essay the poet argues that the attitude of the poet who ascribes 'form' to Reality is entirely different from the attitude of the worshipper who, unable to contemplate on a higher level, seeks for a concrete form of the Deity. For the poet, form is a means to inner freedom. For the worshipper, on the other hand, form is evidently a bond.[68] It will be noted that Tagore here speaks of the worshipper, not the devotee, the distinction being one between 'pujak' and 'bhawuk', to use his own words. Looking at the question from the point of view of the Philosophy of Religion, Rabindranath clearly says that Form is necessary only at the lower level of religious experience. "The very glory of form lies in its impermanence. It fulfils its purpose by its own extinction, like the wick of the lamp, which, to be true to itself, must burn itself out".[69] Form is thus seen to defy all attempts at hypostatisation and its worthwhileness is seen to be directly proportionate to its impermanence.[70] But this, as we mentioned above, is only from the standpoint of the Philosophy of Religion. There is the other, and, for Tagore, the more significant, standpoint—namely, that of aesthetic experience. And from this other standpoint Form has the hall-mark of Reality.

REFERENCE

CHAPTER III

1. Dr. Nihar Ranjan Rai: *Rabindra Sahityer Bhumika*, p. 2.
2. Ibid., p. 3.
3. The poem *Samudrer Prati* from *Sonar Tari*.
4. Charuchandra Banerji: *"Rabi Rasmi"*, Vol. I, p. 256.
5. Ajit Chakravarty: *Kavya Parikrama*, p. 3.
6. The author of *Kavya Parikrama* has discussed Rabindranath's poems in relation to Fechner's theory of Universal Consciousness, and Samuel Butler's theory of the sub-liminal Consciousness!
7. Radhakrishnan: *The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore*, p. 6.
8. Ibid., p. 7.
9. Dr. S. N. Das Gupta: *Rabi Dipita*, p. 112.
10. Ibid., p. 114.
11. *Rabindranath*—A symposium. (Greater India Series), p. 30.
12. Ibid., p. 31.
13. Viswapati Choudhury : *Kavye Rabindranath*, p. 138.
14. Cf. an article on Tagore's Philosophy in *Modern Review*, Vol. 49, p. 639.
15. *Golden Book of Tagore* (Preface).
16. Cf. his Presidential Address at the First All India Philosophical Congress.
17. *Rangabhashar Lekhak.*
18. The poem *Sesh Katha* from *Kari o Komal.*
19. *Santiniketan*—Twelfth Series. ('Samanjasya').
20. *Religion of Man*, p. 22.
21. From *Purabi.*
22. *Utsarga*, poem No. 17.
23. *Amar Dharma.*
24. Address at Santiniketan, 1931.
25. Cf. *It is not as ether waves that we see light* (*Religion of Man*).
26. Davidson: *Recent Theistic Discussion*, p. 30.
27. *Dharma*, p. 29.
28. *Personality*, p. 61-62.
29. Dialogue with Einstein. printed as an Appendix to *Religion of Man.* The argument put forward here is strongly reminiscent of Berkeley.
30. *Santiniketan*—Eighth Series.
31. *Personality*, p. 56.
32. *Atma-parichaya*, p. 48.

33. Quoted by Rabindranath himself in *Amar Dharma.*
34. *Creative Unity*, p. 22.
35. *Religion of Man*, Ch. III.
36. *Santiniketan*—Fourth Series.
37. Bṛihadaranyaka Upanisad. I. ii. 14.
38. Rabindranath's Introduction to *Philosophy of the Upanisads* by Sir. S. Radhakrishnan.
39. Bradley: *Appearance and Reality*, p. 472.
40. *Personality*, p. 58.
41. Merz: *Religion and Science*, p. 174.
42. Bosanquet: *Principle of Individuality and Value.*
43. Lotze: *Microcosmus*, p. 660 (Vol. II).
44. Bradley: *Appearance and Reality*, p. 471.
45. *"Creative Unity"*, p. 35.
46. "Iswara ke jadi pete chahi tabe tanke kono ekti sambandher bhitar diye peteha'be na'ile tini amader kachhe kevalmatra ekti darshaner tattva, nyayasastrer siddhanta haye thakben, amader apan haye uthben na"—(*Santiniketan*—Eighth Series).
47. *Personality*, p. 69.
48. Ibid., p. 158.
49. Ibid., p. 71.
50. *Religion of Man*, p. 19.
51. Josiah Royce: *World and the Individual* Vol. II, p. 419.
52. *Man*, p. 56.
53. Lotze: *Microcosmus* Vol. II, p. 659.
54. *Personality*, p. 38.
55. Ibid., p. 33.
56. *Amar Dharama.*
57. W. E. Hocking: *The Meaniny of God in Human Experience*, p. 237.
58. *Amar Dharma.*
59. "Religion of Man", p. 19.
60. 'Samanjasya' from *Santiniketan*—(First Series).
61. *Santiniketan*—(Fourth Series).
62. *Man*, p. 20.
63. Ibid., p. 28.
64. Gita—X., 41.
65. *Isvarer gun ei je tini kaj kar chhen.*
66. "Tini kaj karchhen, na'ile apnake tini dite parben ki kare?" (*Karmayog* from "Santiniketan"—Thirteenth Series).
67. "Santiniketan"—Thirteenth Series.
68. "Roop o Aroop" from "Sanchaya".
69. Ibid.
70. *Rooper anityatate rooper sarthakata.*

Chapter IV

ON THE INDIVIDUAL SELF

To postulate a Personal God, in the way we described in the preceding chapter, is to presuppose at the same time the freedom of the Individual Self.

Tagore accepts the self as an independent reality, and further says that this independence is not merely 'tolerated' but is necessary for Reality as a whole. "I exist, I become, I move, all these are tremendously important. I 'am' and only along with me all else "is".[1] The human self is an experienced certainty which is not merely "foundational to all knowledge and action" but is indispensable for the ordering of the Universe itself. In 'Gitanjali', accordingly, we find a description of God and man as two separate realities 'floating at will.'[2] The fact that the human self derives its richness of content from its affinity with the Infinite does not imply that its freedom is only apparent, or that its experiences are really the experience of the Infinite alone. The Supreme Spirit, as a modern writer says, may know what those experiences are, may know them 'from the inside', may even have similar experiences himself, but "a finite mind's experience cannot *be* his experience."[3] To accept the reality of the Self but to put down its initiative entirely to the Will of God is not a procedure acceptable to Tagore. He believes, like Caird, that the self cannot be 'propelled by any external force'.[4]

Tagore has emphasised that man is partly finite and partly infinite. Consequently, we cannot identify the self with God as the Absolutists

in India identified the 'Atman' with the 'Brahman'. The individual soul is "torn between the world and God", being attracted by both. The Self has two aspects. In one aspect it "displays itself" and "tries to be big, standing upon the pedestal of its own accumulations" but in its other aspect the Self "transcends itself and reveals its own meaning."[5] Man is thus a "finite-Infinite being," conscious of his finitude only through the presence of an Infinite nature within him". It is interesting to compare these views of Tagore with Sri-jiva Goswami's theory that the Self, though it has 'ultimate affinity' with 'Bhagwan', is nevertheless drawn by the 'Maya-sakti' as well. In relation to the body and the 'Prakrta' (phenomenal) world, Jiva Goswami considers the Self to be finite but through its own inclination towards God it indicates that it is not *merely* finite.[6]

To revert to Rabindranath's own language, the Self has 'a finite pole' existing in the world of necessity.[7] But there is also 'an infinite pole' in the world of our aspirations. Human life is the "relationship of the 'this' and the 'that' ".[8] Tagore, like T. H. Green, believes that man combines in himself Spirit and Nature, that he is 'Earth's child but heaven's heir'. "My very knowledge of the world is possible", he says, "because I am partly infinite." The self, though monadic in substance, is infinite in intelligence. It is, in Rabindranath's own words, "Infinite in its principle, but finite in its expression."[9]

Thus God and man must, be regarded as different though their natures partly overlap. "God's life touches man's life...which is *also* abroad in its career of freedom."[10] In the course of one of his sermons Tagore says, "We are residents of two worlds. We exist on this earth but we also exist in God...At one end we are finite, at the

other Infinite; and our endeavour is to retain the truth of both these ends."[11] We share certain qualities with God but this does not eradicate the difference between ourselves and God. The interpretation of the Upanisadic doctrine "That thou art" (Tattvamasi) on dualistic lines has, therefore, been attempted by Ramanuja and other Vaisnava philosophers. Ramanuja says that the phrase does not imply the identity of God and Self but only the unity of the two aspects of God, namely, the aspect in which he is the indweller of the human self and the other aspect in which he is the 'cause of the Universe'. Similarly, Jiva-Goswami also refutes Samkara's interpretation of 'Tattvamasi' as the complete identity between God and Self, and maintains that the phrase only indicates likeness or similarity. Into the metaphysical details of the arguments of Ramanuja and Jiva-Goswami we need not enter here, but they can be described as typical attempts from the side of Theism to preserve the reality of the finite individuals.

In fact all talk about relation between God and Man becomes meaningless unless we accept the reality of both. It may be the relation of part and whole or it may be that of partial dependence. But in any case it presupposes distinction. As Lotze says: "In the assertion of the dependence of the finite many upon the Infinite One, there is necessarily involved an assertion of a permanent relation of real to real".[12] And, so far as practical life is concerned, says Tagore, "the self must have complete freedom. *Only a free entity can have relations with another entity.* God has made this understanding with us, he has told us: 'Come to me as a free-self. Nothing that is bound can truly approach me'.[13] Therefore, paradoxical as it may sound, the uniqueness of finite centres of experience is as much neces-

sary "from the side of the Absolute" as from the human standpoint. God himself gives us the freedom to deny God. He sustains our separateness from him.[14] And this sustenance is necessary for the union of self and God. The Upanisad says, "Knowing *as separate* the Self and the Mover, blessed by Him he attains immortality."[15] The idea of "cooperation" between man and God is a favourite one with Tagore. The freedom of the human individual reflects the desire of the Infinite to share his power with man. "I am a special entity. My Self does not obey any law so much as it signifies God's delight...Considering this wonderful human Self the Upanisad says, 'Dva suparna sayuja sakhaya *samanah vrksah* parisavajate'.[16]

The reality of the Self is not, therefore, a mere adjectival one. It must be conceded that the self possesses a substantival mode of living. Tagore would not, therefore, describe selves as 'Visesanas' (adjectives) of God. He uses the metaphor of the musical instrument for which all the strings have distinct reality. "My self, and other selves like mine, are the various strings of the Universal Supreme Self which can be regarded as a lute. That is why the human self has purpose and greatness."[17]

It is sometimes maintained that in the highest stage of realisation the distinction between God and Self must disappear. But Tagore, following in the footsteps of the Vaisnavas, says that even at the highest stage of religious communion the distinctness of the finite Self remains unimpaired. The finite is not 'lost' or dissolved in the absolute. Man ever approaches but never merges into God. "We are ever-to-become Brahma".[18] In his article on Rabindranath's Philosophy of Religion, Dr. S. K. Maitra writes: "...Does the finite lose itself in order to attain

the Infinite ? Does it no longer possess any freedom ? The German poet Goethe has declared that by the complete destruction and self-surrender of itself alone can the finite attain its ideal. But our poet (Rabindranath) has on this point accepted the words of Ram Prasad, 'I want to *taste* sugar, I do not want to *be* sugar,'. In his relation to God, man does not lose himself but rather finds himself more completely."[19]

The religious experience is a process and not an event. It consists in an eternal attempt at realisation which is never completely achieved. As Tagore says in one of his sermons, "The difference between Atma and Brahma must always be there. He *has become* what we are ever striving *to be*. The difference is between 'being' (haye thaka) and 'becoming' (haye utha)".[20] God is 'the Infinite ideal of perfection' and man 'the eternal process of its realisation'.[21] The separate existence of the Self, therefore, has had to be accepted even by the mystics, who speak only of a *temporary* suspension of the subject-object relation.

RABINDRANATH AND THE CONCEPT OF IDENTITY-IN-DIFFERENCE

This insistence upon the distinct existence of the finite Self raises the fundamental problem of metaphysics, namely, the problem of reconciling the freedom of the finite, separately from the Absolute, with the coherence and unity of the Whole. If God is the 'ens realissimus', the absolute reality, (and we have seen that Tagore identifies the God of Religion with the Absolute of Philosophy), then how can we speak of another reality outside it ? As Schelling formulated the dilemma, 'If God *is*, I am not; and if I *am*, God is not'. The Absolute omnipotence of God seems to preclude independence of the Self,

and brings in its wake difficulties about moral life, freedom of the will, etc. On the other hand if the finite Self is awarded full-fledged independence, God's omnipotence (so the opponents of Theism complain) is jeopardised. "We cannot", they say, "have it both ways. If I *know* the Absolute as an 'other' I cannot *be* this other. If I have become this other, I cannot know it because I have ceased to be ."[22]

Tagore, while trying to answer this question, has steered between the two extremes of utter Dualism and absolute Monism. He asserts boldly that the many are real, and yet their manyness does not affect the organic unity and coherence of the Whole. Duality and unity, in Rabindranath's view, are complementary forces and creation demands them both. A logical and intellectual justification of this paradox (that duality and unity co-exist) is difficult. But from the point of view of personal experience the contradiction can be resolved. Such, in brief is the solution of the problem of God's relation to Man in Tagore's philosophy.

Once we accept the reality of the Self we have already refuted the position of Absolute Monism. "Only death", says Tagore, "is monistic; life is dualistic".[23] And again, "the spirit of death is one, the spirit of life is many. When God is dead, then alone religion becomes one."[24] The unity of the Godhead, in other words, is not a barren unity but a kind of unity which leaves room for difference. "The one without a second is emptiness, the other one makes it true".[25] Tagore does not advocate a 'plurality of unrelated realities', which he declares to be an absurd idea. But he says that the Absolute has himself decreed that in his own life, no less than in the life of finite individuals, separation and re-union should go hand in hand. "The

Universal is ever seeking its consummation in the unique. The desire we have to keep our uniqueness intact is really the desire of the Universe acting in us."[26] Within the finite many, the infinite One looks for its own truth; the Absolute 'seeks itself in others'.[27] It is only through the finites that the music of the Infinite rings out:

"Simar majhe, asim,
Tumi bajao apan sur."[28]

Duality, therefore, is not illusory, since the Absolute himself has 'desired' it. "Uniqueness and variety are indispensable. God delights in our uniqueness."[29]

In human life we find that all movement and progress are through separation and re-union between man and Nature, man and Society, man and God. In a remarkable passage Tagore says, "... In our physical existence, there is both separation and meeting between us and the world of things. The consciousness of this relationship takes a deeper hue in our mental life where there is continual separation and re-union between the individual mind and the universal world of reason... It widens when there is separation and combination between the individual will and the universal world of personality. And (this relationship) comes to its ultimate meaning when there is both separation and harmony between the individual one in us and the universal One in infinite..."[30]

Thus, Tagore feels that the higher life of man itself demands his double relation of oneness and difference with God. When the seed is under the earth it is 'one'. For if there is peace, it faces no conflict between light and darkness. But when the seed has sprouted, the conflict has appeared and its true life has begun.[31] The

same is true of man whose very separation from God enables him to find the truth of God.

These ideas are reminiscent of Hegel's philosophy, and Dr. S. N. Dasgupta has pointed out that in many of his poems and plays Tagore unconsciously expresses "the ever-new emergence of Being in and through non-being".[32] The idea of the Absolute breaking itself up for its own realisation is a distinctly Hegelian idea. In Hegel's philosophy we find the same desire to reach a compromise between Monism and Dualism. "The Monism which can stand its ground", Hegel says, "must not exclude Dualism. All indeed is one life, one being, one thought —but a life, a being, a thought, which only exists as it opposes itself within itself, sets itself apart from itself, and yet retains and carries out the power of uniting itself... Monism, literally understood, is absurd, for it ignores what cannot be ignored—the many... and Dualism too is an ever-appearing and ever-superseded antithesis".[33] In the course of one of his famous essays Tagore takes up a similar position. "To reject a part of truth is to exclude truth. The mark of reality is that it is all-embracing. There may be contraries but there is also an underlying unity which prevents the parts from destroying each other ... Truth has an inner consistency which arises not by excluding and rejecting differences but by accepting and transcending them. Shiva is Shiva because he has swallowed the poison and assimilated it... I have no use for a truth which cuts out all differences and erects a mechanical wall of consistency. I am not afraid of Difference."[34] While Tagore says that the differences should be "accepted and transcended", Hegel says that they should be "included and over-reached". The implications are the same in both cases. Tagore speaks of the

"self-sundering of the eternal who must have duality for his own realisation".[35] As a result of this duality there is *diversity* in the universe without there being *contradiction*.[36] Even in his poems Tagore conveys the same idea. For instance, he speaks of God's desire to find in man his own treasure which he had put aside.[37] And in 'Gitanjali' he speaks of God's desire to taste his own eternity through human minds and hearts.[38]

The similarity with Hegel, however, must not be carried too far. The difference between the outlook of Hegel and Rabindranath is so fundamental that this parallelism of ideas is seen to be on the surface only. Much more deep-seated is the affinity between Tagore and the Vaisnava Philosophers, especially Jiva Goswami whose theory of inscrutable identity-and-difference (achintya-bhedabheda) comes much closer to Tagore's ideas. According to Vaisnavism the relation between the Infinite and the Finite is one of identity-and-difference. The state of difference is known as Srsti and the state of integration as Pralaya. God continually differentiates himself and integrates himself. The one is his outward movement and the other his inward movement. Universal history appears as the eternal process of cancellation of the difference between God and Self. An intellectual understanding of this process is impossible. It can only be described as 'Lila'.[39] This mystical element which is common to Rabindranath and Vaisnavism is entirely absent in Hegelian philosophy.

It may be objected that this duality, this independence of the finite, makes God limited. Tagore says that God is indeed limited but the limitation is self-given, not external. The duality we described above only indicates God's

power to limit himself at will. Far from conflicting with his omnipotence, God's self-limitation only indicates his omnipotence more forcefully. An all-powerful Deity who could not limit himself "would hardly deserve the name of God, would in fact only be a directionless energy of unlimited amount." Tagore says that God is not *merely* free. If he had been wholly free he would have been passive and inactive. "God has bound himself. If he had not, nothing would have emanated out of him, and chaos would have reigned supreme."[40] God has, by allowing freedom to the human self, consented to his own defeat, like the father who wrestles with his own son and allows himself to be defeated out of joy.[41] It is not through limitation but through curiosity that God seeks his own truth from man.[42]

"Daya kare, ichchha kare, apani chhoto haye,
Apani tumi chhoto haye esa hridaye."[43]

KNOWLEDGE AND REALITY

As mentioned above, Tagore does not claim to have given a logical explanation of the fact that the Absolute and the finite individual are both real. He feels that such an explanation is not possible. "The phenomenon of the Infinite finding itself in the finite is apparently a paradox. But it is a paradox that lies at the root of existence."[44] *That* there *is* between Man and Ultimate Reality a relation of duality as well as unity is a fact, but *why* it is so we do not know. "The fact of actual fragmentariness", as Bradley says, "cannot be explained. That experience should take place in finite centres is in the end inexplicable. But it is not, therefore, incompatible. The plurality of presentations is a fact,

and it, therefore, makes a difference to our Absolute."[45] The same inability to understand the 'why' of duality is expressed by Tagore when he says:

"This I shall accept—How the One

Could become Two, I cannot understand."[46]

Thus we can justifiably speak of a mystical strand in the philosophy of Rabindranath, which prompts him to declare unity-in-duality to be real, though intellectually inexplicable. "There is", he says, "this eternal marvel—the manifestation of the Infinite in the midst of the finite, the concrete."[47] But this marvel has got to be accepted as real.

"The primal mystery of creation.

I, being a poet,

Must for ever modestly accept,

And keep my heart filled with boundless wonder."[48]

Here we fringe upon mysticism, and the question naturally arises: What, then, happens to the possibility of *knowing* Reality? Is this duality-in-unity wholly beyond human knowledge? This is just where the concept of "Love" comes in.

Tagore says: "Religious consciousness is nothing but the experiencing of the relation of love between the Absolute ('paramatma') and the individual self (jivatma) ... This 'love' has separation on one side and union on the other, bondage on one side and freedom on the other. In this 'love' we get a synthesis between the limited and the 'limitless', between Force and Beauty (shaktio saundarya), between Form and Feeling (roop o rasa)".[49]

Love would thus appear to stand in Tagore's philosophy for that basic synthetic principle through which all apparent contradictions are *known* (including the paradox of the simultaneous existence of God and the individual self). It is in the light of this epistemological (or shall we say 'explanatory'?) function of the idea of love that we must understand Tagore's words: "In 'love' all contraries unite.....In the field of metaphysical speculation, Monism and Dualism are absolute opposites. But love 'explains' them both."[50]

The Absolute, on this view, breaks himself into the 'many' because "all love must have duality for its realisation".[51] This, one may say, is not an absolute but a relative type of mysticism. Duality is not then an eternal puzzle; it ceases to baffle us when we see that "it is not a duality of hostility, but of relationship".[52]

Reality may reveal itself either to our discursive understanding, or to our emotional nature, but it is revealed all the same. Knowledge may be the knowledge of intellect, or the knowledge of love, but in both cases it is knowledge. Tagore does not say that the latter type of knowledge is necessarily superior. All that he maintains is that sometimes 'love' succeeds in reconciling contraries, where the understanding does not. "In love all contraries are lost. In it unity and duality are not at variance. It must have one and two at the same time".[53] The term, love has thus a very wide meaning so far as Tagore's philosophy is concerned, standing as it does for the emotional aspect of knowledge in general. Very often he uses the words 'joy' or 'bliss' in the same sense as love. Here we have a near approach to the idea embodied in the Upanisadic verse:

"Yato vaco nivartante aprappy amanasa saha
Anandam Brahmano vidvan na vibheti kadacana".[54]

The paradox of creation is not, then, unknowable, but it is wholly knowable only when the cognitive *plus* the affective aspects of our consciousness are brought into play.

One might therefore hazard the remark that there is something 'intellectual' even above Tagore's usage of the word 'love' which marks it off from the Vaisnava concept—a difference which is very often overlooked by critics. The term 'Oriental mysticism', so readily employed, is certainly quite inappropriate as a description of the idea. Even a quick glance at modern theistic philosophy in Europe will convince any reader that there is nothing exclusively 'Oriental' about Rabindranath's concept of 'Love'. Here, for instance, is a citation from C. C. J. Webb, one of the typical representatives of modern Theism: "Nowhere is there a fuller consciousness of Personality, or of the distinctiveness from one another of the persons concerned, than in the idea of Love."[55] It is thus for an explanation of the separate and 'distinctive' existence of God and the individual selves that Webb has to take recourse to the concept of Love. An even closer approach to Tagore's position is to be seen in the view of James Ward, who writes: "Can we not transcend these one-sided extremes (Monism and Dualism , and find some sublimer idea which will unify them both? Indeed we can and the idea is 'Love' ".[56] Long before this, Goethe had declared that "beyond the recognition of 'love' as the essence of the divine, experience can never attain."[57] And much before Goethe, Spinoza had spoken of the "intellectual love of God" as the true method of knowledge. Given the premises of Theism,

then, some such idea as that of love or bliss or feeling in general seems inescapable. For without such an idea, 'otherness' or difference would indeed be inexplicable. To quote from Pringle-Pattison: "....I appeal confidently to the same great experience (love) to prove the absolute necessity of what I will call otherness'. It takes two to be loved....Surely, as the poet says, sweet love were slain, could difference be abolished".[58]

Finally, it must be pointed out that although Tagore disapproved of a purely cognitive approach to Reality, he did not omit to issue a note of warning against an excessively emotional attitude as well. Feeling does not subsist in isolation from knowledge of desire; the affective element, important in itself, is always conjoined with the cognitive and the conative. Human feelings do not "float about promiscuously in the stream of mental process like fish in a river"; they are experienced always in intimate conjunction with some mode of exercise of the intellectual and volitional functions. This is true no less of our knowledge of absolute Reality than of ordinary life. The reaction against intellectualism, must not land us to the other extreme of maudlin emotionalism. This is unfortunately what happened in India. Tagore writes: "We in India began to look at God only through the play of Emotion. From this there emerged an excessive sentimentalism which we mistook for 'true devotion'. But to look at God in this light is also to look at only one of his aspects in isolation from others.....Man is not guided by the heart alone; and if we allow all the streams of our bodily and mental powers of apprehension to merge into the torrent of emotion, we can never bring about a union with God of the completely human in us".[59]

Being aware of this danger, Tagore warned against the tendency towards an outright rejection of Advaita Vedanta on the score of its intellectualism. "The dualists in our country tend to regard Advaitism as some kind of a scare. They too are intolerant, and look only at the flaws of the Vedanta system, ignoring all its elements of truth."[60]

REFERENCE

Chapter IV

1. *Atmaparichaya*, p. 12.
2. *Gitanjali*, No. 84.
3. G. Dawes Hicks: *The Philosophical Bases of Theism*, p. 261.
4. Edward Caird: *University Sermons.*
5. *Sadhana*, p. 76.
6. S. K. De: *Origin and History of Bengal Vaisnavism*, p. 229.
7. *Sadhana*, p. 153.
8. *Personality*, p. 85.
9. *Sadhana*, p. 81.
10. *Personality*, p. 105.
11. "Amra dui jaygay achhi....Amra tanr madhyeo achhi, sansarer madhyeo achhi. Amader ekdike ananta, anyadike santa" (*Santiniketan*-Second Series).
12. Lotze: *Microcosmus* Vol. II.
13. "Santiniketan"—Thirteen Series.
14. "Santiniketan"—Third Series.
15. *Svetasvatara Upanisad*—I. 6.
16. *Premer Adhikar* from "Santiniketan"—Third Series.
17. "Santiniketan"—Twelfth Series.
18. *Sadhana*, p. 155.
19. *Dharmatattve Rabindranath* by Dr. S. K. Maitra (Contributed in 'Jayanti Utsarga').
20. "Tabe ki Brahmete amate tafat nei? Masta tafat achhe. Tini Brahma haye-i achhen, amake Brahma ha'te hachhe....Tini haye rayechhen, ami haye uthchhai. Haye thakar sange haye uthar milane-i ananda" (*Santiniketan*—Eighth Series).
21. *Creative Unity*, p. 15.
22. Tennant: *Philosophical Theology* I. 380.
23. *Sadhana*, p. 81.
24. *Fireflies*, No. 72.
25. *Fireflies*, No. 52.
26. *Sadhana*, p. 70.
27. Preface to *Creative Unity.*
28. *Gitanjali*, No. 120.
29. *Atmaparichaya*, p. 39.
30. *Personality*, p. 84.
31. Cf. the lines quoted by Rabindranath himself in *Bangabhashar Lekhak.*
32. *Rabi Dipita*, p. 30 Dr. Das-Gupta makes a special

reference to the play *Phalguni* as illustrating his point.

33. Wallace: *The Logic of Hegel*, p. 148.
34. *Amar Dharma.*
35. *Sadhana*, p. 104.
36. "Jini tanr prakashke *vichitra* karechhen, kintu *viruddha* karen ni"—*Santiniketan*, Tenth Series
37. From "Purabi".
38. "He mor devata, bharia e deha pran ki amrita tumi chaho karibare pan"—*Gitanjali* No. 101.
39. S. K. De: *Origin and History of Vaisnavism* p. 260.
40. *Hisab* from "Santiniketan"—Second Series.
41. *Aham* from "Santiniketan"—Seventh Series.
42. The poem *Kripan* from "Kheya".
43. *Gitanjali* No. 116.
44. *Personality*, p. 54.
45. Bradley: *Appearance and Reality*, p. 200.
46. *Naibedya* No. 88 "E katha manibo omi, ek ha'te dui Kemone je hate pare jani ra kichhin".
47. *Atma-parichaya*, p. 18.
48. "Je adi gopan tattva, ami kavi tare Chirakal savinaye swikar karia Apar vismaye chitta rakhibo bharia" (*Utsarga No. 22*).
49. *Atma Parichaya*, p. 78.
50. "....Ekmatra premer madhye-i samasta dwandwa eksange mile thakte pare....Tarker kshetre dvaita evam advaita parasparer ekanta virodhi. Kintu premer kshetre dvaita evam advaita thik eksange jure rayechhe.." (*Santiniketan*—Second Series)
51. *Sadhana*, p. 104.
52. *Personality*, p. 78.
53. *Sadhana*, p. 114.
54. *Kena Upanisad*..ii-3 also Cf. *Taittiriya* ii-4.
55. C. C. J. Webb: *God and Personality*, p. 148.
56. James Ward: *Pluralism and Theism*, p. 453.
57. Quoted by C. Dawes Hicks: *The Philosophical Bases of Theism*, p. 148.
58. Pringle Pattison: *The Idea of God*, p. 289.
59. *Santiniketan*—Third Series.
60. *Mata* from "Santiniketan"—Fourth Series.

Chapter V

NATURE AND SPIRIT—HUMANISM

The question of the nature of God, and of his relation to the human Self, has been dealt with in detail in the preceding chapters. But apart from God and the Self, we must also consider another reality which is variously designated by Tagore as 'World', 'Nature', 'Prakriti', 'Jagat'—even 'Prithvi'; and it is to the subject of the status of this third existent that we must now turn. We shall, in considering this question, inevitably have to deal with the doctrine of Maya, and the extent to which (and the sense in which) Rabindranath accepts this doctrine. Having discussed the status of the World (or Nature) we shall go on to consider the relation between the Self and the 'Not-self', between Man and Nature. And the last-mentioned topic will lead us, finally, to a consideration of what has been termed, not inaptly, as the 'Humanism' of Rabindranath.

REALITY OF THE WORLD AND THE DOCTRINE OF 'MAYA'

The Absolute Monism of Samkara rejects the reality of the world altogether "since", accordings to it, "both Brahman and the World, both unity and multiplicity, cannot be equally real".[1] The phenomenal world, it is claimed, "is not changeless" and therefore cannot be real. Even the highest principle of the world-process, namely the Personal God of Religion (Iswara) has in him the "shadow of non-being".

The subsistence of the world Samkara therefore holds to consist entirely in 'seeming'. This

distinction between reality and seeming, between substance and show, is the same as the distinction between the subject and object of knowledge. Brahman is the sole Subject, the sole Reality, of which the world is a "translation at the plane of space-time."[2] The reality of Brahman, compared with that of the world, is like the reality of an original book compared to that of its translation.

But then, if the world only 'seems', why *is* it at all? The theory of Maya aims at an explanation of the seeming. It is 'on account of Maya' that the world seems. Avidya is the source of ordinary error, but Maya is Avidya on a universal scale, it is the principle of cosmic illusion. It is that which makes the Self believe in the world's reality. Maya thus combines in itself the two simultaneous functions of concealing the real and projecting the unreal. It stands for the 'gap in our knowledge'. In the "Rg-veda", the world 'Maya' stands for the power to transform oneself and assume strange forms. But in the Upanisads, the meaning is seen already to have acquired a new shade and the word is sometimes used almost synonymously with 'illusion'.[3] The Advaita Vedanta marks the farthest crystalisation of the idea, and here Maya becomes what might be termed the 'principle of finitisation'.

Now it must at once be made clear that although Tagore was an exponent of Theism, he never tried to 'refute' the Maya-theory by any of the usual arguments which followers of various Hindu theistic schools have advanced from time to time. Even the most casual comparison of Tagore's views about 'maya' with those of Ramanuja or Jiva Goswami reveals that what we get in his works is not a criticism of the

Maya-doctrine backed by strictly logical arguments, or substantiated by scriptural texts in the orthodox fashion but an effort to establish the reality of the world and at the same time to preserve the element of truth in the doctrine of Maya.

Ramanuja has placed great emphasis on the Upanisadic texts which he has cited to refute the theory of Maya. His own arguments are based primarily on the difficulty of 'locating' Maya. Where, he asks, can Avidya have its seat or support (Asraya)? Not in the Brahman, which is full of perfection, nor in the individual who is himself supposed to be a product of Avidya. Again, if Brahman is self-luminous (Svayam-prakasa), how can Maya conceal it unless it is more powerful than Brahman which is, of course, self-contradictory.

Arguments of a similar nature are advanced by Jiva Goswami and other Vaisnava philosophers.[4] To the statement that the external world originates in misapprehension, Jiva Goswami objects that to speak of misapprehension is meaning-less so long as we are not clear as to its source. Certainly an error cannot have its source in Brahman, who is pure knowledge. In the sun there can be no place for darkness.[5] Error, again, connot subsist in anything external to Brahman since the latter is, axiomatically, the sole Reality. Jiva Goswami therefore holds that Maya must not be regarded as something which opposes itself to or overshadows Brahman, but as one of his own inherent force or 'Saktis'.

Tagore never advanced anything like the arguments described above. He never rejected the concept of Maya on the ground that there was no "location" for it; nor did he ever try to prove, in the manner of Jiva Goswami, that Maya

is the 'Bahiranga Sakti' of God. Between Maya and Avidya, too, Rabindranath does not distinguish very clearly, and in his writings we often find the two words used indifferently.

Understood in its Samkarite connotation, the concept of Maya is altogether rejected by Tagore. "Some of our philosophers say that there is no such thing as finitude; it is but Maya, an illusion. The real is the Infinite, and it is only Maya, the unreality, which causes the appearance of the finite. *But the word Maya is a mere name, it is no explanation.* It is merely saying that along with Truth there also exists the opposite of Truth. But it is not explained how they come to exist at one and the same time.....".[6] We have already noticed that Tagore considers action to be one of the inherent qualities of God. To dismiss the world as Maya would imply that God is passive and inactive.[7]; if God is active, then the result of his action, namely the phenomenal world, must also be real.[8]

The word Maya, however, need not necessarily indicate the absolute rejection of the world's reality. Tagore has often pointed out that it would be wrong to say that Indian philosophy as a whole rejects the world, even if most of its schools accept the idea of Maya in some form.[9] But it would be a greater error to maintain that the world is an 'utterly self-dependent entity, quite unrelated to the will of God', This would mean a crude form of pluralism, and the world, regarded in this sense, is indeed 'Maya'. The absolute separateness of Nature from God is, according to Tagore, as unacceptable an idea as that of an utter immanence or identity of God with the world. Theism of the type represented by Tagore aims at a compromise between Transcendence and Immanence, between Deism and

Pantheism; it implies inter-dependence of God and the world no less than the inter-dependence of God and the Self. Says Tagore; "Without the world God would be phantasm; without God, the world would be chaos".[10] God is not, as a nineteenth century theist says, first God and *then* creator of the world, but *as* God he is creator, and only *as* creator of the world is he God.[11] If by the word Maya we mean something which claims separateness of an extreme kind, our usage is justified. "The Self is Maya where it is *merely* separate", and the same can be said of the world. The contradiction between truth and untruth can thus be designated as that between 'Satyam' (or truth in which all parts are related) and 'Maya' (or a state in which parts militate against the whole). "Maya is that which revolts against the truth of relatedness".[12] It will be seen that this is an original interpretation of Maya by Rabindranath.

Sometimes, he seems to speak of Maya in the sense of Avidya or ignorance. "Avidya is spiritual sleep, it is ignorance or limiting of our consciousness".[13] The outcome of this ignorance, again, is the idea that the world is altogether separate from God. The words of a language of which we are ignorant convey to us no sense of relation. "To be rescued from this fetter of words, we must rid ourselves of Avidya and then our mind can find its freedom in the inner idea. But it would be foolish to say that in order to learn the language we must destroy the words".[14] The world is not unreal, but to regard it as unconnected with the Supreme Reality is Avidya. "It would be wrong to imagine", says Rabindranath, "that God has awarded independent reality only to the self, but that in Nature he is wholly immanent. With Nature too He has the freedom of relation, otherwise

he could not have acted upon Nature...".[15] But this freedom is the freedom of Law. God has separated Nature from himself but also holds it to himself by his own Law.[16]

Sometimes Tagore seems to adopt the position that the world is Maya in the sense that it is an appearance; but an appearance is not contrary to reality; a thing may be real, and yet 'appear'. He even goes to the extent of saying that what is illusory is not necessarily devoid of truth. 'Maya' is like the paper of the bank-note which is quite useless unless it bears the stamp which gives it value. But we cannot say that the paper has no existence at all.[17] Rabindranath also uses the metaphor of the smoke and fire. The fire is a reality, the smoke is only its appearance. And yet the existence of the smoke is indisputable. Similarly the existence of the phenomenal world cannot be questioned even if we presume that it is an appearance. It may be noted that even in Vedanta, a clear distinction is made between illusion and unreality. "The world-appearance is not *so* unreal as the silver in the conch-shell which simply does not exist".[18] Tagore regards appearance itself as an aspect of truth. "When we deprive truth of its appearance, it loses the best part of its reality. For appearance is a personal relationship; it is for me"[19]. As an artist, too, he believes that elusiveness is not outside the pale of reality, and if 'Maya' indicates the inconstant and fleeting nature of things in our everyday life, it is a very suggestive idea. "The dream persists, it is real....The painted canvas is durable and substantial, the picture is a dream, it is Maya. Yet it is the picture and not the canvas which has the meaning of ultimate reality"[20]. This may not be logically consistent with the other interpretation of Maya which we described above,

but then even the idea of Maya is not for him a strictly metaphysical idea with a fixed meaning. He tries to convey the suggestiveness of the concept without denying the world's reality. "The world as an art is 'Maya'. It 'is' and 'is not'. Its sole explanation is that it seems to be what it is. The ingredients are elusive; call them Maya, even disbelieve them, the Great Artist, the 'Mayavin', is not hurt...."[21].

This elasticity of meaning which we find in Tagore's interpretations of Maya accounts for the remarkably tolerant attitude which he shows even towards the most extreme forms of this doctrine. Just as he leaves room for the impersonal Absolute although he himself proclaims God to be personal, similarly he says that "Mayavada" has an element of truth, although he himself emphatically asserts the reality of the world. "Mayavada! Why should anyone get angry at the word! Is there no such thing as ignorance or illusion? Do we not come across illusion in our day-to-day life? Does truth always reveal itself to us unclouded? Just as the fire can only burn through the destruction of the wood, so also can truth be gained only through the destruction of Avidya and Maya. We may say that the fuel of Maya has its purpose for lighting the flame of truth, but we cannot identify Maya with reality, just as we cannot identify the fuel with the flame.... Fragmentariness or incompleteness has two aspects—it reveals the Infinite, but it also conceals the Infinite. The aspect in which it conceals the Infinite has been described as Maya or Mithya....What right then have we to abuse the doctrine of Maya?"[22].

But, as we said before, this conciliatory attitude towards the concept of Maya would not at

all justify the conclusion that Rabindranath ever doubted the reality of the world or Nature. From the standpoint of human experience he considers this reality to be indubitable. "The world appears an illusion", he says, "only to those who approach it intellectually. It becomes positive and real to us when we enjoy it (i. e., experience it)". It is only a person with a narrow outlook, "sitting inactive in a corner of his room", who can deride this world as an illusion.[23] In the Upanisads, too, such an attitude has been condemned. "They enter the region of the dark", the Upanisad tells us, "who are solely occupied with the knowledge of the finite; and they into a still greater darkness who are solely occupied with the Infinite". Or, as Rabindranath himself metaphorically puts it: "The absolute Infinite is emptiness. The finite is something. It may be a cheque-book with no account in the bank, but the absolute Infinite has no cash and not even a cheque-book!"[24]

MAN AND NATURE: SELF AND NOT-SELF

Accepting the reality of the world of Nature, no less than of the individual self, it becomes imperative to consider the relation between them. Rabindranath has written extensively about the relation of Man to Nature, and we must here examine some of the salient points raised by him.

This subject, it must be confessed at the outset, presents some initial difficulties. In the first place, the word Nature itself has been used in divergent senses. It might mean the 'created universe' as distinct from its creator, and in this sense Nature includes Man. The word has also been used so as to exclude Mind but include Life; and then again Nature sometimes signifies the bare material world to the exclusion of every-

thing else. Moreover, (and this second difficulty in a manner follows from the first), the poetic approach to Nature is widely separated from the purely philosophic approach; and both of these are different from the scientific or 'physical' approach.

It will not help at all to insist on asking in what sense precisely Tagore used the word Nature. No clear-cut answer to such a question is possible, and we must remember that here again we are dealing with the philosophy of a poet. Although we are not directly concerned with Rabindranath as a poet of Nature, we cannot wholly isolate his philosophic views about Nature from the general tone of his Nature-poetry. Even in his poems, he writes of Nature in terms of the world as a whole, and not merely of 'hills and valleys, brooks and groves'. We read in his poems as often of 'experience of the world' (Viswa-bodh) as of 'experience of Nature' (Prakriti-bodh).

A typical 'poet of Nature' does not use the latter word in the sense of the totality of the non-mental universe. He thinks mainly of the Beautiful in Nature, and is inclined to restrict his conception to the beauty and appeal of natural objects. But has he, in doing so, really dispensed with all philosophical questions of 'reality'? Is he not, in portraying the Beautiful and singing ecstatically of the over-flowing life, joy and play in Nature, importing in his descriptions extra-natural interests? All poetry, in fact, is seen to proceed from an unstated assumption that Nature has not merely primary but secondary and 'tertiary' qualities as well. "Whether Nature is beautiful or adorable at all", says Bradley, "depends upon the sense in which it is taken. If the genuine reality of Nature is bare primary quality, Nature will be dead. It would

possess at the most a kind of symmetry"[25]. Rabindranath has also condemned the so-called 'scientific' attitude which really means looking at Nature "as a kind of aggregate of material lumps".

It is true that some philosophers have accepted this 'physical' concept. Aristotle, for instance, described Nature as the 'wholly potential' from which everything non-material must be rigorously excluded.[26] But, on the whole, philosophy sets itself against such a view, because it leaves out the rhythmic and dynamic aspect of Nature. Where the scientist might see nothing but a number of immutable laws, the poet and the philosopher cannot help going further, for they do not deal, in Tagore's words, "merely with the element of sameness in Nature".[27] Regarded as 'bare matter,' as a 'poor fiction of primary qualities', Nature is only a convenient abstraction; and Tagore therefore rejects the "view that Nature belongs solely to inanimate things".[28] He regards it, like Bradley, as "that endless world of sensible life which appeals to our sympathy and extorts our wonder".[29] It was in this wide sense that Spinoza used that word Nature when he described it as the "connected Unity which includes man". The poetic and the philosophic attitudes are here seen to have converged, and we find Goethe adopting the 'poetic Spinozism' which enables him to speak of Nature as a 'living whole' in which man and matter, kernel and shell, are one.

"Nature has neither kernel nor shell;
It is all at once the one and the other as well".

In the same spirit, Rabindranath also refuses to see any irreconcilable antagonism between Man and Nature. To admit of such

an antagonism, he says, "is like dividing the bud and the blossom into two separate categories, and putting their grace to the credit of two different and antithetical principles".[30]

But this recognition of 'kinship' between Man and Nature by no means amounts to an identification of the two. Such an identification is inevitable if we either reduce the human to the level of the natural, or arbitrarily elevate the natural to the status of the spiritual. Tagore steers between both these extremes, namely, *naturalism* on the one hand and *pan-psychism* on the other. Just as he advocates a complex relation of unity and difference between man and God, so also does he recognise the "indissoluble links that bind spirit with nature" without disputing the superiority of the former. "The soul's birth in the spiritual world", he says, "does *not* coincide with *severance of relationship* with what we call Nature, *but with freedom of relationship*".[31] Human civilisation itself has supplied monuments of the 'companionship' between Man and Nature; and examples of this companionship, like those so vividly portrayed in 'Robinson Crusoe', have always been a source of inspiration to man.[32] It is not by scorning "Nature's proffered hand of friendship" that humanity has come into its own.

Absolute severance from Nature leads not to freedom but its very opposite. "When a man does not realise his kinship with the world of nature, he lives in a prison-house whose walls are alien to him".[33] Tagore rejects the notion of an "uncompromising civil war between man's personality and his external world".[34]

THE INTER-DEPENDENCE OF SPIRIT AND NATURE

Tagore therefore regards Man and Nature to be indispensable elements in the whole which

is Reality. They 'need each other', as surely as do God and Man. Nature and Spirit are incomplete without each other, they are, (in the words of a modern philosopher who had a remarkable affinity of outlook with Tagore) 'organic' to each other.[35]

Nature depends upon Spirit for its meaning, and Spirit depends upon Nature for its expression. We shall start with the first part of this statement. Tagore says that whatever significance Nature possesses is in virtue of the fact that it is "not merely a store-house of power, but a habitation of man's spirit as well".[36] The objects of Nature look upwards to man, as it were, and seek their own completion.[37]

And man, in his turn, is conscious of this dependence of Nature on his own experience.

"O Nature.
So long as I did not love you
Your light
Failed to find its own wealth".[38]

And in another poem Tagore addressing Nature, says:

"In me, night and day, have your flowers bloomed,
In me have your seeds sprouted;
For me do your trees shower their perfume and foliage."[39]

The "laws of nature" are dumb in themselves, it is the human mind that reveals their meaning. Without man, Nature would be like a 'broken arch', a 'circle unclosed'. To take nature 'apart from the central fact in which it obviously finds expression' is to accept what is nothing more than a 'false abstraction'.

"The earth and the sky", says Tagore "are woven with the fibres of man's mind".[40]

In Tagore's Nature-poetry therefore the human element is hardly ever absent. If he describes a river, a boat inevitably appears, and the ferryman sings out for joy; and if the poem is about a landscape, the farmer is sure to be there, reaping his corn. Thus we find the poet expressing through the medium of art his conviction that 'nature exists for man', that without man nature would be 'as good as nothing at all'. Understood in this sense, we must accept the English poet's view that from Nature

".....we receive but what we give,
And in our life alone doth Nature live".

Nature must look beyond itself, the "external must gather itself up into internality, and existence must sum itself up in the conscious soul". Nature's flowers look up to us and whisper;[41] the sun seeks its reflection in the human face;[42] every object of Nature gazes into our eyes in order that we might make it our own.

But Spirit's need of Nature is equally pressing. The dependence is not one-sided, even though man is higher than nature in the scale of creation. Man himself would "lose his balance", and would have "ceaselessly to strain every nerve and muscle", if he tried to "leave his resting-place in universal nature and walk upon the single rope of humanity".[43] A recognition of this dependence does not at all conflict with the facts of human progress.[44] Even our 'faith in life', which keeps us "unmindful of our mortality, and accounts for all human achievements, is something which nature herself has given us.[45]

Philosophy is therefore constrained to admit

the tremendous part which Nature plays in the life of Spirit. Even Fichte, who started by describing Nature as a 'dead tool', a 'passive non-ego', went on to accept that it indirectly helped Intelligence into being. Schelling, protesting that Fichte had not sufficiently recognised the 'dignity' of Nature, saw in the latter spiritual elements in undeveloped form. Rejecting the sharp contraposition between Nature and Spirit established by the Kantio-Fichtean moralism, he regarded Nature as the "embryonic life of Spirit itself". And in Hegelian philosophy, Nature is conceived as the Idea itself in the form of otherness. It is 'petrified Intelligence', 'frozen Understanding'. "Reason becomes Nature in order to become Spirit".

The idea that Nature is "not just atoms and molecules",[46] but contains the germs of something higher than itself is seen again and again in the poems of Tagore. In his preface to "*Bana-Bani*" (a collection of some of his finest nature-poems), he has tried to convey something of the 'dignity of Nature' on which Schelling and Hegel insisted. He describes the plants as "our dumb friends who teach us how to greet the sky". "Their language", he says, "is the primal language of life, and their movements point to the first springs of Being. The histories of a thousand forgotten ages are stored up in those gestures".[47] And in the first poem in this volume we see Tagore as the "ambassador of humanity", conveying his greetings to Nature".[48]

"Tava prane pranavan.....

..je manava, tahari doot haye

Ogo manaver bandhu, aji ei arghya

Arpilam tomare pranami".

Thinking of "universal Nature's influence over universal Mind" (Viswa-Manaser opar Viswa prakritir prabhava), Rabindranath says that humanity must not only acknowledge this influence, it must also "respond to the call of the green", ('sabujer nimantran') for without such a response it would lose the key to the truth of existence[49].

Even the higher aspects of human life, which elevate man above Nature, can only be nourished by assimilating, and not by repudiating, whatever he shares with Nature. In man himself, there is both nature and spirit[50]. He is *of* Nature, and also *beyond* Nature.[51]. The distinctively human faculties do not rest on a 'purely subjective synthesis', Humanity cannot be treated as a self-contained organism "engineering all its advances out of its own particularity". The specifically human experiences cannot be taken as "an excrescence upon the universe, with no root in the nature of things". Tagore believes that the unification of man's extra-natural impulses, and their convergence upon an integrated order of life, has much to gain from his observation of, and participation in, Nature. "There is", he says, "a touch of personality in Nature which has given a centrifugal impulse to man's heart"[52]. Even the ethical being of man can only be built up "in commerce with the system of external things". Tagore even maintains that in human life the proportion between the natural and the extra-natural "should be as water is to land in our globe, the former predominating"[53].

THE 'STREAM OF LIFE' IN NATURE AND MAN

Tagore does not, however, content himself with saying that Nature and Man are interdependent. He elaborates this idea, and suggests

some of the "points of contact" between these two realms. What unites man to nature is the 'life', the 'rhythm and beauty', which they share in common. All these are only facets of the same conception which can be summed up as an eternal 'stream of life' or 'Energy of Life' (Jivana-pravaha, Jivani-shakti, Prana-dhara as Tagore calls it on different occasions.) The presence of this 'Jivani Sakti' in Nature as well as in Man makes their union inevitable. "There is a stream of life within me. I experience it, and through it I experience also my oneness with the world around me"[54]. This life he saw, like Wordsworth, as an 'active principle':

"From link to link it circulates,
The soul of all the world".

Sometimes Tagore speaks not merely of 'life' but also of 'a stream of consciousness' (Chetana-prahava) in Nature, which, to quote one of his letters, "flows through every blade of grass, every branch of the forest trees; it thrills the green fields around me, I see every fibre of palm tree quivering with consciousness"[55]. To attribute not merely life but also consciousness to nature's phenomena is not quite consistent with Rabindranath's general position. But it is very seldom that he speaks of 'chetana' in Nature. What he has in mind is, generally speaking, the creative, dynamic 'spirit of life'—something like the 'Life-force' of Bergson—which we find in Nature.

It is in this context that Tagore quotes the Upanisadic words: "Yadidam kinca sarvam prana ejati nisrtan" ("All that exists vibrates with life, having come out of life")[56]. Even in pre-Upanisadic philosophy this emphasis on 'prana' is not absent. Prajapati himself was regarded as the personification of Nature's

creative power. Later on, even Prajapati and Savitr (the Vivifier) yield their places to prana, or deified Breath"—the cosmic counterpart of individual life"[57]. In one of the poems of Tagore we find an almost exact parallel to this idea of Nature's life being a counterpart to human life. "Through the world of Nature runs the same triumphant wave of life which surges in every vein of my own body with wondrous rhythm"[58]. And in some of the poems of "Gitanjali", he expresses his desire to participate in the eternal life that scatters itself in the sky[59].

It may be, and has been, objected that Tagore does not sufficiently enlarge this concept of prana—that he leaves it vague. The criticism has an element of truth, although there is nothing really surprising in this, in view of the avowedly lyrical character of his Nature-poetry. Moreover, Tagore sometimes *did* try to elaborate the concept of Life or Prana. A good example of this may be found in his poem "*Vriksha-ropan*" from "Bana-Bani"[60].

And then, he sees in Nature not only 'life' but rhythm and harmony as well. Nature's life is not anarchic, it is held together by the same 'rhythm' as the life of humanity. Nature and Man are like two different stanzas of the same poem, like two different parts of the same symphony. They are "set to the same tune"[61]. This idea is important because it connects Tagore's philosophy of Nature with his Aesthetics.

"The language of harmony in Nature", says Tagore "is the mother-tongue of our own soul"[62]. The phenomena of Nature, like those of human life, constitute a harmonious order. They have, to use his own words, "the rhythm of cosmic motion"[63]. The dance of the seasons finds its

own rhythm in human actions. By one foot of the Nataraja the outer world of form is stirred, by his other foot the inner world of man is set in motion. And the poet says: "O Nataraja, I am your poet-disciple. I shall accept your 'mantra' of universal rhythm".

Except, perhaps, in the most subjective of arts (like Music), Nature is always in the foreground of the creative artist. In art we cherish man's unity with Nature, through beauty we perceive it; so that we sometimes feel that the objects of Nature can have no other reason for existence than that of supplying man with the materials of his pictures, poems and songs. "The first flower that blossomed on this earth was an invitation to the unborn song"[64]. And, if Nature needs the artist for the revelation of its own true worth, Art itself would be bland without 'Nature's willing partnership'. Aesthetic experience reveals in Nature a spirituality which, apart from such an experience, cannot be shown to be there. But Tagore always insists that this experience itself is mediated by Nature. In the famous words of the English poet:

> "Nature is made better by no mean
> But Nature makes that mean; so over the Art
> Which, you say, adds to Nature, in an Art
> That Nature makes".

NATURE AND MAN IN RELATION TO GOD

Tagore's philosophy of Nature culminates in his demonstration that the relationship between Man and Nature is "not a domestic affair which concerns two members of the same universe", but that the two are "held together in God". The 'life' and 'rhythm' which they share cannot

in themselves explain the unity between Man and Nature. To understand this unity in all its fulness, we have to look at them both as spheres of the manifestation of the same God.

This idea is expressed by Tagore through his own interpretation of the well-known 'Gayatri' mantra. "This mantra tells us how to know in one form the same Power who is manifested in Nature and in the human Mind, and who joins them together."[65] And in "Dharma" the same idea is conveyed: "The world without us and the intellect within us—these two are the manifestations of the same Sakti. Having known this, we experience the unity of Nature with the human Mind, and also the unity of our Mind with God".[66]

The relationship of Man and Nature is thus something more than what is demanded by the functioning of either of them. This relationship possesses the hall-mark of Reality and is "stamped by the will of God". With the rays of the first dawn that broke millions of years ago, God has himself joined the life of man.:

"Laksha barash age je prabhat
Uthechhilo ei bhuvane
Tahar arun kiran kanika
Gantho na ki mor Jivane? ".[67]

EASTERN "VERSUS" WESTERN ATTITUDE TOWARDS NATURE

Before concluding this discussion of Rabindranath's views about Nature, it is necessary to notice his favourite idea that the Oriental attitude towards Nature is essentially different from the Occidental.

Tagore has often expressed his view that the tradition of Indian thought is one of immediate

recognition of man's kinship with the world of nature, while the tendency of western civilisation is to emphasise the conflict between the two. "Truth appears to them (the Europeans), in its aspect of dualism, the perpetual conflict which has no reconciliation, and which can only end in victory or defeat.....But in the level tracts of India, men found no barriers between their lives and the grand life that permeates the universe".[68] He goes on to illustrate this by pointing to the contrast between Western and Indian dramatic literature, and especially between Shakespeare and Kalidasa. "In the western dramas, human characters drown our attention in the vortex of their passions. Nature occasionally peeps out, but she is almost always a trespasser, who has to offer excuses. But in our dramas, such as 'Sakuntala' or 'Uttara-Ram-Charita', Nature stands on her own right, proving that she has her own function—to impart the peace of the eternal to human emotions".[69] Tagore also condemns the Western educational system which accentuates the conflict between Man and Nature so that "our books come between us and our world.....covering the windows of our minds with their pages."[70]

Tagore has not worked out this contrast in the domain of philosophy. His remarks are confined to poetry and drama. Even in the field of literature, however, one feels that he has made a rather hasty generalisation in speaking of a fundamental difference of outlook between East and West on this point. He believed that the attitude towards nature as revealed in English literature reflects the impact of Industrialism and the growth of big cities: "The West seems to take a pride in thinking that it is subduing Nature.....This sentiment is the product of the city-wall habit and training of the mind, for

in the city-life man creates an artificial dissociation between himself and universal nature."[71]

It has been objected that in trying to make his point Tagore stretches the contrast too far. There are, undoubtedly, examples in European thought of the kind of attitude he has in mind. Bertrand Russell, for instance, has given us a picture of "man, living in an alien, inhuman and hostile world", in the midst of a nature "that is omnipotent but blind".[72] Then again we have Arnold, writing in the preface to his 'Poem': "What are the eternal objects of poetry? They are actions, human actions.... ..".[73] And excluding, by implication, the world of nature from poetic representation. But then have we not, on the contrary, in Wordsworth and Shelley, assurances of man's partnership with Nature as impassioned and sincere as any that Tagore would long for? Nor is it strictly true that in "Tempest" and "Winter's Tale", Shakespeare has only "shown the gulf between man and nature". On the other hand, 'Tempest' has been regarded as the English pastoral at its ultimate pitch, combining as it does the dark, stubborn, toilsome character of Nature, (Caliban) with the gay, free, unsubstantial grace (Ariel) [74] And in "Winter's Tale", wherein Rabindranath finds a "vortex of human passion" to the exclusion of Nature, Shakespeare has, in fact, sung of nature's objects with even more feeling than is usual with him; has sung rapturously of

"Voilets dim
But sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes
Or Cytherea's breath."

HUMANISM OF RABINDRANATH

We have seen above how Tagore emphasises the intimate connection between Man and Nature.

It would be a one-sided interpretation of his philosophy, however, to hold that he ignored the advance of spirit over Nature or that he failed to see the 'emergence of real differences' with the arrival of Man in the universe. On the contrary, he maintains that man's affinity with nature does not at all conflict with the place of pride that he occupies in the scheme of things. So high, indeed, does he regard the status of man, that God himself can best be considered in terms of humanity, so that we may, Tagore says, fairly claim that 'Reality is human' and, from the side of knowledge, that 'Truth is human'.

This brings us to what has been called the 'Humanism of Rabindranath. It may well be doubted if the word 'Humanism has ever had any precise connotation, but we can call Tagore a humanist (a) in the first place because he accords to man the highest place *within* the phenomenal world, (b) secondly, because he does not hesitate to attribute 'humanness' even to God, and describes ultimate Reality itself in human terms. But if 'Humanism' means a 'dethroning' of the Infinite or a glorification of the finite man *as finite*, then certainly he cannot be called a humanist. He declares that man must continually 'outgrow himself', must come out of himself; the idea of the 'human God' is supplemented by that of the 'divine Man'. This is what distinguishes Tagore's humanism from the shallow Comtist humanism of 19th century Europe.

These points bear a little further examination.

THE IDEA OF 'DEGREES' IN TAGORE'S PHILOSOPHY

First, let us consider Tagore's humanism in the light of his view of "man's place in the cosmos". We have seen above that he accepts

the reality of the world as well as the self. But to accept the reality of everything is not to deny that one thing can be *more* real than another. Nature and spirit are both real, and yet the latter is more real than the former. Thus Rabindranath adopts, in a manner, the idea that there are 'degrees' in truth and reality.

In ultimate reality everything is preserved, nothing is lost. "The flower that has failed to bloom, the river that has lost its course in the desert, even these are not altogether devoid of meaning".[75] ["Gitanjali"—No. 147].

But, while the Absolute reveals itself in every object of creation, how insignificant-so-ever it be, the delight of the Absolute is not equally great in all objects. While everything that he has created pleases him, nothing pleases him as much as man. "Of all his manifestations, man is incomparable. The human self is unique, because in it God reveals himself in a special manner."[76] As Tagore says even more explicitly in 'Sadhna', "The revealment of the Infinite is to be seen *most fully* not in the starry heavens, but in the soul of man."[77]

This, then, is the first aspect of his humanism. He awards to man a place at the top of things. Nothing is wholly unreal, but nothing, again, is as real as man. As he puts it metaphorically: "God has many strings to his 'sitar'; some are made of iron, others of copper, and yet others are made of gold". Humanity is the golden string of God's lute.[78]

MAN'S SUPERIORITY TO NATURE

But in what does man's uniqueness consist? It consists in his freedom, his magnificence, his ethical and aesthetic consciousness. In Nature, the reigning principle is Determinism, in man it

is Freedom. It is this that helps him to "cross nature's bonds",[79] to rise above nature. "Suckled at the wolf's breast, sheltered in the brute's den, man suddenly discovers that he is man—that his true power lies in abandoning his brute strength, and exchanging it for the freedom of the spirit".[80] This freedom implies a certain internality which nature wholly lacks. The essence of Nature, as Hegel says, lies in externality, ("Nature is the sphere of external sensuous existence"). But man, in his freedom, "turns his vision inwards, and upsets Nature's scheme of balance".[81] He takes risks, he defies Law and is none the worse for doing so; "even his erect posture is a gesture of insubordination"[82], and his entire life is the fight of Jack against the seemingly almighty giant.[83].

This freedom, again, transforms him from a receptive to a creative being. "In man the life of the animal has taken a further bend. He has come to the beginning of a world which has to be created by his own will and power. The receptive stage is past....Man enters the career of creative life....".[84]

In the creativity, this initiative, lies man's magnificence. He can look beyond his minimum needs of survival. He can scorn the dictates of utility. "To all other creatures, Nature is final. To live, to propagate their species and to die is their end; and they are content. They never cry for emancipation from the limits of life".[85] The glory of man is that he is not content, he wants more, "he is restless, he is athirst for the distant and the faraway":

"Ami chanchala he, ami
Sudurer piyasi".[86]

His craving for progress is insatiable. However great he becomes, his cry always is: "Not here;

Not here: I long for another dwelling".[87] ["Balaka"].

Being aware that he is "not a casual visitor, but a special guest in this universe"[88], man is never satisfied with the small, even though he is physically small in the context of the mighty world.[89] He says: "Bhumaiva sukham, nalpe sukhamasti". Man's passion is for greatness, not for happiness.[90] He foregoes all the comfort of contentment, and longs for the glorious, the immense, the 'vrihat'.[91]

IDEA OF 'HUMAN REALITY'

Man's elevation above Nature, however, is only one aspect of Humanism, we might even say it is the lower stage of Humanism. Tagore does not content himself with showing man's high stature in the scale of creation, he goes on to ascribe 'human' qualities to Reality as a whole. He conceived universal history itself as but the record of the gradual emergence of human reality. "The philosophy of 'Nava-jatak' is akin to that suggested by certain interpreters of the Cosmic Ray. There is a process of dissolution in History, but silently, inevitably and ceaselessly human reality is being built up".[92]

Divinity, on such a view, at once acquires a new meaning. If the divine is the 'most real', it must also be the most human. Tagore accordingly says: "Humanity is a necessary factor in the perfecting of divine truth"[93]. Man will thus appear to have prescribed forms to reality. We men, live in reality and thereby determine and widen its limits.[94] Men, so to speak, are the 'makers' of Reality.

God himself depends upon human being for perfecting his universe. He 'purchases his sunrise from the eyes of man':[95]

God's power finds its own fulfilment in the human world:

"Amar bhuvane tabe
Purna ha'be
Tomar charam adhikar".[96]

It is not true, Tagore says, that God has everything to give, and man has everything to receive. He proclaims man's right to "give" even to God. "To all things else you give, from me you ask".[97] Without man, God would not be God at all. Man came and God woke up to find his joy:

"I came and you woke:
I came and your heart was stirred"

And in the magnificent climax of the same poem Rabindranath declares that God finds himself only by gazing into *human* eyes, and receiving the touch of *human* hands:[98] This is Humanism at its ultimate pitch. How strikingly do these words, raising humanity to its loftiest pedestal, remind us of Shelley's 'Hymn to Apollo':

"I am the eye with which the universe
Beholds itself and knows itself divine".

From the point of view of religious experience, too, the conclusion to which such Humanism leads is quite simply and explicitly stated: "My religion is the Religion of Man in which the Infinite is *defined in humanity*".[99] In the field of Religion, the question is not so much one of attributing human qualities to reality but of "realising the humanity of God" which is already presupposed.[100]

HUMANISM IN VAISNAVA PHILOSOPHY

In the "Religion of Man", Tagore has quoted extensively from madieval Vaisnava poets in

whose works we find the impress of the same humanistic outlook. In an age when the common man had lost all faith in the worth and dignity of the human individual, and in a country where the Absolute had been exalted so as to become an 'omnipotent abstraction', the Vaisnava poets raised the banner of revolt, and tried to restore to humanity the greatness of which its own philosophers had deprived it. The Vaisnavas addressed God as the 'Perfected Man', and Chaitannya declared that of all the manifestations of God the highest was the human manifestation.[101] Others used the expressions 'Nara-Hari'' 'Maha-Manava' and 'Maner Manush, with reference to God.[102] Kabir, Dadu, Rajjab and Ravidas are of the many humanist poets in whose works Tagore had found a substantiation of his own ideas. Above all, he admired the humanism of *Chandidas* who had proclaimed:

"Listen, O brother man:

The truth of Man is the highest truth,

There is no truth higher than that".

Chandidas had also written: "Man is the gem, the very life of creation. But most of us are deceived by the exterior, and fail to fathom the true greatness of humanity".[103] This greatness lies in the fact that man, like God, 'is Love'. His love is not restricted to things of this earth, he is beyond ordinary emotions.[104] Starting with these ideas of Chandidas, the 'Sahajiyas' of a later day proclaimed that man, and not God, is the proper object of worship, holding fast to the view that human qualities can imprint on man the character of the Supreme Being.[105]

It is easy to level against such a view the charge of anthropomorphism, but such a charge

has to be boldly faced. Tagore says: "There is in all Religion a certain element of anthropomorphism".[106] And again: "....Our God is also Man. If this is condemned as anthropomorphism, then man should be blamed for being man, and the lover for loving his beloved as a person, and not as a principle of psychology".[107] Tagore does not condone the cruder forms of anthropomorphism, but he feels, with a modern writer, that "there is likewise an anthropomorphism which is circumspect and enlightened", and quite unlike that variety of it which we see, for instance, in Locke.[108] To find the Supreme, the 'Bhuma', in ourselves is one thing; but a worship of the self is quite another thing. Against the latter we must be on our guard.[109] Tagore carefully steered between the two extremes of submergence of human values on the one hand and a worship of the human in the finite sense on the other. We can therefore say of him what Matthew Arnold said of Goethe:

"And he pursued a lonely road
His eyes on Nature's plan;
Neither made man too much a God
Nor God too much a man".

REFERENCES

TO

CHAPTER V

1. Radhakrishnan: *Indian Philosophy* Vol II, p. 561.
2. Hiriyanna: *Outlines of Indian Philosophy*, p. 358.
3. Such usage is to be seen, for instance, in the *Prasnopanisad*.
4. S. K. De: *Origin and Early History of Vaisnavism etc.*, p. 232.
5. Ibid., p. 231.
6. *Sadhana*, p. 95.
7. Jagatke jadi mithya bale mane kari tabe Bhagavano to nishkriya haye othen (Santiniketan).
8. *Santiniketan*—Fourth Series.
9. *Sadhana*, p. 19.
10. *Stray Birds*.
11. Ulrici: *God and the World*, p. 572.
12. *Sadhana*, p. 85.
13. Ibid., p. 32.
14. Ibid., p. 73.
15. *Isvara je keval manushkei parthakya dan karechhen ar prakritir sange mile ek haye rayechhen e katha bolile chalbe keno? Prakritir sange-o tanr ekti swatantrya achhe, na'ile prakritir opar tanr kono kriya-i chalito na* (*Parthakya* from *Santiniketan*—Third Series).
16. *Iswara ei prakriti ke ki diye prithak kare rekhechhen? Niyam diye.*
17. *Sadhana*. p. 80.
18. Das Gupta: *Indian Philosophy* Vol. I, p. 445.
19. *Personality*, p. 51.
20. *Creative Unity*, p. 10.
21. *Religion of an Artist* (Contemporary Indian Phil., p. 38).
22. *Mayavada! Sunilei asahishnu haye otho keno? Mithya ki nei? Satya ki amader kachhe ekebarei unmukta? Kath ke dagdha kare jeman agun jale, amader agyanke, mayake dagdha kare-i ki satyer jowala jalchhe na? Ei khandakaler asamapte ekdike anantake prakash karchhe. apar dike achhanna karchhe. Jedike achhanna karchhe sedike tahake ki balibo? Moya balibo na ki? Mithya balibo na ki?* From *Santiniketan*—Fifth Series.

23. The Poem *Mayavada* from *Sonar Tari.*
24. *Personality*, Pp. 56-57.
25. Bradley: *Appearance and Reality*, p. 435
26. Following the Aristotelian tradition, the Italian *Philosophers of Nature* (Telesius, Patricius—later, Bruno and Campanella) elaborated this purely physical concept.
27. *Personality*, p. 54.
28. *Sadhana*, p. 6.
29. Bradley: *Appearance and Reality*, p. 434.
30. *Sadhana*, p. 7.
31. *Personality*, p. 94.
32. *Religion of Man*, p.176.
33. *Sadhana*, p. 8.
34. *Personality*, p. 113.
35. A. S. Pringle Pattison: *The Idea of God.*
36. *Creative Unity*, p. 27.
37. Cf: Some of the poems in *Purabi.*
38. *He bhuvan.*
Ami jata kshan
Tomare na besechhinu bhalo
Tata-kshan tava alo
Khunje khunje paye nahi tar sab dhan....''
From *Balaka* No. 17
39. .....asankhya *rajani din juga-jugantara dhari*
Amar majhare phutiyachhe trina tava etc. etc.
The poem *Basundhara* from *'Sonar Tari*
40. *Personality*, p. 74.
41. *Gitanjali* No. 31.
42. *Surya amar mukhe nayan meli*
Dekhe apan chhabi. (*Balaka* No. 44)
43. *Sadhana*, p. 10.
44. Even among the Stoics it was recognised that the positive content of morality could only be described as life in harmony with Nature.
45. *Religion of Man*, p. 195.
46. *Personality*, p. 31.
47. ....*Tahader bhasha jiva jagater adibhasha....Hajar hajar batsarer bhule-jawa itihas ke nara dey.....* (Preface to *Bana Bani*).
48. The poem *Briksha Bandana* from Bana Bani
49. *Matir Dak* from *Purabi.*
50. *Prakritik ekam adhyatmik jekhane paripurna samanjasya labh karechhe.....*(*Samagra* from *Santiniketan*—Fourth Series.

51. *Dui ke niye manusher karbar. Se prakritir, abar se prakritir uparer. Edike se kaya diye beshthita, ar ek dike se kayar cheye anek beshi.* (*Dwidha* from *Santiniketan*—Eleventh Series).
52. *Personality*, p. 70.
53. *Religion of Man*, p. 174.
54. *Bangabhashar Lekhak*.
55. An old letter quoted by Rabindranath himself in *Amar Dharma*.
56. Quoted by Rabindranath in *Creative Unity* and in many of Santiniketan sermons.
57. Hiriyanna: *Outlines of Indian Philosophy*, p. 41
58. *Eamar sharirer shiraye shiraye Je prana-taranga-mala ratri-din dhaye Sei prana chutiyachhe viswa-digvijaye ..... Sei juga-juganter virat spandan Amar narite aji karichhe nartan''* (*Naibedya* no. 26) (The English translation is by Rabindranath himself)
59. *Gitanjali*, no. 96
60. In this poem, (*Vrivsha-ropan*, from 'Bana Bani'), he addresses Nature as 'Prabal Pran', 'udar pran', 'komal pran' and so on.
61. A letter quoted by Ajit Chakravarty. ("Prakritir sange ami ek-i chhande basano'')
62. *Creative Unity*, p. 7
63. Ibid. p. 10
64. *Fireflies*, p. 60
65. *Viswa-prakriti evam manava-chitta, ei duike ek kare miliye achhen jini tanke ei duiyer madhye ek rupe janibar se dhyanamantra.* From *Shanti-niketan* (Tenth Series.)
66. *Bahire jagat, evam antare amar dhi. Ei dui-i ek-i saktir vikash* (*Dharma*).
67. *Utsarga* poem no. 13.
68. *Creative Unity*, p. 47.
69. Ibid., pp. 50-51.
70. Personality, p. 142.
71. *Sadhana*, p. 5.
72. *Free Man's Worship*, by Bertrand Russell.
73. Preface to the Edition of 1853.
74. Edmund Blunden: *Nature in English Literature Ie phul ra phutiti jherechhe dharani to Ie nadi mara-pathe haralo dhara Iani, he jani, tas haye ni hara'.*
75. *Gitanjali*, no. 147.

76. *Iswarer viswa-sristir madhye ami aparva, ami atulaniya .... Sei je visesh ami, tar madhye tomar visesh ananda, visesh avirbhava.. Viscsh* from *Santiniketan* Third Series).
77. *Sadhana*, p. 41.
78. Address at *Santiniketan*, 1931.
79. *Man*, p. 4.
80. *Religion of Man*", p. 162.
81. Ibid., p. 52.
82. Ibid , p. 51.
83. Cf. *Robindranath and Bergson* by Dr. S. K. Maitra.
84. *Personality*, p. 88.
85. Ibid., p. 87.
86. From *Kheya*
87. From *'Balaka'* (*Hetha noy, anya kotha, anya konkhane*).
88. *Creative Unity*, p. 83.
89. *Manush chhoto haye o kichhutei chhoto le santushta ha'te parchhe na.* (*'Satya Bodh* from *Santiniketan*" 1 th Series).
90. *Asal katha, manusher sakal cheye satya ichha hachhe boro ha'bar ichha, sukhi ha'bar ichha noy* (*Bhuma* from *Santiniketan* Seventh Series).
91. *Santiniketan* (Fourteenth Series).
92. Dr. Amiya Chakravarty: *Rabindranath the poet of Modern Age.*
93. *Creative Unity*, p. 80.
94. *Religion of Man*, p. 134.
95. *Amar chokhe laha je kine.*
Tomar suryodaya.. Balaka no. 54.
96. *Purnata* from "Purabi. Also cf.:—
Swarga aji kritartha holo amar deke,
Amar preme, amar sneho etc. etc. ("Balaka").
97. *Stray Birds.*
98. *Tumi Ami* from "Balaka".
99. *Religion of Man*, p. 96.
100. *Man*, p. 26.
101. *Krishner jatek lila, sarvottam nara lila,*
Nara bapu tahar sahay
102. Cf. *Maner madhye maner manush*
Koro anveshana
103. *Manush manush sabai kahaye.*
Manush keman jana
Manush ratan, manush dhan,
Manush paprun dhan.

Bharam bhul je anek jan
Maram nahiko jane....

104. *Manusher prem nahi jivaloke*
Manush se prem jane....
105. *Manindra Mohan Bose*: *The Post-Chaitanya Sahajiva Cult in Bengal* (Preface).
106. *Man*, p. 68.
107. *Religion of Man*, p. 114.
108. Cf. Dawes Hicks: *Philosophical Bases of Theism*, p. 51.
109. *Chhoto Boro* from "Santiniketan" Fifteenth Series.

Chapter VI

AESTHETICS (I)

In the philosophy of Tagore the most important place is undeniably occupied by aesthetics. On no other branch of philosophy has he written so widely, or with such zest, as on aesthetics. Being himself a creative artist of the first rank, this department of philosophy was, for Tagore more real, and of greater significance, than any other. Whether he has consistently obeyed his own aesthetic doctrines in his poems, pictures and songs, and, if so, how far he has successfully vindicated them in practice, is an enquiry that will occupy historians of Indian art and culture for many years to come. The student of Tagore's philosophy, however, must of necessity restrict himself to a discussion of those doctrines themselves.

Tagore's aesthetics, like Kant's, can indeed be described as the "crowning phase" of his philosophy. The true and the good are meaningless abstractions to him except in relation with the beautiful. As *Nalinikanta* says: "Tagore loves 'satya' and 'mangal' only to the extent that they *are* 'sundar' as well"[2]. The poet starts from 'experience' which primarily suggests ideas of the beautiful, and only incidentally those of veracity or morality. Art aims at "utterance of feeling", which, he tells us, "is not the statement of a fundamental truth, or a scientific fact, or a useful moral precept.... If Science or Philosophy may gain anything from it, they are welcome, but that is not the reason of its being. If while crossing a ferry, you can catch a fish, you are a lucky man, but that does not make the ferry-boat a fishing boat, nor should you abuse

the ferryman if he does not make fishing his business"[3].

But to say that aesthetics is the most important section of Tagore's philosophy is not to suggest that in this subject he has actually founded a system or a school. Virtues of an artist are often the vices of a philosopher; and even in aesthetics, Rabindranath has failed to give any systematic form to his views or even to rid them completely from inconsistencies. He never cared much for the 'historical method' in aesthetics;[4] and was so much against partisanship and sectarianism in art, that he avoided classifying his ideas on any fixed lines[5].

In Tagore's aesthetics we find a curious blending of typically western ideas with many concepts which we associate almost exclusively with the Oriental attitude towards Art. We shall see in the course of this chapter some of the striking affinities between his views and those of European astheticians like Bergson, Spencer, Bosanquet and Croce. It may be asked how far we are justified in discussing Tagore's views along with those of Nietzsche or Spencer, from both of whom he differed so drastically. But in the case of a writer like Tagore, with all his powers of assimilation and his distrust of system-building, comparative discussion often helps us in clearing up many points. That is why we have tried to analyse Tagore's views about 'play' and 'Utility' in art, in the context of Spencer's theory regarding the same; and have tried to show how Tagore's attitude towards the age-old controversy between the universal and individual elements in art suggests something of Nietzsche's formulation of the ultimate unity of Apollonian and Dionysian art.

The debt which Tagore owes to Hindu aesthe-

tics is also considerable; but here again we find the same assimilative spirit at work. Vaisnava aesthetics, too, has left subtle marks on Tagore's theories. Though he refers but rarely to 'bhavas', 'anubhavas' and 'sthayibhavas, it is known that he was familiar with all their implications. It has been said of *Schiller* that he was "in accord with the spirit, but not with the letter of Kantian aesthetics"[6]. The same might well be said of Tagore's relation to Vaisnava aesthetic writings. As for Hindu aesthetics of the 'schools', Tagore's essay entitled "Chhabir Amga" (The six Limbs of painting), bears ample testimony to his deep appreciation of the principle of external and internal harmony which is the main feature of ancient aesthetics in India as well as in the Graeco-Roman world. In fact, Tagore's main endeavours in the province of aesthetic speculation, as in Metaphysics and Ethics, seems to be to avoid all extremes, and to obey the general principle of harmony, of which 'proportion', 'rhythm', 'unity' are but aspects. We shall see how Tagore repeatedly emphasises this princi ple in every department of aesthetics, including literary criticism.

We shall, therefore, begin our discussion of Tagore's aesthetic philosophy, not by asking for a "definition" of Beauty but by drawing pointed attention to the fundamental principle on which he takes his stand, and in the light of which alone can we enter into the real spirit of his aesthetic writings.

THE NATURE OF BEAUTY: THE PRINCIPLE OF HARMONY IN ART

Tagore has given us no exact definition of Beauty, but he tries to bring out the concept of the Beautiful; in the first place by distinguishing it from the non-beautiful and the Ugly, and

in the second place by discussing Beauty in relation with Nature, Truth and Reality.

The aesthetic consciousness of man has had a development. In the first stages of this development, Tagore says, "We have to start with a division—the division between the beautiful and the non-beautiful". Gradually, however, we begin to think of Beauty as an universal spirit. When our aesthetic understanding is only meagrely awakened, we regard as beautiful anything that startles us by colour or sound. Among the primitives the striking is regarded as the beautiful. "Our first acquaintance with Beauty is in her dress of motley colours that affects us with its stripes and feathers—nay, with its disfigurements"[7]. But as our ideas mature and tastes alter, "beauty renounces violence", and the "music of beauty has no longer any need of exciting us with loud noise." "Thus in the history of aesthetics there comes an age of emancipation"[8].

Tagore does not seem to have given much thought to the role of the 'Characteristic' in Art, and in his works we do not get an appraisal of the same. Nevertheless, it is clear that he is not one of those who regard 'strangeness' to be the sole criterion of Art. It has often been maintained that the emphasis on the 'Characteristic' is a distinctive feature of modern aesthetic, while that of the ancient is an emphasis on the idea of harmony and artistic unity.[9] If this is true it must be said that Tagore inclines more towards the ancient than the modern view of Beauty.

Beauty ceases to appear to us, then, as something that forces itself sharply upon our senses or mind, and is seen "more in the unassuming harmony of common objects than in things start-

ling in their singularity"[10] In art harmony, proportion, unity are fundamental. To whatever aspect of art we may turn we instantly realise that "elements of our mental content must be in harmony with the total imaginative construction or process"[11]. We shall see later that Tagore eschews all one-sided standpoints in art. His aesthetic philosophy is based on the idea of unification of, and harmony between, diverse elements. He demands harmony between the sensuous and the spiritual, between emotion and intellect, between form and content, between observation and expression, and between the individual and the universal aspects of Art.

In ancient Indian aesthetics, harmony and proportion have come in for special emphasis. Tagore quotes the Hindu view of proportion of parts (pramanani),[12] and shows that the "principle of accommodation" operates as much in aesthetics as in Logic or Ethics. "The logical relationship present in an intellectual proportion, and the aesthetic relationship indicated in the proportions of a work of art both agree in one thing. They affirm that truth consists not in facts but in harmony of facts"[13]. There could be no effective differentiation of forms ("rupa-bhedah") without proportion. "Our aesthetics, starting with rupa-bhedah, goes on to pramanani. Difference exists because without difference there is no union. But there is also limit, because without limit there is no Beauty....Form has necessarily to be clothed in proportion"[14].

In Greece too Beauty was thought to consist in "the imaginative or sensuous expression of unity in variety".[15] In the Middle Ages, Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas continued to stress the unifying power of Beauty. Augustine spoke not merely of harmony but of 'symmetry'.[16]

While recognising that symmetry might be enriched by contrast, Augustine held it to be the ruling principle in Art as distinct from, and even opposed to, characteristic expressiveness. And Thomas Aquinas said "..The senses arecharmed with things duly proportioned as analogous to themselves."[17]

It was after the Renaissance, and more particularly after the Romantic movement in the later eighteenth century, that the emphasis in aesthetics shifted to the characteristic. Whether or not Tagore can be described as a romanticist in Art is a different question altogether. In any case, if romanticism involves abandonment of the law of harmony in art, he would have preferred to be called a conservative. His own art-creations, as a poet, a composer and as a painter, are characterised by restraint. And, as we shall see later, he demanded not merely the restraint of technique but the restraint of emotion as well.

Art must, however, transcend the elementary criterion of restraint, and advance to the creation of Rhythm. For great Art, something more is required than mere proportion, which even animals are capable of. "Birds repeat a single note, or a very simple combination of notes, but man builds his world of music and establishes ever new *rhythmic* relationships of notes, which reveal to him an universal mystery of creation".[18] That is why, Tagore says, great poetry uses symbols of music rather than of painting;[19] it is more 'gitadharmi' than 'chitradharmi'. Music has higher expressive capacities than other arts because it serves in the words of plotinus, as the "audible symbol of inaudible harmonies"[20]

Rhythm and harmony are "at the root of

Reality itself". In Art we feel this rhythm more than in other spheres of life because our own creative activity reflects directly the universal rhythm.[21] "Through our sense of Beauty", says Tagore, "we realise the harmony which is in the universe".[22] And conversely, "the more we comprehend the harmony in the physical world,....our expression of beauty in art becomes more fully catholic".[23]

All great art, and especially Music, appeals to us because it represents, in *Schiller's* words, "the archetypal rhythm of Nature itself". If in Tagore's own attitude to Music we see a drifting away from classical forms, it is only in so far as Classical Music, abandoning proportion between form and content, sometimes allows a ridiculous growth of formal detail. Although Sanskrit texts enjoin that in music the meaning of words and the manner of execution should both be equally attended to, it is seen that the meaning is very often smothered; and it is against this that Tagore protests.[24]

The aesthetic activity is thus the relating, harmonising, unifying force which enhances the significance of life itself. It is the activity of the 'total man', and presupposes elimination of all that is one-sided. Kant says: "All other forms of perception divide man, being based exclusively either in the sensuous or the spiritual side of his being. Only the perception of Beauty makes of him an entirety, because it demands the cooperation of both his natures".[25]

The unity which the artist seeks is greater than the unity between the different parts of his art-work; it is greater even than the unity between the diverse ideas in the artist's mind during the process of creation; for the highest art demands that the artist himself should be

in 'communion' with the entire universe. "The true principle of art", says Tagore "is the principle of unity".[26] Apart from the external unity of parts, which creates taste-value in a particular picture or symphony, we have the unity of the artist's personality; and this is what distinguishes the unity of Art from the unity of Science. "The scientist seeks an impersonal principle of unification, which can be applied to all things".[27] But the unification of art presupposes personal experience. The true artist is "one with the world." His art cannot flourish in isolation from Nature and Society. "The rhythm of Beauty is the inner spirit, whose outer body is social organisation".

Thus Beauty is seen to be a link that unites man with Nature, Society, and God or ultimate reality itself. Tagore says: "The word 'Sahitya' is derived from 'Sahit' which means 'together'; thus even derivatively, literature in India stands for synthesising activity".[28]

THE 'UGLY' IN ART

We have discussed in such detail Tagore's emphasis on harmony, for two reasons. In the first place, he often uses the words 'harmony' or 'harmonious' when what he really means is 'beauty' or 'beautiful'. The second reason is that without bearing in mind his views about harmony, rhythm, unity, proportion, and allied concepts, it is scarcely possible to appreciate the position which he takes up regarding many of the aesthetic problems which we shall consider later.

To illustrate this the better, let us begin by taking up the extreme case of the 'Ugly' in Art—even though such a procedure is unorthodox from the point of view of Aesthetic Criticism.

Why should art have any concern with some-

thing which is not merely *not* beautiful but avowedly against the principle of Beauty? Why should aesthetics consider the Ugly at all? On Tagore's theory of harmony, the question ceases to puzzle us, for he regards ugliness not as an entity in conscious or unconscious opposition to beauty, but as something that explains those breaches of harmony which are only too common in human life. "We can give rise to ugliness by going counter to the eternal law of harmony which is everywhere".[29] To Tagore sheer ugliness is not an acceptable idea. "It is only the narrowness of perception", he says, "which sharply divides the field of man's aesthetic consciousness into ugliness and beauty".[30] The idea of 'degrees of truth and reality', which we find in other departments of Tagore's philosophy is equally present in his aesthetics. There is no such thing as absolute evil; good and evil are but aspects of the moral principle. Nor is there any such phenomenon as utter death; life and death are both aspects of the Life Principle (jivani sakti). Similarly he maintains that both ugliness and beauty are aspects of the principle of beauty.[31]

Tagore's view of ugliness is the exact opposite of the view of *Schlegel* who describes the Ugly as "the unpleasant manifestation of the good". Schlegel regards ugliness as "wholly outside beauty, of which it is the embodied nagation".[32] But the assumption that a "pleasant manifestation of the bad" is impossible is itself unwarranted. Similarly, those who regard 'elimination of the Ugly as one of the negative laws of aesthetics'[33] would have to exclude from the province of Art much that is genuinely expressive.

Tagore says: "In Art, a certain amount of 'opposition of forces' is necessary".[34] To exclude the Ugly from art altogether would be "to admit

that our sense of beauty creates a dissension in our universe, and sets up a wall of hindrance across the highway of communication".[35] Even in the Middle Ages, the 'necessity of Ugliness' was recognised. *Saint Augustine* claimed that the ugly should be regarded as "an element of the beautiful" to which, nevertheless, it serves as a foil. The universe as a whole, it was maintained, contained an element of ugliness ('deformitas') which we cannot neglect or dismiss as an illusion. Ugliness, according to Tagore, does not fall outside the truth of art. It consists only "in the distorted expression of Beauty, which comes from imperfect realisation of Truth".[36]

It is necessary to stress, however, that while Tagore in obedience to his doctrine of harmony, refuses to expel the Ugly outright, he never gives to ugliness any independent reality. Ugliness, like Sin, has no sovereign existence. It has been aptly remarked by one of his critics that in the works of Rabindranath we do not get any portrayal of pure tragedy because he rejects the concept of the 'wholly evil'.[37] In his dramas, therefore, there is no Iago, no 'motiveless malignity'.[38]

THE PERSONAL ELEMENT IN ART

Treating the theory of Ugliness as a necessary digression to exemplify the general law of hormony in art, we now proceed to the more important corollaries of that law. The first step forward from the idea of unity or harmony leads Tagore to the idea of personality in Art. "Human personality has a principle of unity, which is satisfied in a picture, a poem, a character.... Its standard of reality is hurt at the slightest consciousness of discord, which is against the fundamental unity at its centre".[39] Unity and harmony are concepts which are intelligible only

in relation to personality. "The principal object of Art is the expression of Personality, and that is why it uses the language of picture and music".[40]

While Science "eliminates from its field of research the personality of creation", Art seeks to put aside all that is impersonal and mechanical. Consider painting, for instance. While looking at a picture, "Science deals with the element of sameness, with the law of perspective and colour-combination", but it misses the picture itself, "which is the creation of a personality and which appeals to the personalities of those who see it".[41] Or take the case of Music. Imagine a man from Mars coming to the earth and listening to a gramophone. The personality of the singer is here apparently absent; and yet the visitor would interest himself not in the mechanism of the gramophone but in "the truth of the music which his personality immediately acknowledges as a personal message".[42] "The facts of the gramophone make us aware of the laws of sound, but the music gives us personal companionship".[43]

Some recent writers on aesthetics, approaching the question of personality from a predominantly psychological angle, have tried to identify the personal element of art with the unconscious or sub-conscious sources of creation. They have consequently been led to the conclusion that the more personal a work of art, the more esoteric and limited its appeal. Following this line of argument, *Freud* himself has declared: "The true artist.....elaborates his day-dreams so that they *lose that personal note* which grates upon strangers.....He opens out to others the way back to the comfort and consolation of his own unconscious sources sources of

pleasure".[44] This statement gives us the impression that the personal is necessarily the peculiar or the incomprehensible. But Tagore makesit quite clear that the personal in art is also the shareable. "Personality is the harmony of the unique, while the peculiar is the discord of the unique".[45] For Tagore, personality denotes not the 'sub-conscious" but rather the fully conscious, which in art leaves its imprint on the art work. "Works of art are the signatures of beauty, in which the mingling of the personal touch leaves its memorial".[46] Tagore is not enamoured of that 'genius' which is akin to madness, and which exults in its originality, unaware that it borders on the neurotic.[47]

In Art, personality, has a threefold part to play. From the point of view of the creator, we have already seen that his personality leaves an indelible impress on the art-work. "The music and the musician are inseparable".[48] From the spectator's or the listener's viewpoint, too, art has its value only insofar as his own personality is awakened as a result of enjoyment of a particular work of art. "The true value of *Beethoven's* Sonata lies in its power of touching the depth of our own personality".[49] That is why the Oriental tradition of art, which stresses the personal element more than the Europeans do, enjoins the spectator "to seek the artist concealed within the art". In his *Reminiscences* Rabindranath writes: "In European music, outward embellishment must be perfect in every detail....But in our country, an artistic exposition of the melody is the main object.... In Europe, the voice is the object of culture, and with it they perform impossibilities. In India the virtuoso is satisfied if he has heard the *song*; in Europe, they go to hear the *singer*".[50] Thirdly, from the point of view of

the total process of creation, this communication *of* a person *to* a person is seen to be the highest purpose and criterion of art. Brojendranath Seal, referring to Tagore's art, has written: "What *does* enter the norm and test of poetry is not emotional exaltation, imaginative transfiguration, or disinterested criticism, but in and through them all the creation of a personality with an individual scheme of life, an individual outlook on the universe".[51] Tagore not only satisfies this criterion in his own poetry, as a theorist of art too he demands the same criterion. Every joyous thing on earth, he says, reflects the artist's laughter.[52] "A poet is a true poet only when he can make his own personal ideas joyful to all men".[53]

Moreover, Art not merely "*expresses* personality", it also helps to *create* personality. "With the truth of our ideas" (as expressed in art), "we also grow in truth". *Bergson* says: "The art creates the artist as much as vice versa". And when the work of art reaches its 'consumer' it again helps to enhance personal value. "The poet not only expresses his inner self, he also develops *our* (i.e., reader's) hidden self. The poet expresses a state of the soul, and if we understand his work it is only because there is some impression in us, however nascent, which corresponds to what he describes".[54] For the producer as well as the enjoyer, then, art is "self-culture" ("Atma Samskriti").

Finally, Tagore tries to assure us tha this recognition of the supremacy of the personal element in art does not imply any belittling of theoretical generalisations. "When we say that art only deals with those truths that are personal, we do not seek to exclude philosophical ideas which are apparently abstract".[55] Generalisations which supply us with "common deno-

minators'' regarding aesthetic problems are not only permissible but even necessary and profitable, even if they are 'apparently abstract'. These cannot, however, be 'perfect representations' of artistic truth which must of necessity be related to "that personality which is the proper language of Art".[56] With this reservation, not merely Philosophy, but even a social science like History might be permitted to send its emissaries within the territory of aesthetic. Tagore says: "History, so long as it copies Science and deals with abstractions, remains outside the domain of literature. But as a narrative of events which have personal significance or appeal, it takes its place by the side of the epic poem".[57] History imparts to the ages with which it deals "a taste of personality"; so that these periods "become human to us and we feel their living heart-beats'.[58]

THE 'DIVINE' AND THE 'HUMAN' IN ART

Before we consider how far this view of Art is compatible with that "harmony between the individual and the universal" which is Tagore's ideal, it is necessary to see the intimate connection between this "aesthetic personalism" and the general metaphysical position taken up by Tagore regarding the fundamental problem of Reality.

As we saw in Ch. IV., Tagore for all his occasional 'advaitism', was essentially a theist ina philosophy, and advocated a personal God as the Supreme Reality. It has already been seen how his aesthetic approach shaped his Metaphysics. But the influence was mutual, and his theory of art too derived much from his general view of reality. He emphasises the personal element in art not only from the point of view of the artist, whose personality plays a decisive role

in creation, he further maintains that art is personal because "personality is at the root of existence itself"; because reality, in his view, originates in a personal God and finds its ultimate significance in the relation that subsists between this personal God and the personal Self of man. The function of art is to reveal the ties of Beauty and Love which constitute this relation. "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".[59]

In modern aesthetic speculation, especially in the West, the idea of God does not figure very prominently, and psychological and epistemological problems about Taste, perception, etc., are given more attention.[60] But from time to time man, in his desire to fathom the real meaning of his own art, is struck by the presence in it of a certain divine element which is lacking in other aspects of his life. And the sense of beauty is then seen, as *Schelling* saw it, as "the supreme expression of Divine Reality uttering itself through man".[61] As Schelling himself says, however, the ancients had a more profound appreciation of the divine in art.[61]

Loyal to the traditions of Indian art, Tagore too saw an intimate connection between human art and the creative aspect of God himself. The idea is not merely that man creates beauty only under divine inspiration, but that man himself is an art-work of God. Humanity is a divine harp of many strings "waiting for its one grand music".[62] And, again, "Our creations are only variations upon God's great theme of the universe.....Our freedom as creators finds its joy in contributing its own voice to the concrete of the world-music".[63]

Unless God were Supreme Beauty as well

as Supreme Reality, creative life would be impossible. Art springs from the artist's conviction: "I am a messenger *of* the Beautiful".[64] Tagore found that this conviction was not lacking in the history of Indian art. The 'Nirguna Brahman' is not the God of our daily life. The Reality that appeals to us is one with which we are able to associate all the possibilities of beauty and joy which we experience in our own life. "God with us is not a distant God....We feel his nearness to us."[65]

In our aesthetic literature, therefore, we find that aesthetic delight is set on the same level as delight in communion with God. In the "*Sahitya Darpana*", for instance, we read: "Rasa is the very twin brother of the immediate experience of God" ("Brahmasvadana sahodarsh"). Rasa is "full of spontaneous self-consciousness and bliss, free from the taint of intruding object, akin to Brahmic Bliss".[66] As a modern Indian scholar says: "Brahma-svada has been likened in one aesthetics to 'Rasasvada', because in both cases intimate realisation comes after the limitation of the ego-centric attitude are transcended".[67]

The "Bhagavadgita", regards the principle of Beauty to be a manifestation of the Absolute. "I am the splendour of splendid things". "For whatsoever is beautiful, it goes forth out of a fragment of my splendour"[68] Not merely Beauty, but even the criticism of Beauty (poetics, aesthetics in general) was considered to be divine in its origin. "Then the Spirit of poetry, (Kavya-purusa), born of the goddess of Learning, (Saraswati), was set by the Self-existent Being to promulgate the study of poetics in the three worlds".[69]

In the poems of "Gitanjali", the idea of God

as the inspirer of man's artistic effort recurs again and again. God, desirous that man should add his art to God's own, creates so many occasions for the expression of Beauty in colour and tune.[70] Tagore sometimes speaks of man as being the instrument on which God plays His music.[71]

Now make the poet silent, O God,
Take his heart itself for your flute,
And play upon it a melody rich and deep.[72]

In one poem, Art is regarded as a gift which God has sent to humanity. "My art is Your gift. It is You who make songs blossom in my heart like flowers in a garden".[73] Human art has a 'nisus' to the divine art. For all the different interpretations that we might put upon art-creation, the true artist knows that the real meaning of his art "surges towards the Divine".[74] That is why great art is simple and unadorned. The artist who realises that art is only a manifestation of the Absolute, ceases to take pride in the skill and technical excellence of which his pen and his brush are capable.[75]

Thus man is an artist because God is an artist, a "Master-musician whose melody pervades the universe"[76] The entire universe is a "poem of God". Tagore quotes from the Upanisads: "Devasya pashya Kavya. Na mamara na jiryati (i.e., "Behold the poem of God, it neither perishes nor decays"[77]). And in "Gitanjali", he sings of the fullthroated, joyous song of God which energises the whole world.[78]

It may be urged that in thus elevating the divine in art, Tagore inclines towards determinism and minimises the free creative activity of man. That this charge is baseless, and that he

obeys the principle of harmony and proportion even in his estimate of the divine and the human in art, can be seen from the stress on human personality which we have already found to be one of the decisive factors in Tagore's aesthetics. Although it must be confessed that in "Gitanjali", some of the poems do bear traces of the doctrine of "prapatti", and depict the artist as relinquishing the active role in creation, nevertheless, Tagore's general philosophic outlook is too humanistic to permit any serious diminution of man's share in the production of aesthetic value.

On the other hand he tells us again and again that Art shows the superiority of man over the rest of creation. "The world of art ever extends its frontiers to unexplored regions. Art is signalizing man's conquest of the world by its symbols of beauty, springing up in spots which were barren of all voice and colour....Art is supplying man with his banners, under which he marches on to fight against the inane and the inert....The encroachment of man's personality has no limit....The one effort of man's personality is to transform everything with which he has any true concern into the human. And art is like the spread of vegetation, to show how far man has reclaimed the desert for his own".[79] Art not merely elevates humanity, it proclaims in an unmistakable fashion the place of pride that man occupies in the scheme of things. Art therefore, is one of the pillars of human progress itself, and not merely a by-product in the process of man's submission to absolute reality. It is "the great inheritance of humanity", the "eternal voice of Man, that speaks to all men the messages that are beyond speech".[80]

Tagore says that it is the development of man's imaginative faculty which, even more than

the emergence of intellect, signifies that with man evolution has taken a leap which is qualitatively different from all the leaps that it had taken in the past. "In man, the life of the animal has taken a further bend.... The receptive stage is past, there is now a career of creative life.... This creative energy in man has shown itself from the beginning of his chapter of life.... Man has been born from the world of nature's purpose to the world of freedom. For creation is freedom".[81]

Thus we see that Tagore's obedience to the ancient Indian tradition concerning the divine element in art does not at all conflict with his glorification of humanity. His God is not the Absolute of Advaita Vedanta but the personal God of Vaisnava theism. The aesthetic spiritualism which Tagore derives from the ancients is modified and supplemented by the influence which the mediaeval poets exerted upon him. In Europe, the ancient view about the divine in art was carried over into Middle Ages. This happened in India too, but in a very different fashion indeed. In Europe, art became, throughout the Middle Ages, the 'handmaid of theology', and the result was not only a destruction of Greek humanism, but often the emergence of a rigid, made-to-order spiritualism. In India, on the contrary, there was no militant Church to set its uniform artistic standards. Art, without losing its intimate connection with popular religion, became in mediaeval India a vehicle of the free human spirit.

And since Religion itself proclaimed a personal God, Art was called upon to express the 'sakhya' (friendship) between God and man rather than the 'dasya' (servitude) of man in his relationship with God. It is in this spirit that

Tagore says: "Art must reveal the *companionship* between ourselves and Reality".[82] The point of view of Absolutism is quite different, for the transcendence of God is with Absolutism an article of faith. The following passage from *Shukracharya* will clarify the issue. "The artist should attain to the image of God by means of spiritual contemplation *only*.....A spiritual vision is the only standard for art....*Better present the figure of a god, even if it is not beautiful, rather than present the figure of a man, however, handsome he may be.*"

Rabindranath Tagore would undoubtedly regard this as an ideal which no great art can accept. Art must not accept the divine at the expense of, or in contradistinction to, the human. It must rather show that there is something of the human in God and some thing of the Infinite in man. And after all, so far as art is concerned, "the proper subject of mankind is man" Tagore quotes from a poet of mediaeval India the following lines:

"I had my pleasure when I rested within bounds,

When I soared into the limitless, I found my songs".[83]

What the poet means is that in Art, man 'transcends his finitude'. This is a very different thing from asking the artist to refrain from delineating anything that is human; for man is not 'merely finite'; and 'transcending his finitude' might well go hand in hand with the heightening of his own consciousness. It is only by revealing the noblest and highest in humanity itself that we save the principle of divinity in art, without reducing it to the status of a mere means to mystic contemplation. As Schopenhaeur says:

"Man is more beautiful than all other objects and the revelation of his nature is the highest aim of art. Human form and expression are the most important object of plastic art, and human action the most important subject of poetry."[84]

AESTHETIC "DELIGHT"—(ART AND THE "HLADINI SAKTI")

In the aesthetics of Tagore as in the art of the Bengal Vaisnavas, creativity is regarded as an outcome of the primeval Joy that overflows itself and is manifested in art.

The universe itself, according to this view, is a work of art—a concrete expression of God's creative joy. Tagore quotes from *Sayanacharya*: "Brahman is boundless in his superfluity which inevitably finds its expression in the eternal world-process"; and then adds: "This is the doctrine of the genesis of creation and therefore, of the origin of all Art".[85] Tagore also says that there is "an image-making joy in the Infinite";[86] and that "the world as an art is the play of the Supreme Person, revelling in image-making".[87]

Not merely the Vaisnavas, however, but even the ancient writers on aesthetics considered art, especially poetry, to be the outcome of divine joy. "Indra and others asked for delight from Brahman and they were given poetry and drama. (drsyam srvyamca) ".[88] In the "Natyasastra" of *Bharata*, the origin of art, particularly of dramatic poetry which was regarded as the prime art, is traced to the 'delight of the gods'. (Cf. Tatobrahmadayo devah prayogaparitosita).[89]

Aesthetics proper, however, has to consider the 'joy-element' in art not merely with reference to Ultimate Reality, but more specifically with reference to the artist and the person who

enjoys the work of art. In ancient as well as modern writings on this subject we find considerable attention paid to the pleasure derived in the aesthetic judgment, and in the creative process as a whole.

"A poet", says Tagore "is a true poet only when he can make his own idea joyful to other men".[90] Enjoyment is the soul of art. "What is rasa?", asks Bharata; and answers: "Enjoyment".[91] The consummation of the most stable aesthetic emotions[92] is in their fitness for being enjoyed. "It is the joy within us that becomes creative".[93] Tagore was familiar with the views of ancient Indian aestheticians about the nature of artistic delight. "The rhetoricians of ancient India had no hesitation in declaring that enjoyment is the essence of literature".[94] The criterion of reality in art is the happiness it is capable of producing. "Gladness is our sole criterion of truth, which is known when we touch truth by the music it gives".[95]

Tagore does not neglect to emphasise that this 'joy' which reigns supreme in art must be clearly distinguished from 'pleasure' in the physical sense. Although he does not indulge in a psychological analysis of artistic pleasure as a state of the mind, he makes it quite clear that the actual gratification which the eye or the ear receives from a picture or a melody is only a fraction of the total aesthetic delight.

"What is unpleasant", says Rabindranath, "is not necessarily unbeautiful".[96] Art may delight us without pleasing us. Bosanquet says: "The highest beauty, whether of Nature or of Art, is not in every case pleasant to the normal sensibility.....And what is pleasant at first to the unrestrained sense is not always beauti-

ful".[97] In spite of his stress on 'joy', Tagore is no 'hedonist' in art. That there are qualitative differences between diverse types of pleasure is the 'moral' underlying such poems as 'Purna Milan'[98] and 'Vijayini'[99] Speaking of the distinction which Tagore makes between the enjoyment of Beauty and sensual pleasure, *Ajit Chakravati* says: "The poems of 'Kari-o-Komal' show that Beauty is for enjoyment. Life, to be truthful, must also be enjoyable. But while the artist expresses this in a chaste and transparent light, the crude epicure does it otherwise".[100] Once we think of artistic joy as just one mental state among others, we end up by denying the diffearence between it and any other variety of pleasure. Adopting such a purely psychological standpoint, *Leslie Stephen*, for instance, declares that "the end of all truly aesthetic indulgence is *immediate* pleasure.....The difference between the aesthetic and other pleasures depends upon the form of the gratification, not upon the instincts gratified.....Whatever gives us pleasure, may also give us aesthetic pleasure".[101] This point of view goes directly counter to the spiritual outlook in aesthetics, which sees in human creative activity the source of a feeling which, while pleasurable in itself, shares little in common with that feeling of well-being and comfort which the hedonist aims at. To quote *Bosanquet* once more: "Aesthetic enjoyment is pleasure in the nature of a feeling or presentation, as distinct from pleasure in its momentary or expected stimulation of the organism".[102] If art has at certain periods of human history been looked down upon as a "thing of the senses", it was primarily as a reaction against an extreme view of art which identified the beautiful with the pleasure-giving. Tagore says: "Those who are unable to grasp Beauty in its true sense, treat it contemptuously as a

sensual affair....But he who has probed into the inexplicable depths of Beauty knows that it transcends the senses. Not merely the eye, the ear or the skin, but even the heart is unable fully to fathom that joy".[103] Moreover, the universality of aesthetic satisfaction differentiates it from the merely pleasant. Kant says, "Unlike other objects of pleasure, beauty is that which pleases universally, without a concept".[104] The satisfaction derived in art serves as a bond of unity. While other pleasures divide man, the enjoyment of art makes us exclaim: Let us become one in Beauty".[105]

"Between the artists and his art", says Rabindranath, "subsists that detachment which is the pure medium of love".[106] The artist does not seek from his work any but the most unalloyed pleasure. "The pleasure which constitutes the predicate of the Judgment of Taste is disinterested" (Kant),[107] and consists in a "will-less contemplation of the pure ideas".[108] It is this disinterested delight that Rabindranath demands from art; this pure, '*nirvastuka*' joy, as he puts it in one of his letters.[109]

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT IN ART

Joy, however, is only one of the emotions and we must now consider how far Emotion in general plays its part in art, and how far it determines the nature of the art-process and the appeal of the art-product.

We have noticed already Tagore's belief that "ultimate reality reveals itself to the emotional side of our nature." If the function of art is to reveal the highest reality, it does so by arousing and conveying emotion as nothing else can. The brush, the chisel and the lute are, therefore, useless without the heart's promptings. Tagore says: "That which cannot enter the hearts of

others unless it is created and moulded by the heart of the artist—that is the material of art".[110]

The latent explosive power that is concealed in every great masterpiece of art depends upon this very "feeling-content"; and the more natural and elemental the feeling, the more effective is the art-work. "The truth of artistic awakening", says Tagore in one of his letters, "depends upon spontaneity of emotion".[111] This in no way implies that for effectiveness of art the emotion aroused must be violent. Love and bliss are the least violent of emotions. And if they *are* violent, they are no longer emotions congenial to art, but sink to the level of 'passions'. Driving home this distinction, Tagore says: "The power which accomplishes the miracle of creation.... is no passion, but a love which accepts the bonds of self-control from the joy of its own immensity".[112] 'Love', 'Joy', 'Delight' are terms which the poet uses indifferently to denote the bliss-aspect of reality in general. The world 'love', therefore, need not baffle us, even though Tagore uses it in the sense of aesthetic emotion. Aesthetic feeling moves us not aggressively but tenderly. It is not as though we take recourse to art when the emotion is too violent to be conveyed through ordinary speech or gesture; it is more often the case that our feelings are "too gentle for words", and can only be sung, not spoken. The poet says:

> "What the bashful heart is unable to express,
> That do I clothe in Music and send forth".[113]

In Music, which Tagore regards as the 'highest and the most truly spiritual of arts', the emotions aroused are significant "not for their violence, but for their slow, rhythmic, gradual

effect on the consciousness".[114] If music is "reality become audible", it is because it harnesses to itself a certain logic of the emotions which is stronger than the powers of the mind. Music, says Tagore, is the language of feeling, as words are the language of reason.[115]

The vigour of art, then lies in the feelings it conveys and evokes. In one of his letters, *Keats* says that the excellence of every art is in its "intensity". It is on account of this emotional intensity that "art is capable of making all disagreeables evaporate".[116] To achieve this intensity, art enters the region of beauty where, in Tagore's words, "creation throbs with eternal passion, eternal pain".[117]

In ancient Indian aesthetics, the 'rasa' school, which stresses the emotional element in art, overshadows all others; and it is interesting to see how far Rabindranath accepts the doctrines of this school. The words 'rasa' and 'bhava' carry with them a peculiar flavour which is not easily to be rendered. The word 'rasa', as a contemporary scholar rightly says: "is a highly subtle conception which cannot be adequately expressed in Western critical terminology".[118] Tagore himself was alive to this difficulty. Of 'bhava' he says: "To try to define this concept would be to complicate it. The idea of bhava in itself contains so many meanings, just as a diamond has so many corners. The trouble arises because we use now one meaning of the word and now another. We use the word 'bhava' to indicate Feeling, Idea, Suggestion, etc."[119] Similarly the word 'rasa' has been translated etymologically as 'relish', 'taste', or 'flavour'; but then *Jacobi* even translates it as 'mood'.

Tagore speaks of 'rasa' in the sense of 'juice' or 'essence'. "The outer world has its juices

which excite our emotional activities. This is called in our Sanskrit aesthetics '*rasa*' which signifies outer juices having their response in the inner juices of our emotions".[120] It is remarkable that although Tagore made no special efforts to interpret the Sanskrit texts with the thoroughness of a scholar, he should have hit upon that meaning of the word 'rasa, which is derivatively the most primary. For in the "Rigveda" too 'rasa' stands for 'juice'.[121] In the earlier hymns it even signifies 'water' or 'milk'.[122] When, therefore, the word was used in the context of Art, it was probably intended to denote something 'liquid', something which was strikingly unlike the rigid, inelastic realities of everyday life.

This "response of the inner to the outer juices" does not, however, exhaust the connotation of 'rasa'. Apart from the painter and the environment painted, there is the person who appreciates the painting—and for him too the 'rasa' has its appeal. It is of course impossible for the observer or the listener to grasp in its entirety the emotion of the painter or the singer respectively. Nevertheless, a substantial part of the rasa can be transferred. *Sri Sankuka* one of the greatest aestheticians of ancient India, conveys it thus: "Rasa, even if it is not *produced* as an effect, is *inferred* by the spectator, and this inferred feeling is realised by him as rasa."[123] This 'inference' is not a logical process, but an instinctive understanding of the sentiment involved. The affective element in art always overshadows the cognitive. What we *feel* about a rose and what we *know* about it concerns divergent spheres of our consciousness and art deals primarily (though not exclusively) with the former sphere.[124]

How far Aesthetic Philosophy should con-

cern itself with the reality of the objects which arouse aesthetic emotion is a controversial matter which we shall consider later. It is possible to hold extreme views on this subject without doubting the reality of the emotion itself. *Lipps*, a significant theorist, says: "Unlike practical empathy, aesthetic empathy is quite unconcerned with the reality of what is felt."[125] But there is a lurking ambiguity in this statement. Whether the objects or events which awaken the emotion are real is one question; but whether the feelings awakened are themselves real is a different question altogether. Tagore makes it quite clear that the emotion felt and expressed in art must be genuine, even if the objects which 'start' the emotion and the objects towards which the emotion is directed, are wholly fanciful. More real the feelings, more effective the art.

Art often takes its rise from a negative response to the emotions. This happens when the artist endeavours not to express feelings which are agreeably real, but rather to eliminate feelings which are 'too real', i. e., oppressively real. This is the truth underlying Aristotle's theory of 'purgation' or katharsis of the emotion.[126] Aristotle, however, in his discussion of Tragedy was thinking mainly of the spectator's emotion, not the author's. But when Tagore says that "the emotional surplus in man seeks its outlet in the creation of art."[127] he thinks in terms of the artist. [128]

It is necessary to point out in conclusion that, while stressing the emotional element in art, Tagore does not think in terms of a particular emotion or set of emotions which may be specifically termed 'aesthetic emotion'. Nor does he seek, like the modern psychologist, to formulate the concept of an aesthetic 'sentiment', with

reflex centres of its own.[129] He speaks of the emotional side of man as a whole, and the extent to which it is affected in artistic creation. He says: "In the creation of art, the energy of an emotional *ideal* is necessary." [130] To regard the aesthetic emotions as being distinct and peculiar would be to think of them as appetites. It is the prerogative of art to call into play every possible variety of emotion.

If it had been otherwise, all talk about the 'free personality' of the artist would be meaningless. The problem of aesthetic analysis would then be simplified, for the number of possible emotional responses to certain hypothetical situations would then be fixed for ever. But this simplicity would be at the expense of variety and richness. So long as we accept that the feelings conveyed in art reside in the artist's heart, and not in the object or even to which he responds, we cannot tolerate the concept of a determined number of emotional attitudes which alone may be termed 'aesthetic'. That Rabindranath had made up his mind in this matter is quite clear from the way in which he invariably spoke of aesthetic emotion. He has indeed written: "Whether 'bhava' exists in the object, or is superimposed upon the object by the mind, is a theoretical question which I am incompetent to answer."[131] But in spite of this disclaimer, to the poet has indirectly answered the question on various occasions. He always described 'bhava' as 'inner form' (antarer roop) thereby declaring that it is the artist who 'supplies' emotion to the art-process, that the emotion does not 'inhere' in the object as certain 'neo-vitalist's in aesthetics would have us believe. Tagore says: "Man naturally *gives* a mental colouring to all things." And again: "The human mind *sees* 'bhava' even in dead and inert matter."[132]

Chapter VII

AESTHETICS (II)

ART AND EXPRESSION

Art is not concerned, however, merely with the experience of emotion but also with a creative *expression* of it. Tagore does not look upon art as 'pure experience', unhampered by the exigencies of externalisation. In obedience to his basic principle of harmony between all the elements in art, he rejects the theory that once the artist has felt the emotion, creation would 'come automatically'. In a short essay entitled "*Kavyer Gadyariti*' he says: "Poetry is the intimate union of the spoken and the unspoken" (i.e., the felt)[133] And in the realm of Music, this alliance between the felt and the expressed is renewed on a higher level of understanding. "To the singer, idea and expression are brother and sister; very often they are born twins.[134]

There are some theorists of beauty who underrate the importance of expression in art. *Lessing*, for instance, thinks that "expression falls outside beauty", and that the effort for expression hampers the true artist who should "aim at beauty for beauty's sake."[135] But Lessing seems to think of expression in the sense of craftsmanship alone. For Tagore expression is spontaneous and effortless and in no way conflicts with depth of feeling or keenness of observation. After all, he says, "Emotion is only one of the ingredients of art, and not its end which is the beauty of perfect fulness."[136] This 'perfect fulness, resides in the wholeness of the art-process, of which

observation, conception, expression (externalisation), and appreciation are related stages. Of all these stages, expression in the most important since it constitutes the link between the artist and the spectator or the listener. "The whole world", says Tagore, "aches for expression in its endless rhythm of lines and colours, music and movements, hints and whispers."[137] And in a private letter he declares: "Expression is my Religion". (prakash amar dharma).[138] Tagore thus sounds a timely note of warning against the 'cult of feeling', in aesthetics. The foremost exponent of this cult is *Giovanni Gentile*, who says: "The pure subjective form of every thought, in which art consists, can only be feeling. Art is not 'as some have said'[139] the expression of feeling, but the feeling itself".[140] This is a manifestly one-sided view of the real meaning of creation and Tagore is emphatic in his rejection of it. The very distinction between man and the lower animals, he says, is that man, unlike the latter, "feels the longing to express himself for the very sake of expression."[141] Even *Winckleman*, who considers expression to be 'detrimental to beauty[142] has to accept that the two are 'ultimately inseparable' And *Goethe* says that in art beauty arrives when expression is done with. "Art is formative long before it is beautiful".[143] To exclude expression and to restrict artistic activity to the mere contemplation or feeling of the Beautiful would only lead us to the self-contradictory position that art is not creative at all. In a note on the "Value of Literature", Tagore says: "The emergence of 'rasa' is not the sole pursuit of art; it has the other aspect of creation and expression of forms" (from "Sahityer Mulya")[144] The recent tendency, sponsored by Italian Idealism, to exalt Feeling as the one and only divinity in Aesthetics

should, therefore, be regarded as an ominous portent of the 'lethargy' which decadence brings in its wake. As *John Dewey* says: "To define the emotional element of aesthetic perception merely as the pleasure taken in the act of contemplation is a thoroughly *anaemic conception of art* ".[145]

It may be remarked in passing that Tagore's views regarding 'Expression' in art follow inevitably from his theory of personality which we have already discussed above. To say that 'art is personal' implies that 'art expresses personality'. Human personality is creative and "takes delight in expressing itself in picture, poem and song".[146]

ART AS PLAY

This union of the felt and the expressed, of the 'vyakta' and the 'avyakta', of emotion and creative revelation, is very suggestively conveyed by the concept of 'Play'. In the aesthetic writings of the Vaisnavas, Art is often referred to in terms of the 'leela' of Bhagwan. In the Upanisads, the entire universe is described as the eternal sport of Brahman. In European aesthetics, too, the idea of play is a familiar one. Tagore has made use of the concept of play in the context of both the human and the divine elements in art.

One of the most persistent metaphysical ideas in Tagore's works is that human nature is partly finite and partly Infinite. In art, too, this theory holds true; for in the sphere of art, whatever is purely finite in man is held in abeyance and his affinity with the Infinite becomes more pronounced. Art is born of 'leisure', of 'surplus', of 'play'. It is in the play of art that man approaches closest to the Infinite.

This view of Tagore is strikingly similar to that of *Schiller* who also maintains that the 'play impulse', from which all art takes its rise, is the real link between man and God. In almost the same words as Tagore's Schiller tells us that man is a finite-Infinite being. The material instinct, (Stofftrieb) fetters man to time and space. The formal instinct (Formtrieb) lifts man to the level of an Infinite Being. But then, how are these two instincts to be reconciled? The unification is to be sought for in the 'play-impulse'; [147] they depend upon the interpenetration of the sensuous and the rational. Man, says Tagore 'sports' with his creations, as does God; and that is why God has something of the human, and man something of the Divine.[148] In a poem entitled "Khela" ('Play'), Tagore exclaimes: "How can I be human at all if I do not indulge in play?".[149] And in "Santiniketan", he says that God is human because like us he 'plays' and creates beauty and love through His play.[150] Mythology affords many examples of the artistic representation of God assuming diverse forms for His play.[151]

Tagore proceeds to make it clear that the 'extravagance' demanded by aesthetic play has nothing to do with life-preservation or adaptation. His attitude is here akin to that of Herbert Spencer, who wrote: "The activities we call 'play' are united with aesthetic activities by the trait that neither subserve, in any direct way, the process conducive to life"..[152] In lower forms of life, the sole function of play might be biological, but in the play of man this element does not enter. Tagore conveys this distinction quite clearly: "In animals", he says, "play is either secondary to life, or itself represents the tendency of their life's needs. The kitten's sport invariably consists in catching imaginary rats .....But, for man, recreation is primary".[153]

ART AND UTILITARIANISM

On the basis of the above views, it is not at all difficult to estimate Tagore's attitude towords the utilitarian tendency in aesthetics.

Tagore has criticised very frequently the ethical and social implications of the utilitarian philosophy. But in aesthetics, this opposition becomes more pronounced and emphatic.

"Utility and sentiment follow different lines in human expression". Between the two, art is on the side of the latter. A work of art *can* be devoid of use, but it cannot be altogether without sentiment. The artist can never derive any real pleasure in his work by sheer anticipation of physical comfort or material well-being. Nor does the excellence of the art-product consist in its use-value. In the course of a letter Tagore says:" The value of a beautiful vase does not reside in its utility. Through its grace it has learnt to scorn the market-value aspect of its existence ..Poetry has been and can be written about a Grecian urn, but never about a Grecian hammer. Efficiency might astound us, but it can never make us sing. Implements can give man power and wealth, but they can never inspire him... Only that species of excellence makes artists of us which is enough in itself, which needs nothing beyond itself".[154]

In the history of human civilisation there was a period when implements, were meant for fighting, carried on them terrifying figures and patterns. But a time came when man saw that "even his weapons were no longer to be objects of terror only, but ought to give pleasure also; and the finely-wrought sword-belt began to claim as much attention as the sharp edge itself.[155] Such

examples can be multiplied to show that perfection in art bears no reference to growth in utility. Nor is art seen to obey the 'urge' for social adaptation. Tagore rejects quite emphatically the "biological interpretation of art". "The faculty of imagination is special to man, because it is entirely superfluous for biological survival" [156]. In the realm of art, the "Angel of Surplus" rules indisputably. Like *Bergson*, Rabindranath believes that the creative imagination which governs art, unlike the 'mechanistic intellect', is quite superfluous for the satisfaction of our natural demands. "The sense of beauty", he says, "unlike the intellect, is not at all indispensable for worldly success and life-preservation". [157] It is quite possible that Rabindranath was here directly influenced by *Spencer*, for he has on several occasions made references to the latter's works and was a keen student of Spencer when he was in England.

Analysing some of the simplest of human sensations and sentiment, Spencer concluded that "the aesthetic character of a feeling is habitually associated with separateness from life-serving functions".[158] This is just what Tagore wishes to convey, though he avoids scientific terminology. In the chapter entitled "The Artist" in "Religion of Man", there are many echoes of Spencer's view of Art.

We have seen already that the 'joy' of art, according to Tagore, is separated from all elements of desire and utility which are involved in other kinds of pleasure. It is 'disinterested delight'. "We contemplate the Beautiful in nature and art without the least notion of desire or use".[159] This does not imply that in the world of utility there is no 'expression' at all but only that it is qualitatively different from

artistic expression. "It has to be conceded", Rabindranath says, "that man cannot help revealing himself in the world of use also. *But there self-expression is not his primary object.* In everyday life, when we are mostly moved by our habits, we are *economical* in our expression ...But when our heart is fully awakened in love, or in other great emotions, our personality feels the longing to express itself for the very sake of expression. In Art, we forget the claims of necessity, the thrift of usefulness".[160]

This passage has been quoted at length because here Tagore comes out openly against the utilitarian theory of art, which has had distinguished supporters in the history of philosophy. *Plato* himself was to a certain extent an 'utilitarian' in the field of aesthetics. In "Hippias Major", Socrates asks: "We do not call eyes beautiful if they cannot see, do we?"; and proceeds to say that what makes objects (or even abstract things like wisdom and virtue) beautiful is the efficiency it gives us in our day-to-day life. *Hume*, of course, takes an even more extreme view, and declares that utility is "not merely the attendant of beauty, but its very essence". "That shape which produces strength is beautiful in one animal, and that which is a sign of agility, in another....And architects would declare only that pillar to be beautiful in which the top is more slender than the base".[161]

This view entirely rules out the concept of "disinterested pleasure" which, as we saw above, is the keynote of Tagore's aesthetics. Utility may be the outcome of art, but never its aim, which is delight "The narrow emphasis on utility diverts us from the complete man to the merely useful man"; and since art requires for

its perfection the development of the complete human personality, the striving after utility can only be an obstacle to the creation and revelation of beauty and soon tends to become an end in itself. Even natural beauty seems to elude us if we try to harness it for our use:

"Why did the stream dry up?
I put a dam across it to have it for my own use,
That is why the stream dried up".[162]

Nevertheless, it would be unfair not to concede that Tagore also zealously avoided the other extreme, and never wholly identified himself with the 'art for art's sake' school. To say that the worth of art does not primarily consist in its use-value is not to maintain that art is purposeless, or to declare, like Oscar Wilde, that "all art is utterly useless".

Even Kant refused to contemplate the possibility that beauty might exist except as relative to some purpose. In the evolution of social forms, no less than the all-round growth of the individual's integrated consciousness, art has its valuable functions to discharge. "The 'inutility' of the aesthetic activity *is only relative* and has often been exaggerated; for it does, in some measure, tend to the conservation of the individual and the race, being, and having been in the past, a social factor, though an incidental and subordinate one",[163] Tagore also points to the "extension of art's boundaries" which no longer permits the artist to sing merely of kings and courtiers but demands that the excellence that he creates must have social worth for the common run of mankind.

INTELLECT AND INTUITION IN ART

In aesthetics, from anti-utilitarianism to

anti-intellectualism is but a short step. The quest for utility is the "concern of the mechanistic intellect". The free, creative activity of the artist is quite different from the logical, discursive 'understanding' of the metaphysician. Tagore refutes the 'mechanists' and intellectualists in aesthetics with as much vigour as he refutes the utilitarians.

Here too, Plato seems to be on the other side. He quite deliberately speaks of the Beautiful as a "manifestation of intelligence".[164]; and he refers to the idea of poetic "inspiration" in satirical and contemptuous terms.[165] In clear contrast to this, Tagore says that "analytical treatment does not help us in discovering the vital point in art".[166]; and far from making fun of the idea of inspiration, he upholds the intuitionist view of art.

In order to illustrate his view in this matter, Tagore takes up the contrast between Science and poetry. The guiding principle of the former is Law; of the latter, Freedom. When we "think of the world in terms of elements and forces, ions and electrons, it loses it 'appearance', its touch and taste. The world-drama with its language of beauty is hushed, the music is silent".[167] The scientist asks for the 'why' and the 'wherefore' of everything; he examines and analyses, divides and adds up; he cannot proceed one step without making a thousand queries. But the artist, in whom feeling rather than intellect becomes creative, has no need of being so cautious. "A work of beauty", says Tagore "has no questions to answer; it has nothing to *do*, but to *be*".[168] In art we must look simply and solely at the 'what' and eschew the 'where' and the 'when' of things.[169]

A modern French writer, *Jacque Maritain* says: "Art abides entirely on the side of the mind".[170] If mind stands for discursive intellect, Tagore cannot accept this view, for the intellect which operates in Science seeks to bring human thought and action in conformity with certain pre-established rules, processes and 'moulds'; while the imagination which is the centre of artistic creation refuses to be encumbered with logical formulae, and obeys no other criterion than that of gratification. "The world of Science is an abstract world of force. We can *use* it by the help of intellect but cannot *realise* it by the help of personality....*But there is another world* which we see and feel, and deal with in our emotions. Its mystery is endless because we cannot analyse or measure it. We can only say 'Here you are:'....*This is the world* from where Science turns away and in which Art takes its place".[171]

Not that Tagore demands an abolition of all rules in art. He only emphasises that "creative imagination is free and cannot be dictated to". Rules have their value, insofar as they make for technical perfection. But then, technique is for Tagore but a fraction of creation. In the *conception* of the artistic idea no rules must be prescribed, though in the *execution* of that idea, the artist might derive help from rules and conventions. In other words, man is free in the *acquirement* of the artistic experience, though the *presentation* of that experience may be determined by a set of aesthetic laws.[172]

Even this concession Tagore does not seem to make very readily. His own creative work, in poetry, painting and music, breathes a spirit of innovation and daring experiment. In the course of a letter he says: "I have never obeyed

the pundits who want me to analyse a song piecemeal and judge its value by the conformity of its parts to the rules of 'raga'. I have 'lost my caste' on this account, but I have always regarded this loss as a virtue rather than a pollution. I am a rebel in all branches of art, and especially so in literature".[173]

In the early 19th century, as a result of the apotheosis of reason which was still in vogue, the thought-element in art was very much overstressed. Even the rising tide of romanticism was unable to undo this emphasis. *Hegel*, of course, as the high-priest of intellectualism in every sphere of thought, was the foremost supporter of this tendency. That he realised the importance of the spiritual element in art makes little difference, since for him Spirit and Reason were identical. Hegel says: "Everything that is beautiful necessarily partakes of the mind, and is produced thereby." Again, "The absolute need from which Art springs lies in the fact that man is a thinking consciousness."[174] Many years before Hegel, even *Baumgarten*, from whom aesthetics got its very name, had defined the theory of beauty as "the Science of *sensuous cognition*" or "the art of *thinking* beautifully."[175]

Tagore did not fail to notice that in India too this hyperintellectualism was making itself felt; and he saw the necessity of protesting against this attitude which, he feared, would leave out that "unforeseeable element" in which resides the highest charm of art. Once we make Reason the arbiter in art, as we have already made it in Philosophy and Science, we must look at the process of art-creation as a chain in which every link has its fixed, unalterable place. But in art, the 'law of causality' has to be held in

abeyance; cause and effect become primary only when there is a conscious effort to "deduce things from things". Tagore does not hold such an effort to be necessary in the sphere of aesthetics. The principle of unity in a work of art is unanalysable. If the artist directs all his efforts towards achieving a logical unity of parts, the chances are that it would elude him. But if his art is sound and his emotion genuine, the unity would emerge, not as a result of his intellectual correlation, but because it is not in the nature of things that the unity of emotion and expression should conflict with intellectual unity.

From the above, it follows as a matter of course that the artist can never tell exactly what will be the result of his work.[176] In Tagore's own drawings we see this unpredictable element.[177] Lines and curves just come into being which the artist had never consciously set out to draw. Like Bergson, Tagore believes that a good deal of the charm of art lies in its, "unpredictability". Since the artist himself is not the same person during the various stages of creation, how can we expect him to predict with accuracy what the final shape of his work would be? "The finished portrait is explained by the features of the subject, by the nature of the artist, by the colours spread out on the palette". But even with the knowledge of these, the artist could not have fore seen what the picture would be "for, to predict it would have been to produce it before it was produced, an absurd hypothesis which is its own refutation".[178]

The artist, then, has an eternal "What do I know?" in answer to the most persistent interrogations about his art. Just as one cannot step in the same river twice, one cannot question the

same artist twice. Every moment in the process of creation, he has changed, and his work has changed with him. In Art, says Bergson, there is an "eternal creation of self by self".[179] "With the truth of our artistic expression", says Tagore "we ourselves grow in truth".[180]

The unpredictable sometimes borders on the unknowable. Tagore has written: "Does one ever write poetry to *explain* this or that matter? Something felt within the heart tries to find external shape as a poem....when anyone says he does not *understand* a poem I feel nonplussed. If someone smells a flower, and complains that he does not understand, we say: There is to nothing understand. It is only a scent."[181] Beauty can truly be understood only from the standpoint of immediate experience, and not of the mediating intellect. "It is not as ether waves that we receive light. The morning does not wait to be introduced to us by some scientist".[182] In one of Tagore's plays the king tells the poet: "O poet, your meaning I do not understand, but your melody touches my heart". And the poet says: "The flute is played to be listened to, not to be understood".[183]

It has been maintained that Tagore cannot be completely acquitted of the charge that he carried his distrust of the intellect too far. He failed to 'reconcile the head and the heart' and thus violated the principle of harmony between the different elements in art which he had himself laid down. Immediate experience may be the most important criterion of aesthetic fidelity, but it is not the *only* criterion. Consequently, we cannot accept in its entirety Tagore's statement that "the *only* evidence of truth in art exists when it compels me to say, 'I see' ".[184] It is true that beauty appeals primarily to the feelings, but it

cannot be maintained that it never suggests thought.[185] Santayana says: "Art will commune with no one who has not enlarged his mind as well as tamed his heart".[186] Tagore, however seems to reject the very possibility that the aesthetic process might simultaneously act upon our feelings as well as cater to our cognitive needs. He even goes to the extent of saying that in Art we must try to "curtail the meaning". "The words *have* meaning", he complains, "is just the trouble. That is why the poet has to turn and twist them in metre and verse, so that the meaning may be held somewhat in check, and the feeling allowed a chance to express itself".[187]

INDIVIDUALISM AND UNIVERSALISM IN ART

It might well appear from the aesthetic intuitionism of Tagore that he adopts in art the position of an extreme 'individualist'. This, however, is not the case. His categorical rejection of all that is 'mental' in art was indeed a mistake, but in other respects his views seem to have retained their balance. Far from advocating an extreme individualism, Rabindranath tries to reconcile the 'individual' and the 'universal' element in art.

Aesthetic emotion stirs the artist in an individual manner. But it carries within itself a certain universality so that not merely this or that person but everyone can, if so inclined, derive from it ideas which further creation. It can be said, therefore, that all genuinely aesthetic experience is a "manifestation of the universal mind".[188] Tagore refers to *Bertrand Russell's* view that 'Beethoven's symphonies are not the creations of a universal mind—they are personal to him". Russell is right only in so far as he wishes to illustrate the difference

between a symphony and a mathematical truth, but not if he means that Beethoven conveyed *only* his particular mood and nothing else. Tagore says that everyone, with proper training, can appreciate Beethoven's music.[189] The emotion he expressed is universal, though it acquired a unique aspect when poured through the mould of his personality.

Conversely, if an artist starts with an idea which is exclusively his own, in the very process of creation he universalises it. In Tagore's words: "To detach the individual idea from its confinement....and to give its soaring wings the freedom of the universal, this is the function of poetry."[190] The gain in universality is not, therefore, an incidental matter, but the very aim of all art. In one of his earlier writings, Tagore says: "The function of literature is to transform the inner into the outer, to give word to emotion, to make universal what is individual and eternal what is transitory."[191] Bergson may be regarded as the great apostle of individualism in art, for he considers the art-process to be the "gnawing of the artist's past into his future". But even Bergson has to admit that this individuality 'cannot be absolute', and that if we try to make it so, 'all the moulds crack'. "While the tendency to individuate is everywhere present, ...it is also opposed by the tendency towards reproduction".[192] In saying that art 'attains to the individual', we do no more than stress the fact that art, as a part of life itself, "manifests a search towards individuality".[193]

It is not possible, therefore, to accept Dr. Radhakrishnan's statement: "To Rabindranath Tagore beauty is wholly subjective".[194] On the contrary the poet tells us that although our 'sense of joy varies', we cannot declare there is no such

thing as an universal standard of beauty. "Looking at history over a larger period, we see that artists seem to agree in their judgment of artistic beauty". Differences in race and culture do not make for differences in the *capacity* for aesthetic appreciation, which is common to all men. Tagore writes in the course of a private letter: "There are no geographical divisions in the province of art. What matters is human emotion, and this is universal".[195] Art is "the great inheritance of humanity" as a whole.[196] Beauty and excellence reveal the soul of man. They "transcend the isolated man and realise the universal man whose dwelling is in the heart of all individuals".[197]

It is true. of course, that while art as an experience is something that all men are capable of, not every person can have an experience in a heightened form, nor express it in a vivid manner. And to this extent, art attains only to the individual. Just as printed currency notes go into circulation only if they bear the watermark of the state, similarly an 'experience' enters the realm of art only when it has been duly stamped by the personality through which it has passed.[198]

In fact, the Kantian phrase "subjective universality" seems to sum up Tagore's views in this matter. "The artist", he says, "finds out the unique, the individual, which is yet in the heart of the universal".[199] Referring to Tagore's poetry, Dr. Das-Gupta says: "To survey oneself through others, and others through oneself, that is the poet's craft".[200] Tagore, thus, is no 'solipsist' in aesthetics. The hyperindividualism of decadent art never had any charms for him. The painter *Abanindranath* seems to advocate at times at more extreme type of indivi-

dualism than Rabindranath could ever accept. Abanindranath complains that "the world applauds the craftsman more than the artist, because the former aims at the satisfaction of others, while the artist creates just to identify himself with his work and for nothing else".[201] On Rabindranath's view, however, the artist creates in order to convey his feelings to others, and not merely to 'identify himself with his work'. The essence of art is that it is "shareable".[202] Art is not for the solitary reveller; the joy of creation is 'contagious'. *Hirn* says: "Without a 'public', in the largest sense of the term, no art would ever have appeared."[203] To maintain otherwise is to recognise in beauty nothing but a divisive force that persuades each man to build his own world. Tagore, on the contrary, sees in Beauty a bond which unites human souls. "Poetry and the arts cherish in them the profound faith of man in the unity of his being with all existence".

This appreciation of the ultimate unity of the universal and the individual in art is strikingly reminiscent of the views of Nietzsche. It is remarkable that the ideas of Tagore and Nietzsche should be similar in spite of the deep temperamental differences between them. Nietzsche developed a symbolism of "the brotherhood of the twin divinities, Apollo and Dionysus". Apollo stands before me as the genius of enlightenment and of the principle of individuality, while at the joyous cry of Dionysus the bars of individuality burst, and the way opened for the womb of feeling".[204] These two gods "speak with each other's tongues, thus achieving the highest aim of tragedy and of all art".

Corresponding to the 'individual' and the 'universal', there are in aesthetics the concepts

of the Sublime and the Beautiful; and here too we find a close affinity in the views of Tagore and Nietzsche. The Sublime is the 'grand' in art, and is expressed in what Winckleman calls 'the high style'.[205] Tagore also speaks of 'magnificence' of the 'wealth and splendour' of art. In a letter he says: "Man sings when his endeavour touches the 'grand', the 'charam''.[206] When he speaks of the 'charam' and the 'mahat', Tagore clearly refers to the strictly individual element in art, for the Sublime, as Kant says, is "one degree more subjective than the Beautiful".[207] The sublime in art represents the range and flight of the individual imagination, while the Beautiful represents tenderness, universal love, the desire to merge oneself with others, the craving of human hearts to "become one in beauty". Tagore in his poem "Dui Nari"[208] has given a remarkable symbolism of the two principles of sublimity and beauty—a symbolism which immediately reminds us of Nietzsche. The poem can be paraphrased thus: "At some unknown moment in creation, there arose two Forms out of the endless deep one, *Urvashi*, the queen of passions, the temptress of the gods; the other, *Lakshmi*, benefactress, mother-like and chaste. Urvasi, bringing with her the wine of spring, would scatter on men her fire and mirth and steal the peace from their hearts. She would bring with her the verdant bloom of spring, and the songs of restless youth. And Lakshmi would return to them the tender, tearful joys of autumn, with its fruitful maturity and peace, would shower on all the blessings of Nature, and bring for them the nectar of graceful smiles."

This distinction between love and passion, between the peace of autumn and the riotous mirth of spring, between the nectar of Lakshmi

and the wine of Urvasi is, in essence, the same division of art into Apollonian and Dionysian with which Nieztsche has familiarised us. [109] All that is aggressive, individual and sublime is arrayed in apparent opposition to all that is peaceful, universal and beautiful. But the opposition is only partial, and in great art is altogether transcended. Art has to begin with this opposition, which it must itself resolve. "I do not agree", says Nietzsche, "that arts can be derived from one exclusive principle..... I recognise in Apollo and Dionysus the living and conspicuous representatives of *two* worlds of art, differing in their intrinsic function and in their highest objective".[210] But the 'two worlds' are interdependent, the twin divinities "speak with each others' tongues". In Aesthetics, as in other branches of Philosophy, Tagore adopts 'unity-in-difference' as the guiding rule. The aggressive, sublime aspect, and the tender, graceful aspect—these two correspond with the two aspects of Absolute Reality itself, viz., power and magnificence (Aiswarya) on the one hand, and kindness and love on the other. (Madhurya).

And so, in the poem quoted above, Lakshmi and Urvasi do not appear in absolute conflict but rather as two aspects of the same creative principle. The poem ends on a note of harmony and we are taken to the "sacred confluence of life and death", where a temple has been dedicated to the worship of the one Infinite principle.[211]

RELATION OF ART TO TRUTH, REALITY, AND NATURE

No account of the aesthetics of Tagore can be complete without some consideration of his views about the relation of art to logical, formal, and natural reality. It might appear at first sight that here we are dealing with the weakest point

in Tagore's aesthetics, for he seems unable to make up his mind whether beauty really subsists in the form or the content of artistic representation, and how far the aim of art is to be faithful to reality, both in Nature and as indicated by the laws of thought.

It must first be conceded that Tagore was quite emphatically against the view that art serves as an 'escape' from reality. Art is much too serious a business to be regarded as a mere diversion to which people take recourse when they are 'oppressed by actuality'. In "Religion of Man", Tagore says: "Art evokes in our mind the deep, rich sense of reality".[212] Like Bergson, he believes that the artist can approach nearer to reality than the average person. "Art has the magic wand that gives undying reality to what it touches".[213] The object of art is to reveal to us, in nature and in the soul, within us and without us, things which we cannot reach through the consciousness.[214] (Bergson) To a great artist, a vision is native which others miss, because they cannot probe into the depths of reality as he can. "It is a great world of reality for man, vast and profound, this growing world of his own creative nature. This is the world of art".[115] (Tagore)

We have already seen how the poet deprecates the attempt to assess the meaning of art from an 'intellectual' point of view. The intellect 'judges things from outside', while the artist in a sense enters the very object he seeks to portray. Schelling says: "The artist emulates that spirit of Nature which speaks from within things, and uses their shape and form as its mere sensuous symbols". Speaking from within things is possible only for one to whom the 'reality' of those things has been conveyed in its entirety. Since Tagore believes that the emotional aspect of

reality transcends its existential and cognitive aspect, he naturally looks to art, and not to Logic or Epistemology, for the key to truth and reality. The world is revealed "to the emotional and imaginative background of our mind".[216] We know it "not because we think of it but because we directly feel it."[217] Whether we call it as 'Absolute', 'God', or simply as 'Reality', we have to accept that it is best communicated in the artistic process of creation, and not in the discursive process of analysis:

> "In song I touch that reality
> Which ever eludes my Mind."[218]

In "Gitanjali", Rabindranath has also said: "It is only through Music that I hope to find You."[219]

But wherein does this reality, which art reaches and expresses, actually consist? Is it a purely formal and 'abstract' kind of reality which art reveals, or does it dwell equally in the content and the form of art? Tagore sometimes appears to speak of Beauty in the strictly formal sense.[220] In "Sahityer Swarup" he says: "For poetic art truth lies in form not in meaning". But on the whole, he is suspicious of all loose talk about 'pure beauty'; as Prof. D. P. Mukerji says, Tagore frequently reiterates his rejection of the 'cult of beauty'.[220] Many critics have interpreted his famous poem "Urvasi" as a hymn to abstract beauty; even Thompson calls it "the most unalloyed worship of abstract beauty in world literature"[222] But the very fact that Beauty is here apostrophised in a concrete manifestation indicates the poet's awareness that the formal and the sensuous aspects of beauty are inseparable. Tagore himself has written: "....'Urvasi' is not merely abstract. The abstract form must take up some material

to express itself. In this poem, the pure 'form of beauty has taken up the 'matter' of a female body for its own expression."[223]

Form is, after all, only a vehicle of the content and not an end in itself. We have seen how Tagore combines the modern emphasis on expressiveness in art with the ancients' insistence on harmony or balance of form. In true art, he says, "the lines of Form will converge with the lines of Feeling". ('Ruper rekhay milibe raser rekha').[224] This is a highly significant statement; and the fact that it occurs in an obscure poem only shows how the aesthetic doctrines of Tagore may be gleaned from his poems no less than his prose works. The idea of pure, abstract, form of beauty (roop), and the emotional content of beauty (rasa) are apparently like parallel lines; and yet in all great and true art the two converge.

Then, there is the problem of 'realism in its popular sense. Apart from 'formal' reality, we have to consider how far artistic beauty, is, or should be, faithful to reality in its material or naturalistic meaning. Here again Tagore sounds a note of caution about the ultra-modernists who would, in the name of realism, expugn from art all non-material elements. It is true, he says, that art must be in contact with reality, and that there is nothing in nature or society that may not evoke creative feelings. In one of his plays, "Raktakarabi," we come across the remark, "Even in the din of the market-place, there is a tuned guitar ready for the player who cares to use it".[225] But some of the moderns would have us believe that only on the noisy market-place can art flourish, and that the artist who does not write or sing of the market-place is an impostor. "Times are such", Tagore complains, "that only if I write about a group of

drunkards in a wine-shop am I likely to earn the title of a 'modern' writer; only then will people turn to me and say, "Here is a true poet, a realist'. If the production of such cheap poetry is what the realist demands, then I say unhesitatingly, so much the worse for realism."[226]

A 'photographic' reproduction of reality, then, is not the aim of art; for to accept such a view would be to make the imitative element all in all. There must of course be 'likeness' or similarity between the original and its representation, but this must not be merely external. Tagore says: "External likeness, or 'bahinsadrsya', is not the aim of poetry. The discerning reader will not regard that poetry to be of a high order which merely describes accurately."[227] There must be likeness of spirit (antarsadrsya) as well. "To see the outer through the inner, and to convey the inner in the form of the outer—this is the goal of poetry, and of art generally."[228]

All art, then, must admit an element of idealism. Tagore says that the words 'realism' and 'idealism' should not be used dogmatically in aesthetics. They are elastic in their meaning, and signify different things to different people. From the point of view of Indian philosophy, for instance, we cannot speak of realism in the same strain as the western writers on Aesthetics do. "The Indian literature of art", says Tagore "reveals a peculiar view of classifying all objects into two classes—the seen (drstan), and the unseen (adrstan).... An Indian work of art is not a copy, but a creation; a creation of impression produced by the object, whether real or imaginary. Realism and idealism of the East are not, therefore, of the same import as they are in the West. Realism in India was not abso-

lute, but comparative, as if it were really a *realism of idealism.*"[229] This is a significant statement, and suggests a tolerant and flexible attitude towards the question of idealism in aesthetics.[230]

This desire to reach a compromise between realism and idealism is seen in the distinction which Tagore often makes between the 'real' and the 'true'. In a brief fragment called "*Satya O Vastava*" ('The True and the Real'), we get an appraisal of art-truth from the romantic point of view. "When a man loses his faith in his self-expression, he misses his own humanity.... Man is not simply 'real' much of him is unreal, and yet true. In literature and art man might traverse the path of the real, but his ultimate destination is the 'true'."[231] If pursuit of commonplace reality were the end of art, the essentially creative faculty of imagination would itself have to be banished, "but man prides himself that in his exaggerations he is more real than in his usual reality."[232] When we say that 'Beauty *is* Truth', we really mean that Beauty *becomes* truth when it undergoes imaginative transfiguration in the hands of a creative artist. This is the meaning of all genuine symbolism in art. Creation is realisation of truth through the translation of it into our own symbols."[233]

This view gives us the key to the relation between art and Nature, the latter being understood in the sense of a 'reservoir' of reality upon which art can most readily draw. If ideal perception of reality is our standard, we presume that artistic Beauty is, in a sense, superior to the Beauty of Nature. It may even be questioned, as Bergson says, "Whether, except as revealed by the artist, Nature is beautiful at all; whether, indeed, Nature is not secondary to Art?".[234] Adapting the famous Kantian phrase to the

realm of aesthetics, we can therefore, say that 'Art *makes* Nature'. "It is the creative impulse", says Rabindranath, "which makes songs even with stones and metals".[235]

AESTHETICS AND ETHICS

Before concluding this survey of Tagore's aesthetic opinions, some passing reference must be made to his views regarding the relation of Beauty to Goodness, and of Art to Morality. Although Tagore, as a lyricist, is suspicious of didactic art, and disapproves of the 'dry moralists' who 'put moral maxims in the place of human personality', he does not believe that the moral and the aesthetic ideas are 'contraries' or that there is a 'polarity' between them. Moral and aesthetic activity differ from each other not because they deal with two different realities but because they emphasise different aspects of the same reality. Tagore says: "The stream which comes from the Infinite and flows towards the finite is the God....Its echo which returns from the finite towards the Infinite is Beauty".[236]

It is sometimes maintained that Art and Morality, even if they are not contraries, deal with entirely different spheres of human nature, and therefore have nothing in common with each other. A typical representative of this view is Oscar Wilde who says: "There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well-written or badly written. This is all". But Tagore believes that this exaltation of so-called 'pure art' can only be used to justify the production of works which have nothing elevating or noble about them and whose artistic value is therefore doubtful. Instead of creating for us a world in which moral ideals find their natural places in beauty", such a view would only "wreck the world that we have built ourselves,

however, imperfectly".[237] Nothing could be more disastrous than an effort to reconstruct social order on the basis of complete dissociation between the moral and aesthetic values. Progress in art is closely linked up with moral progress. "A city without art", according to *Seeley* "will not merely be a dismal place; it will be an immoral place as well".[238] It is sometimes made a charge against art that in human history, periods in which art has flourished have often been characterised by dissolution of moral standards and pursuit of sensual pleasure. This, however, is not the blemish of art but of those that put into practice the theory that man's moral life has nothing to do with his creative life. Tagore believes that art has potentially the power of 'making men moral'; but since in moral life free will reigns supreme, this power may or may not be actualised. Pursuit of Beauty might lead to an increase in Goodness; but it may also have the contrary result. The aesthetic principle is in this sense, and in this sense alone, a-moral, for it might either degrade or elevate humanity. That is why Tagore depicts Urvasi, the symbol of Beauty, as emerging from the ocean of Creation with nectar in one hand and poison in the other.[239]

But here we already find ourselves dealing with problems which belong properly to the field of Ethics, and must, therefore, pass on to another Chapter.

REFERENCES

TO

CHAPTERS VI & VII

1. Tagore's aesthetic views have, in fact, exercised considerable influence on subsequent course of art in Bengal. Abanindranath has written: "Bengal's poet suggested the lines of art. The Bengali artist continued to work along those lines."
2. Nalinikanta Gupta: *Rabindranath*, p. 12.
3. *My Reminiscences*, Pp. 222-223.
4. Cf. *Sahityer Swarup*, p. 45.
5. In the course of a letter to Dr. Amiya Chakravarty, Rabindranath writes: *I read some books by Spender and Forster.....My own opinion is that, whatever our party affiliations in politics of religion, they do not enter at all in our literary estimates. From the point of view of emotional satisfaction, we are not called upon to obey any schools in art* (*Letter* written in June, 1938).
6. See Bosanquet *History of Aesthetics*, p. 289.
7. *Sadhana*, p. 139.
8. Ibid, p. 140.
9. Cf. Bacons statement: *Strangeness is the soul of art.* Also, Schiller's remark that 'beauty-mongers' often ignore the element of 'significant roughness' in art.
10. *Sadhana*, p. 139.
11. Collingwood: *Outlines of a Philosophy of Art.*
12. Quoted in *Creative Unity*, p. 31.
13. Ibid. p. 32.
14. *Chhabir Amga.*
15. Bosanquet: Op cit., p. 30.
16. Augustine *De Divisions Mundi.*
17. St. Thomas Aquinas: *Summa Theologica.*
18. *Religion of Man*, p. 151.
19. *Sadhana*, p, 142.
20. A pharse from Plotinus.
21. Rabindranath regards harmony and rhythm as the static and the dynamic aspects respectively of the same principle of proportion. The two complete each other. Without rhythm, art would be lifeless, even if it carries harmony of parts. Without harmony, on the contrary, art would be anarchic, even if it is lively.

22. *Sadhana*, p. 141.
23. Ibid, p. 142.
24. See an article on *Tagore's Music* by A.A. Bake in *Golden Book of Tagore.*
25. Kant: *The Critique of Judgment*, p. 117.
26. *Personality*, p. 20.
27. Ibid, Pp. 23-24.
28. Cf. "Beauty is the ideal of perfect harmony which is in the Universal Being" (Dialogue with Einstein), "It is harmony which lifts poetry into music" (Sahityer Swarup, p. 13), "Even physical science and mathematics have their rhythm which produces harmony" (*Religion of Man*, p. 140).

Such citations from Rabindranath's writings could be easily multiplied. The artist, according to him, must neither soar too high, nor remain too deeply rooted in the earth, but must try to end up on a note of harmony: Cf. the lines:

Jeno amar ganer sheshe

Thamte pari same eshe.

29. *Sadhana*, p. 141.
30. Ibid, p. 138.
31. Burke held that Ugliness, though the opposite of Beauty, often coincides with the Sublime in Art, and thus renders its own service. ("Inquiry into Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful" Section XXI, *On Ugliness*).
32. Schlegel *Theory of Ugliness.*
33. Cf, for instance, H.R. Marshall's *Pain, Pleasure and Aesthetics*, p, 305.
34. *My Reminiscences*, p. 213.
35. *Sadhana*, p. 138.
36. Ibid, Pp. 140-141.
37. Subodh Sen-Gupta: *Rabindranath*, p. 24.
38. Contrast Aristotle, who held that Art must admit of 'the beautiful manifestation of ugly reality.' *Poetics* V., I.) Lessing admits the ugly in art as a 'means to the cosmic and the terrible' (*Laocoon* XXI).
39. *Religion of an Artist* (from Contemporary Indian Philosophy, p. 37).
40. *Personality*, p. 19.
41. Ibid, p. 54.
42. *Religion of an Artist.* See also *Creative Unity*, p. 11.

43. *Creative Unity*, p. 12.
44. Quoted by Charles Baudouin in: *Psycho-analysis and Aesthetics.*
45. *Personality*, p. 24.
46. *Creative Unity*, p. 115.
47. Cf. the discussion of 'Neurotic and Artistic Personality' in R.H. Gordon's *Personality* (Kegan Paul). p. 243.
48. *Sadhana*, p. 143.
49. *Personality*, p. 52.
50. *Reminiscences*, p. 189.
51. An article in *the Golden Book of Tagore.*
52. *Jibaner prati sukhe paribe tomar hasi* (From *Sonar Tari*).
53. *Sadhana*, p. 60.
54. Bergson: *Creative Evolution*, p. 7
55. "What is Art?" from *Personality.*
56. *Creative Unity*, p. 197
57. *Personality*, p. 21.
58. Ibid, p. 22.
59. *Personality*, p. 35.
60. Schelling: *The Philosophy of Art.*
61. This is especially true of earlier Greek poetry, Cf. Gilbert Murray's *Five Stages of Greek Religion.*
62. *Creative Unity*, p. 202.
63. *Personality*, p. 55.
64. *Sadhana*, p. 102.
65. *Personality*, p. 27.
66. Vishwanatha: *Sahitya Darpana.*
67. S. K. De: *History of Sanskrit Poetics*: Vol. II, p. 171.
68. Gita X., 11.
69. See S. K. De: Op Cit Vol. I, Ch. I.
70. *Gitanjali* poem no. 154.
71. Cf. *Creative Unity*, p. 87. *Man feels himself to be a flute through which God's own breath has been breathed.*
72. *Gitanjali* poem no. 59.
73. *Gitanjali* poem no. 97.
74. *Toma pane dhaye tar shesh artha-khani.*
75. *Tomar kachhe khate na mor kabir garab kara* ("Gitanjali no. 125).
76. *Gitanjali* no. 22.
77. Quoted by Rabindranath in an address at Santiniketan (see the journal 'Prabasi'—Jaishtha, 1347).

78. *Jagat jure, udar sure, ananda gan baje* (Gitanjali, no. 15).
79. *Personality*, Pp. 28-29.
80. *Creative Unity*, p. 197.
81. *Personality*, Pp 88-89.
82. *Creative Unity*, p. 9.
83. *The Creative Ideal.* In this paper, Rabindranath has quoted from a number of medieval poets of Bengal.
84. Schopenhauer: *The World as Will and Idea*, p. 287.
85. *Contemporary Indian Philosophy*, p. 34.
86. *Creative Unity*, p. 10.
87. *Contemporary Indian Philosophy*, p. 34.
88. See. *Philosophy of Aesthetic Pleasure*, by Pancapagesa Sastri, p. 2.
89 Bharata: *Natyasastra* I, 6, Rabindranath speaks of the *Joyous song of creation* (Gitanjali, no. 15), and of Man, the artist, being invited by the Supreme Artist, and being given a place of honour at the *festival of joy* (Gitanjali, no. 44).
90. *Sadhana*, p. 60.
91. *Asvadyatvat* (Natyasastra).
92. *Sthayibhava.*
93. *Creative Unity*, p. 5.
94. *Personality*, p. 8.
95. *Contemporary Indian Philosophy*, p. 33.
96. *Sadhana*, p. 140.
97. *Bosanquet*: Op. Cit., p. 7.
98. From *Kari o Komal.*
99. From *Chitra.*
100. Ajit Chakravarty: *Kavya Parikrama.*
101. Leslie Stephen: *The Science of Ethics*, p. 334.
102. Bosanquet: Op. Cit. p. 8.
103. *Chhinnapatra*, p. 142.
104. Kant: *The Critique of Judgment*, p. 67.
105. *What is Art?*
106. *Creative Unity*, p. 39.
107. Kant: *Critique of Judgment*, p. 55.
108. Schopenhauer: *World as Will and Idea*, p. 253.
109. Letter to Dr. Amiya Chakravarty, published in Vaisakhi (1315).
110. *Sahitya.*
111. .....*tahar satya t'ar akritrim vedanar vege* (Letter to Dr. Amiya-Chakravarty).
112. *Creative Unity*, p. 66.

113. *Utsarga*—poem no. 21:—

Lajuk hridaya je kathati nahi kahe
Surer bhitare lukaiya kahi tahare.

114. This passage occurs in *Panchabhoot*, an early work.
115. *Jibansmrit.*
116. Keats: *Letters* (no. 21)
117. *Creative Unity*, p. 41.
118. Sushil Kumar De: *History of Sanskrit Poetics*, Vol. II, p. 170.
119. *Chhabir Amga.*
120. *Personality*, Pp. 14-15.
121. *Rg-veda* 9. lxiii. 13. Also, 9. lxv. 15.
122. *Rg-veda* 8. lxxii. 13.
123. S. K. De: Op. Cit. Vol. II, p. 150.
124. Cf. *Personality*, 16.
125. Lipps: *Aesthetic* Vol. II, p. 35.
126. Lessing also says that tragedy affects the mind *by means of pity and terror.*
127. *Personality*, p. 11.
128. Of the pleasure derived through tragedy, Rabindranath says: *We enjoy tragedies because the feeling of pain which they produce rouses our consciousness to a white heat of intensity* (*Religion of Man*—p. 130).
129. Cf. M. Ribot: *Psychology of the Emotions.* Spencer also speaks of a distinct *aesthetic sentiment.*
130. *Creative Unity*, p. 33.
131. *Chhabir Anga.*
132. Ibid.—The word *mind* does not here stand for the intellect, which is subordinate in art-creation.
133. "Sahityer Swarup," p. 13. *Vak evam avak bandha parechhe chhander malya-bandhane. Ei vak evam avaker ekanta milan-i kavya.*
134. *Sadhana*, p. 143.
135. Lessing, *Loacoon*, IX.
136. *Reminiscences*, p. 184.
137. *Personality*, p. 32-33.
148. Letter to Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterji (See *Geet Vitan*,—1350, p. 6.
139. Here Gentile evidently refers to Croce.
140. Quoted by Collingwood.

141. *Personality*, p. 17.
142. Winckelman: Works. V. 33
143. Goethe's Works (English translation) Vol. XVII, p. 348.
144. *Sahityer Swarup*, p. 34. In another context Rabindranath definitely says that *beauty is expression* ('Personality,' p. 34.)
145. Dewey: *Art as Experience*, p. 253.
146. *Creative Unity* (Preface.) Also cf. *Personality*, p. 19:
The principal object of art is the expression of personality and therefore it necessarily uses the language of picture and music.
147. Schiller's Works (English translation) Vol. II.
148. *Santiniketan*—14th Series.
149. The poem *Khela* from *Sonar Tari*; *Kemone Manush ha'ba na karile khela?*
150. "Santiniketan" 15th Series 1—*Tini khela karchhen bole-i ami Bhagavan ke maha-manava bole mane kari.*
151. Cf. Schiller: *The the Gods of Olympus, free from wants, occupied themselves in taking mortal forms, in order to play at human passion..... Similarly, in Drama we play with the achievements, virtues and vices that are not our own.*
152. Spencer: *The Principles of Psychology* Vol. II, p. 627.
Spencer's explanation, however, is still basically physiological. In the Chapter on Aesthe-Physiology in the same book, he explains aesthetic play with reference to the "tendency to useless and superfluous exercise of organs that have remained quiescent or dormant for an unusually long period." It will thus be seen that although Spencer and Rabindranath both sought to dissociate play from life-preservation, their general attitudes to this question were very different.
153. *Man* (Andhra Lectures), p. 6.
154. Letter to Dr. Amiya Chakravarty. See "Kavita"—Vol. IX, No. I.
155. *What is Art?*
156. *Religion of Man*, p. 16.
157. *Man*, p. 32.

158. Spencer: *Principles of Psychology* Vol. II, p. 633. Spencer points out that those sensations which are most easily separable from life-preserving functions are just those which acquire aesthetic significance.
159. Kant: *Critique of Judgment.*
160. *Personality*, p. 17.
161. Hume: *Treatise of Human Nature.*
162. The poem *Durakanksha* from "Chitra."
163. Ribot: *Psychology of the Emotions*, p. 329.
164. *Cratylus* IV, 16.
165. *Phaedrus*, 245.
166. *Personality*, p. 20.
167. Ibid., p. 58.
168. *Creative Unity*, p. 5.
169. Schopenhaueur: *World as Will and Idea*, p. 231.
170. Jacque Mariatain: *Art and Scholasticism.*
171 *Personality*, p. 4.
172. Cf. *Kavyer Tatparya* from "Panchabhoot."
173. Letter to Dr. Amiya Chakravarti. See 'Vaisakhi,' 1351, p. 5.
174. Hegel *Introduction to the Philosophy of Art.*
175. Baumgarten: *Aesthetics* Part I.
176. *Chhabir Amga.*
177. Rabindranath started with erasures in his manuscripts. In the very act of blotting out the unwanted word pictures and designs had already emerged!
178. Bergson: *Creative Evolution*, p. 7.
179. Ibid., p. 8.
180. *The Meaning of Art.*
181. *Reminiscences*, p. 222.
182. *Religion of Man*, p. 107.
183. *Phalguni.*
184. *Religion of Man*, p. 137.
185. Cf. Hogarth: *Beauty suggests as much in the way of thought as in the way of feeling.* ("Analysis of Beauty.")
186. Santayana: *Three Philosophical Poets.*
187. This demand that the meaning should actually be curtailed may well be regarded as the high-water mark of anti-intellectualism in Aesthetics. It is bound up with the view that Consciousness itself is really the villain of the piece which 'corrupts' the aesthetic capacity of the 'natural man.' Cf.

Wagner: "Art is an inbred craving of the natural, genuine and uncorrupted man; not an artificial product of the mind which involves Science, but of that deeper impulse which is unconscious"—("Art-work of the Future.")

188. *Man*, p. 31.
189. Ibid., p. 33.
190. *Creative Unity*, p. 41.
191. *Sahitya.*
192. Bergson: *Creative Evolution*, p. 185.
193. Ibid., p. 186-187.
194. Radhakrishnan: *The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore*, p. 7.
195. Letter to Dr. Amiya Chakravarty: See "Kavita" Vol. IX, No. I, p. 2.
196. *Creative Unity*, p. 197.
197. *Man*, p. 23.
198. Cf. *Personality*, p. 36: *A great battle may be a great fact, but it is useless for the purpose of art. But what that battle has caused to a single individual soldier, separated from his loved ones and maimed for life, has a vital value for art.*
199. *Personality*, p. 24.
200. Dr. S. N. Das Gupta: *Rabi Dipita* (Preface.)
201. Abanindranath Tagore: *Bageshwari Shilpa Prabandhavali*, p. 4.
202. Samuel Alexander: *Beauty and Other Forms of Value*, p. 35.
203. Hirn: *Origins of Art*, p. 5.
204. Nietzsche: *The Birth of Tragedy.*
205. See Bosanquet: *History of Aesthetics*, p. 242.
206. Letter to Dr. Amiya Chakravarty (See "Kavita" Vol. IX, No. 2, p. 3.
207. Knox. *The Aesthetic Philosophies of Kant, Hegel and Schopenhaueur*, p. 50.
208. *Dui Nari* from "Balaka."
209. Another interpretation of this poem, suggested by a well-known critic, is to the effect that Urvasi and Lakshmi symbolise Movement and Rest respectively.
210. *The Philosophy of Nietzsche* (Modern Library Edition), p. 168.

Appolonian art is lovely, frail, fantastic. There is measure and restraint in it, and freedom from

the wild and uncontrollable turmoil of elemental emotion.....But Dionysian art is passionate, torrential, primordial.

211. .....*jiban mrityur.*
Pavitra sangama tirtha tire,
Ananter puja mondire.

212. *Religion of Man*, p. 140.
213. *The Religion of an Artist.*
214. Bergson: *Creative Evolution*, p. 30.
215. *Creative Unity*, p. 197.
216. *Religion of an Artist.*
217. *Religion of Man*, p. 130.
218. "Gitanjali" No. 78: *Man diye ja'r nagal nahi pai Gan geye ta'r charan chhunye jai.*
219. "Gitanjali" No. 132: *Gan diye je tomay khunji..*
220. Cf. "Sahityer Swarup"; *In poetry, truth lies in form, not in meaning.*
221. D. P Mukerji: *Tagore—A Study*, p. 130.
222. Thompson; *Life and Work*, p. 27.
223. Letter to Charuchandra Bandyopadhyaya. See *Rabi Rasmi*, Vol. I.
224. This line occurs in a poem from *Mahua*, one of Tagore's maturer works.
225. *Raktakarabi*: "Hater kolahaler madhyeo achhe sur-bandha tambura."
226. *Shityer Swarup*, p. 10.
227. *Chhabir Amga.*
228. Ibid.
229. See *Rupam*, No. 19 (1924.)
230. Nor is such an attitude entirely new even for the European writers. In the preface of his '*Aesthetic*,' Cairiere described his standpoint as one of '*ideal-realism*.' And Schasler declared his own aesthetic principle to be 'the synthesis of realism and idealism.'
231. *Sahityer Swarup*, p. 46. Cf. Ananda Coomaraswami: In Indian art, which is a joint creation of Aryan and Dravidian genius, we get a wedding of symbol and representation.
232. *Man*, p. 23.
233. *Creative Unity*, p. 21. Rabindranath takes care to warn us, however, that allegorical or symbolical significance should not be considered as the essence of poetry. Cf. 'Kavyer Tatparya' from "Panchabhoot."

234. About the necessity of synthesising idealism and realism, too, Bergson seems to agree with Rabindranath. "Art is certainly a more direct vision of reality. But this purity of perception implies an innate and specially localised disinterestedness ....., in short, a certain immateriality of life, which is idealism.....Realism is in the work, when idealism is in the soul. And it is only through ideality that we can resume contact with reality" (*Creative Evolution.*)

235. *Creative Unity*, p. 13.

236. *Reminiscences*, p. 224.

237. *Personality*, p. 51.

238. Seeley: *Lectures and Essays*, p. 171.

239. *Urvasi* from "Chitra."

CHAPTER VIII

ETHICS (I)

The ethical doctrines of Tagore are characterised by the same desire to harmonise all extremes which we noticed in his metaphysical opinions. In individual as well as in social life, he tries to show that the highest ethical ideal is that which satisfies the whole of human nature. With this principle for our guidance, we can proceed to examine his views on some of the important ethical problems.

THE MORAL BASIS OF LIFE

The first question which necessarily confronts any ethical enquiry is that of the place and status of moral ideas in the life of humanity. Is morality inseparable from human life, or is it an insignificant 'super-addition', as some extreme materialists seem to believe? Tagore's answer to this question is quite categorical. Moral discrimination, he says, is an essential part of human nature. "The life of an animal is unmoral, for it is aware only of an immediate present. The life of a man can be *immoral*, but it cannot be *unmoral*; it must have a moral basis" [1]

Man, as man, can never be utterly detached from moral questions. He is free to develop himself either for the better or for the worse, "but he has no option to refuse to choose sides." *Samuel Alexander* asks, "Can any conduct be morally neutral?" and answers in the negative.[2] That we have a moral self is undeniable, though it may be dormant at times.[3] Morality is not a "fiction", as Vaihinger would have us believe,[4]

To call morality an illusion or a fiction would be to admit "that man has been the greatest mistake in creation ."[5] An effort has been made in modern times to interpret human history without reference to the development of ethical standards. But this, says Tagore, is a manifestly one-sided view of human nature. Even a rank materialist cannot altogether rule out the influence exercised by moral ideas in the course of civilisation. Sociologists sometimes condone social evils by saying: "It is pathetic but it is history", implying that moral sentiments have no serious bearing on the history of human beings.[6] But in the very act of denying moral influences, they contradict themselves. "Their logic is the logic of egoism,"[7] and the denial of morality itself becomes an ethical theory — the theory of extreme Egoism.

Man is distinguished from the rest of creation "by the dualism in his consciousness between what is and what ought to be. To the animal this is lacking, its conflict is between 'what is' and 'what is desired'; whereas in man the conflict is between what is desired and what *should* be desired."[8] Man depends "for his existence on the world of nature.". But "for his humanity he depends on the moral world," and "by this entry into the moral world, the dualism of the animal life and the moral makes us conscious of our personality as man."[9]

There are some writers on Ethics, like Hartmann and Schopenhauer, who would regard life as essentially an evil and who declare that "God committed the initial folly by creating human beings". On such a view morality would indeed appear to be a fiction. Tagore is vehemently opposed to such an attitude. Life is not all evil, in fact, "looked at in a correct perspective, life is not only not evil, it is positively blissful".

MORALITY AND RELIGION

If there are thinkers who would deny the moral basis of life, there are also, at the other extreme, people whose outlook is so wholly 'spiritual' that they refuse to ascribe ultimate value to morality and demand that "morality must outgrow itself into Religion" But Tagore would accept no relationship of 'higher' and 'lower' between Ethics and Religion. In any case, he would not let the former be submerged into the latter. His attitude is humanistic and does not permit him to drown human values in an abstract kind of Religion. Tagore like Rashdall, condemns the view that "the religious attitude carries us into some supra-moral region and enables us to attain a point of view from which moral distinctions are transcended."[10] True religion consists in a heightening rather that an obliteration of moral consciousness. "The 'dharma' of inner life is the true religion. The religion of lower animals consists of their biological life. Man's religion consists in his humanity, the innate creative force in Man."[11] Self-realisation, the highest ethical ideal, is also for Tagore the ideal of every true religion. "The Religion of water is 'waterness', the Religion of fire is combustion, and the Religion of man is in his own innermost truth."[12]

The quarrel between Religion and Ethics is as old as philosophic reflection itself, and has been the subject of lively controversy in modern philosophy. Descartes, Paley and Locke believed that Religion is the source of morality. Kant and Martineau, on the other hand, asserted that Ethics must necessarily be treated before Religion. While Tagore occasionally inclined to the latter view, it would be a mistake to suppose that he ever sharply differentiated between Ethics

and Religion as two discrete phenomena and then inquired which came first and which later. L. T. Hobhouse traces the emergence of ethical monotheism and shows that in the very earliest periods of human culture, Ethics and Religion were fused.[13] Tagore also shows that religious evolution presupposed the concept of a moral God. There might have been animistic religious sects before morality; but Religion (as distinguished from religions) emerged together with moral consciousness. Tagore points out in this connection that the history of Zoroastrianism supplies a clue for the proper understanding of the relation between Ethics and Religion in early human history.[14]

THE ETHICS OF EGOISM

We can start our discussion of Tagore's Ethical Philosophy by considering his views about the 'egoistic' solution. Tagore maintains that an extreme form of Egoism involves a necessary breach with the moral nature of man. The very basis of goodness lies in man's capacity to look beyond his own interests. "To live the life of goodness is to live the life of all."[15] Egoistic ethics seeks to trace all altruism to an unconscious selfishness, but every kind of egoism is really ego-altruism. Hobbes considered human life as the perpetual effort after the gratification of desires. He said that if a man at times appeared to be unselfish, "it was only to acquire the means of satisfying all *future* desires." This is a perverted view of human life. Tagore does not deny that selflessness is sometimes more apparent than real. Altruism too can be self-sufficient and condescending—it, too, can "humiliate by gifts the victims of its insolent benevolence."[16] As Bosanquet shows, altruism also can be indirectly

selfish and therefore, "we cannot always accept 'living for others' as an expression of unqualified praise."[17] But this does not mean that the capacity for self-sacrifice, reflected in the innumerable martyrdoms of history, can ultimately be reduced to unconscious egoism. Leslie Stephen illustrates the egoistic attitude by the example of Sir Philip Sidney, who, though himself dying, refused a cup of water and gave it to another soldier. The egoist would comment that "his vanity was greater than his thirst" and that his sacrifice was the outcome of his selfish desire for posthumous praise.[18] But this attitude towards life can appeal only to a misanthrope.

The ethical doctrine of Egoism inevitably leads to the cult of power. Given the premises of Hobbes, the system of Nietzsche is bound to emerge. Tagore unequivocally condemns the doctrine that "virtue is power," and "justice is the interest of the stronger." He has expressed his dislike for Nietzsche in some of his letters as well as private interviews and conversations.[19] It is significant that while Tagore was a sympathetic student of all varieties of Indian religious thought, he had no sympathy whatsoever for the Sakta cult or the apotheosis of power in the form of Kali. Anything suggesting a glorification of force or violence was alien to his moral temperament. He differs from Nietzsche both in his interpretation of "value and in his conception of the God of Ethics." Nietzsche says: "The root of all value is to be seen in the superior man's sense of his own nobility."[20] Tagore, on the other hand, believes that not power but love is the key to ethical value,[21] and that the concept of power itself is meaningless in the context of pure

selfishness. Love may appear to be weakness, but is really strength; egoism may appear as the assertion of power, but really the weakness of the moral self.[22] Further, Nietzsche says that the God of Theism, the merciful and benevolent God of Christianity, is "one of the most corrupt conceptions ever arrived at on earth.... Everything strong, brave, domineering and proud has been eliminated out of it."[23] To Tagore such a proud, domineering God is quite unacceptable. His God is the God of tenderness and love, who tempers Power with Joy in order to establish kinship with humanity.

Egoism is not only "bad," it is also false; it contradicts man's infinite ideal which is his truth. In a poem in "*chaitali*,"[24] Tagore asks God to whisper into his ears, "Your selfishness is false, the infinite in you is true."

"Even to be efficiently selfish, a man has to curb his immediate impulses."[25] The Egoist lives in an unreal world and as such his egoism cannot succeed. He aims to prosper in a world which he cannot understand, and thus he aims at the impossible. "The man who aims at his own aggrandisement underrates everything else. Thus in order to be conscious of the reality of all, man has to be free from bonds of personal desires."[26] Not only does the Egoist fail to understand reality, he does not even know his own self, nor derive any joy from even those actions which he thinks will promote his selfish interests. "The soul can only find its truth by unifying itself with others and only then it has its joy."[27]

"My heart longs always to give
Not merely to get:

It craves to scatter

Whatever it gathers."[28]

"At every step we have to take into account others than ourselves. For only in death are we alone."[29] The very criterion of life is that it has to extend its frontiers. In Tagore's words, "life has to come out of itself. Its truth is in the merging of the inner with the outer. Even the body cannot subsist unless it draws light and air and food from outside and returns them in some form."[30] The Egoist 'cannot enter the world of perfect harmony.' Only the self "which transcends self-interest finds its truth in union with the All.[31] The fundamental problem of Ethics, says Prof. Rogers, can be formulated thus: "What motive has any individual to seek the good of others as well as his own good?"[32] The motive, Tagore would reply, consists in man's inherent desire for a unified life. "In vehement self-assertion, we ignore our unity."[33] We accept the Egoistic criterion "only when we look upon the multiplicity of things as the final truth."[34] To imagine that life can ever be based on pure selfishness is, in the words of Ritchie "to forget the solidarity of human beings." "I, as a person here and now, have in me a great part of the lives of many persons."[35] A man who 'lives for himself' can only be an obstacle in the harmony and continuity of existence. "A too near view of ourselves is the Egotistical view, which is the flat and the detached view—but when we see ourselves in others, we find that the truth about us is round and continuous."[36]

The social consciousness of man demands of him some degree of altruism in thought and action. Morality is not for 'man' but for 'man-in-society.' From this point of view, "altruism

is one of the laws of the world. Whether we like it or not, we have to act for others." Take the case of knowledge. One may gather it for a selfish motive, but the prosperity to which this knowledge contributes is inherited by millions.[37] Truth and goodness have an universal aspect which "even the most evily-disposed selfishness has to recognise."[38]

Awareness of his own altruism constitutes man's supremacy over the rest of creation. "Man consciously realises the Law of Altruism, and acts upon it, thereby showing his superiority over dead matter".[39] The gradual revelation of man's innermost truth to himself coincides with his emergence "from the narrow world of self-sufficiency into the larger life of social communion." This communion implies a non-egoistic principle which holds people together. Tagore says, "For selfish reasons we may *collect* together, but we can never *unify* or unite."[40] The famous poem "*Nirjharer Swapnabhanga*", (i.e. "Awakening of the Waterfall") symbolises the melting of man's ice-bound Ego, and its merging into the current of humanity where it finds its own true glory, just as the stream finds in the torrent the truth it had missed in the glacier.[41] Human progress, on its ethical side is the ascending movement from selfishness to selflessness. Man's true song is:

"I travel to seek the heart of humanity,
With the Lamp of Love to guide me;
I travel to join the work of the world
Ignoring my own petty worries."[42]

HEDONISM

While accepting the altruistic basis of moral life, one may yet consider pleasure to be the true

end of action. Tagore's main criticism against hedonistic ethics is that pleasure is a very vague term and cannot, therefore, serve as a criterion of morality. "By adjustment of our mental attitude, things seem to change their properties, and objects and actions that were pleasurable to us become painful and vice versa."[43] Pleasure is popularly regarded as being dependent on gratification of desire. But if morality has to set men on the path of greatness, it must start with an analysis of what is *truly desirable*, as against what is *actually desired* by men in their weaker moments. "In sin we lust after pleasures not because they are truly desirable but because the red light of our passion makes them appear desirable."[44]

From the side of the higher life, some pleasures may appear no longer pleasurable. "From the point of view of the Good, pleasure and pain appear in a different meaning.... While on the plane of selfishness pleasure and pain have their full weight, on the moral plane they are so much lightened that the man who has reached it astounds us by his patience."[45] A deliberate pursuit of pleasure can only be possible 'on the plane of selfishness.' Ethical life is a life of ideals, and ideals transform our conceptions of things. "He who dedicates his life is Truth and thinks of himself against a vast back-ground of ideals—for him personal happiness and misery have a changed meaning. By accepting pain he transcends it."[46]

Pleasure by itself is fierce and aggressive. Its gratification can only be the ideal of that part of man which is continuous with Nature. But man is not merely a part of Nature; he also transcends Nature. And the quest for pleasure must, therefore, be tempered by the quest for

spiritual (non-natural) ideals. Pleasure, says Tagore, is not to be rejected; but it can only be accepted as modified by our higher nature. "In human nature, sexual passion is fiercely individual and destructive, but dominated by the ideal of love, it has been made to flower into a perfection of beauty."[47] What seems pleasurable when passion and excitement rule the mind seems the reverse of it when the mind is calm and serene. "Under a certain state of exultation of mind, mortification of the flesh has been resorted to *for pleasure*."[48] The undivided pursuit of pleasure has its reckoning with the perversion of a man's entire outlook, just as "the cultivation of unwholesome appetites has its final reckoning with the stomach."[49]

UTILITARIANISM

Even the more refined forms of altruistic hedonism, as represented by the utilitarian or the evolutionary schools, did not commend themselves to Tagore as sound bases for morality. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, which was the formative period of Rabindranath's philosophic outlook, Mill, Bentham and Spencer exercised considerable influence. Tagore has made many appreciative references to their writings and there is evidence to show that he had particular fondness for Mill.

But he felt that their theories were essentially European or rather "Western" in their origin and their appeal. The development of natural science, extension of man's dominion over Nature, increase in the material comforts of human life—these, says Tagore, have been the main endeavours of Western culture. The Oriental ideal has, on the other hand, always been one of spiritual and religious development rather than the utilitarian

ideal of mere 'comfort' or 'well-being.' While science is "frankly impersonal in its quest for utility," Indian thought directs us "towards the personal man....who is found in the region where we are free from all necessity—above the needs both of body and mind—above the expedient."[50] Man's freedom from natural want is a splendid and necessary achievement, but every culture has its own tradition, and Oriental culture has not the tradition of Utilitarianism. "It would be an utter waste of opportunities if history were to repeat itself exactly in the same manner in every place."[51]

Moreover, the very superiority of Man over the rest of creation, which science aims at, consists in his capacity to rise above utilitarian considerations. There would be no joy in a life which is occupied solely in the pursuit of utility. Has not Mill himself admitted: "Ask yourself if you are happy, and you cease to be so?" Tagore says: "Men spend an immense amount of time and resources to prove that....they are *not* a mere living catalogue of endless wants."[52] Food and shelter mean everything to animals, but this "aspect of busy practicality."[53] is not all for "human beings." Even an Utilitarian moralist like Sidgwick has to acknowledge that "the impulse towards pleasure, if too predominant, defeats its own aim." As the psychologists would put it, there is a play-instinct in man which has nothing to do with his food-seeking instinct. Tagore says that in the animal world the two instincts are linked up. In the animal, the play-instinct itself represents the tendencies of his life's needs. "The kitten's sport consists in catching imaginary rats."[54] But man has in him the faculty of imagination, "a faculty which is special to him, because it is superfluous for

biological survival."[55] As an artist, and a theorist of art, Tagore is decisively opposed to Utilitarianism. "There are sentiments in us which are creative, which do not clamour for gain, but overflow in gifts, in spontaneous generosity."[56] We do not weigh the usefulness of things in our mental balance every time we admire a beautiful object or symphony or action. Our standard is not one of quantitative 'more' or 'less.' "From the point of view of mere actuality a lotus is a clod of earth. But the human mind has a standard of value, a sense of 'excellence' which transcends quantitative standards."[57] The picture of man struggling for his life's needs is not a complete picture—"the world of present needs is bound up with a world that infinitely transcends our present needs."[58] Otherwise, to use the words of John Dewey, we would have to commit emotional suicide.[59] There is a "basic duality" in man's being.[60] He wants his comforts, but he also wants magnificence. "Man alone is intemperate. He wants profusely, and gives profusely....He shatters the shelter of comfort and calls out for a difficult architecture."[61] He is not satisfied with the little, "though the little may be the useful"; he says: "bhumaiva sukham, nalpe sukhamasti"; in the "barely enough" there may "be comfort but no contentment."[62]

There is in human life an element of leisure and repose which utilitarian ethics cannot account for. "There is struggle for existence in nature, but Leisure, the Angel of Surplus, has detached man from the claims of physical necessity."[63] But for this 'surplus' in man there would be no morality and no moral philosophy. In animal life even altruism is for biological needs. "It is the altruism of the herd

and the hive."[64] But man's morality or goodness is not for race-preservation. "His goodness is not a small pittance, barely sufficient for a hand-to-mouth existence . . .And upon this wealth of goodness, man's ethics are founded."[65] When the Gita says: "ma phalesu kadacana", it means just this—"You should be moral *not* because it pays to be good, but because goodness is part of your true nature." Utilitarianism fails to give us a sufficient ground for moral obligation. As Muirhead says: "The man who is temperate because he desires the pleasure of temperance is *not* moral."[66] Man's moral status is not to be judged "by the market-value of his service."[67] Man is an end in himself, not a 'means' to social well-being.

From this point of view, Tagore condemns the utilitarian tendencies of the present age. He says that by "feeding the demon of utility" we are endangering the moral progress of humanity. "Our needs are always in a hurry. They rush and hustle, they are rude and unceremonious, they have no surplus of leisure."[68] Utilitarian ethics, in its extreme materialistic form, makes of men mere "walking stomachs and brains."[69] "With the overwhelming growth of necessity, our civilisation has become a gigantic office."[70] The higher spiritual ideals of man are kept in abeyance, or are themselves interpreted in Utilitarian terms. Mill had already said: "Even Jesus was a Utilitarian," thus reducing Religion to the organisation of wants; and now we have Croce proclaiming "that there can be utility without morality, but there cannot be moral value without utility", and that morality is only "the logic of Economy".[71]

Thus we "shackle the Infinite and tame it for domestic use",[72] so that man's spirit is impri-

soned "in the wriggling tentacles of a cold-blooded utilitarianism."[73]

ASCETICISM

Tagore's rejection of the hedonistic or utilitarian criterion does not, however, lead him to the other extreme of rigorism or asceticism. He does not regard man's worldly life as being fraught with danger for his moral self. Even from his earliest writings it is so clear that the influence of Vaishnava religion and his acquaintance with the Bauls of rural Bengal, had driven out of Tagore all distrust of the body. "These Bauls have a philosophy, which they call the philosophy of the body. . .Evidently the underlying idea is that the individual's body is itself the temple, in whose inner shrine the divine appears before the soul.[74] Religion in its highest form sets itself against asceticism. The Rgvedic prayer runs: "O Lord of my Soul, give me eyes a second time, give me life and the power of enjoyment, bless me that I may for ever greet the rising sun".[75] And the same holds good for Christianity. "The task of achieving the Kingdom of God", says Albert Ritschc, "includes all labour in which our lordship over nature is exercised by the maintenance, ordering and furthrance even of the *bodily* side of human nature."[76]

Tagore tells us in many of his poems that the body is not the prison of the soul. The rigoristic ethics of Kant seeks to establish an antagonism between Reason and Sensibility. But Tagore would never accept that sensibility is necessarily irrational. It has to be guided, not destroyed. "It will not do to shut the doors of our senses and turn away from the world".[77]

Tagore even complained that the Ethics of

the Upanisads sometimes smacks of too much asceticism. Of course, it is not true that the Upanisadic ideal is to "crush out every feeling by vacuity, apathy, inertion and ecstacy" as Gough alleges.[78] A downright mortification of the flesh is not advocated by the Upanisads.[79] Nevertheless, their philosophy is characterised by a violent reaction against the selfish abandonment to pleasure which we find in the preceding period. Later Indian thought carried to extremes the suggestions of renunciation contained in the Upanisads, and, ended up by giving us an "over-dose of asceticism". This ascetic note is distinctly seen in the Ethics of Sankaracharya.[80] Criticising this asceticism, Tagore says: "Our knowledge, in its vain endeavour to look at Absolute Reality in isolation from the world of things, has hardened like a stone. Our heart, in its effort to enjoy God by imprisoning him within its feelings, faints of its own excess".[81]

In one of the famous poems from "Balaka", Rabindranath asks: "Where is heaven?" and answers: "Heaven is here, in my body, my love and joy and sorrow. What greater fortune can there be than to have been born a human being."[82] That is why it has been said: "Rabindranath is a Sadhak, not an ascetic. .Asceticism may be a phase in self-realisation, but not the whole of it. More difficult, and fuller, is the sadhana of those who are *in* the world without being *of* it."[83] Acquisition and renunciation are the two aspects of human life, and both are real. "They correspond to the centripetal and centrifugal forces which operate in us and both these forces contribute equally to man's dignity ....The basic truth underlying human greatness is that he not merely accepts but also renoun-

ces."[84] The highest good is to be achieved not by escaping from life, but by living it fully and worthily. "Only by living life fully can you outgrow it". As Hastings Rashdall says, "In general a man's mind is not raised above the level of the lower desires....by austerity, but by healthy preoccupation with social or intellectual activity..There may be room for asceticism by way of discipline..But it may be doubted whether the self-consciousness attendant upon such self-inflicted disciplinary privations....is not a grave objection to them."[85]

In looking up to heaven we must not ignore the earth. Rabindranath writes in *Chaitali*:

Blessed am I that I have
Sought for heaven's light.
Blessed am I that I have
Loved my abode on earth."[86]

Dr. Schin Sen says, "The life of renunciation is to be entered upon not by rejecting pleasure but by rising above it. This reconciliation is the prime factor in Rabindranath's spirituality. It is this note that has sounded in *'Naivedya'*, *'Gitanjali'*, *'Kheya'* and *'Gitimelya'*"[87] In *"Prakritir Pratisodh"*, one of his earliest dramas, Tagore declared the futility of asceticism. The hermit returns home and "the seeming triviality of the finite" disappears.[88] Freedom is not freedom at all if it rejects life. "Freedom through ascetic denial is not for me....It is through this earthen vessel that I shall drink heavenly nectar....I shall never close the gates of my senses. The joy of God shall for me remain in the midst of the joy of colour, song and perfume."[89] In a famous poem in "Chitra", Rabindranath conveys his longing

"to return to the shore of humanity, leaving the world of idle imaginings."[90]

Moral progress is the record of man's endeavours to live the 'good life' in his day-to-day activities. The ascetic, "sitting in his corner, would deride this grand self-expression of humanity in action."[91] The ascetic fails to see that he is himself the obstacle in the way of moral progress, that he is himself "the distraught wanderer, drunk in the wine of self-intoxication".

The ascetic ideal is based on escapism. Rabindranath says: "Religion is escape for two kinds of people—for ascetics and for rakes".[92] It preaches a kind of goodness which is separated from reality. This is a diluted virtue, a 'cloistered' virtue, in Milton's words which never sallies out and meets its adversary. Tagore interprets Kalidasa's play "Kumarasambhavam" as depicting the ultimate unity between Shiva, the spirit of Goodness, and Sati, the spirit of Reality. Even the Buddhist ideal is one of Nirvana throuh love. Tagore quotes the Buddha himself to show that the latter preached not a negative ethics of indifference but an attachment or love from which the last traces of egoism have been eliminated. God is to be found in the world; the infinite is to be attained not by negating the finite but by realising it on a higher plane. This idea is expressed in a poem called *'Vairagya"*. The devotee leaves his home in search of God, not realising that he was increasing rather than shortening, the distance between God and himself. At last God himself cries out in despair: 'Where does my devotee go, forsaking me?'[93]

To escape from life is to "throw away our

only chance of realising the meaning of our personality". Therefore, Rabindranath says:

"I do not wish to depart from this beautiful world

I wish to live on amongst mankind.[94]

THE ETHICS OF ACTIVISM

Acceptance of worldly values further implies a life of action—for only through action can these values be realised. "No creature has to work so hard as man....who has to be incessantly making and unmaking,....seeking and finding and suffering"[95] In passivity there can be no creation. God himself, in his aspect of Creator, is Active. "He works, for without working how could He give Himself?".[96] He radiates through many-sided activity ('bahudha sakti yogat'). To realise an Active God we must ourselves be active. "Let us once for all dislodge from our minds the feeble fancy that would make out God's joy as a thing apart from action."[97] Life is meant for action; "take the pitcher and go to the river."[98] The Upanisad says: "In the midst of activity alone wilt thou desire to live a hundred years."[99]

Tagore was not alone in the modern philosophical world to emphasise the active side of ethical life. 'Voluntarism' or 'Activism' is an important tendency in modern philosophy—a tendency which in its extremer forms identifies life with 'will' and culminates in the "will to power" of Nietzsche and the "will to believe" of William James. Tagore takes good care to save his activistic philosophy from any taint of utilitarianism or gross materialism. Action is inevitable not because of its 'preservation value', but because without action man cannot give expression

to the joy within him. "On the one hand action is stirred by want, on the other, it hies to its natural fulfilment,"[100] man acts to live, but even more inevitably does he act to enjoy. The action that is stirred merely by want lives only in the process of its satisfaction. That is why, as Perry says, the new activistic philosophy "strives to be free from biologism and utilitarianism".[101] The 'action' that Tagore advocates emerges not from the springs of necessity, but from the fountain of spiritual joy. "Joy without the play of joy is no joy at all—play without activity is no play. Activity is the play of joy".[102]

This non-utilitarian or even anti-utilitarian activism is what we get in the *Bhagawadagita*. Action, says the Gita,[103] is inevitable for man, be he rich or poor, wise or ignorant. But the difference between the wise and the ignorant is that while the latter judges action from the viewpoint of material gain, the former acts disinterestedly. As Tagore says, the wise man is he who "dedicates his action to God."[104] Once we purge action of profit, we may safely identify the moral life with the life of action. And then we can say with Rudolph Eucken; "Spirit is action and struggle. Life is a deed."[105]

Freedom and Renunciation take on a different significance when we look at the active life in this way. Rabindranath quotes a passage from Buddha's sermon to Sadhu Sinha wherein he says: "It is true, O Sadhu, that I renounce activities, but only those that lead to evil in word, thought or deed." Moral progress does not mean freedom *from* action but freedom *in* action. Activity does not restrict our freedom, it does not "tie us to the wheels of necessity." Tagore

says: "Joy is expressed in Law, and Freedom is expressed in action. Joy demands Law when it can no longer contain itself. And when the human self can no longer contain its freedom, it finds an outlet in Action."[106]

The true message of Morality is always: "Put out this dim light. Wake up from your dreams; the sun calls you. Unbolt the doors, get out on the open road."[107] Tagore, like William James, calls upon men to be "faithful fighters in the cause of righteousness" and preaches a "militant moralism" of struggle and alertness.[108]

It will thus be seen that the interpretation of Tagore as a merely contemplative poet, asking people to retire in a quiet corner, away from the "fever and the fret" of active life is wholly inaccurate. Even the mysticism of Rabindranath is not a meditative mysticism. A division is sometimes made between contemplative and active "types" of mysticism. But it may well be doubted if Tagore would accept that any true mysticism can ever be purely contemplative. Human nature itself has two sides, the Active and the Contemplative, none of which can be wholly ignored.[109]

Tagore believes in a moral ideal but he reminds us that without action the ideal will for ever remain an ideal. "The more man acts and makes actual what was latent in him, the nearer does he bring the distant yet-to-be. In that actualisation man is ever making himself more and yet more distinct, and seeing himself clearly under newer and newer aspects in the midst of his varied activities."[110] That is why the idea of the Infinite which Tagore offers us is one that will satisfy the dynamic side of human nature. His God is the God of the market-place,[111] who acts and demands action from his devotees.[112]

CHAPTER IX

ETHICS (II)

It is now necessary to consider Tagore's views about what have been termed the 'postulates of Morality', namely God, Freedom and Immortality.

God

Tagore's metaphysical views regarding God's nature and "meaning for human experience" have already been discussed in Chapter Three above. But it is incumbent at this stage to examine his conception of God from the ethical standpoint as well.

Rabindranath insists that in any true conception of the Infinite, there must be room for ethical values. We must accept, in other words, that God is the Supreme Good, as He is the Supreme Reality. Rabindranath believes in a personal God, the fountain of all *virtues*, as of all power and truth. He would never agree with Bradley that *goodness* is an "appearance" which must be transcended in the Absolute. "The good", says Bradley, "is not the perfect but is merely a one-sided aspect of perfection. It tends to pass beyond itself; and, if it were completed, it would forthwith cease properly to be good."[113] The Infinite, therefore, which is perfection, cannot be the Good, for "goodness is a one-sided appearance of the real."[114]

Rabindranath takes the opposite view of God's relation to ethical values. He identifies God with perfect goodness and the 'God-centred life' with the perfectly good life. "To live in perfect

goodness", says Rabindranath, "is to realise one's life in the Infinite. This is the most comprehensive view of life which we can have by our inherent power of the moral vision of the wholeness of life."[115] To dissociate ethical values from God is to banish God from the human world. An Absolute who is not wholly good "cannot appreciate goodness", and therefore, can be of no solace to man in his striving to better himself. Even Bradley has to modify his position, and has to admit: "In a sense, therefore, the Absolute is actually good, and throughout the world of goodness it is truly realised in different degrees of satisfaction."[116]

Rabindranath, like Kant, believes that our "Practical Reason" demands a living faith in God, and a constant endeavour to express His will. The moral action is to be judged by its success in conveying man's solidarity with the Infinite. "When the moral law is in abeyance," says Rabindranath, "man misses his inner perspective, and measures his greatness by its bulk rather than by its vital link with the Infinite."[117]

The Infinite appears to Rabindranath as the ultimate end of our moral striving, the 'All-Good' for which alone individual acts of goodness can have any meaning. Lotze says: "God not merely possesses the metaphysical attributes of Unity, Eternity, and Omnipotence, but also the ethical attributes of Wisdom, Justice, Holiness. God is not merely supreme reality, but supreme worth as well."[118] Our courage, fortitude, love, and honour would not make us moral if the Infinite Goodness were not the sum-total of all courage, honour and other virtues. This idea has been vividly brought out

by Rabindranath in one of his poems in the collection "Gitali."[119]

(B) Freedom

If God is the first axiom of morality, Freedom is the second, but in dealing with the problem of freedom, we have to tackle at the outset the contradiction that while as a link in the natural chain of events, man is subject to the law of necessity, as a member of the spiritual realm of ends he is free.

In resolving this contradiction, Rabindranath shows that we can realise the Infinite only as free individuals, even though it may appear that we are bound by natural environment. "This self of ours has to attain its ultimate meaning.... not through the compulsion of God's power, but through love, and thus becomes united with God in freedom."[120] As Green says: "Man is free, because God is free. Man is the subject in which the eternal consciousness reproduces itself, and is, like itself, a free cause."[121] The very idea of a self-distinguishing consciousness involves the idea of freedom. To distinguish oneself is to know oneself apart from others. Thus freedom, as Renouvier says; "becomes at once the postulate both of knowledge and of morality." If God had all the freedom and man had none, truth and goodness would equally lose their meaning. But, says Rabindranath, "the universe is not under a martial law", so far as man is concerned. Naturalistic ethics tries to derive the higher from the lower, and makes the former dependent upon the latter. What sensationism does for epistemology, necessitarianism does for Ethics. Rabindranath does not deny that man is dependent upon natural forces for the fulfilment of his functions as part of nature. But

there is in man a principle which is non-natural. This principle is his free, inner self. "In his physical and mental organism, where man is related to nature, he has to acknowledge the rule of a king. But in his self he is free."[122] As Martineau says: "The moral judgment necessarily credits the Ego with a selective power."[123]

Human society, like the world of nature, is based on the rule of law. But the law is made by man himself and is not inherited readymade from Nature. Rabindranath says, "Freedom first breaks the law, and then makes the law which brings it under true self-rule."[124] The meaning of evolution is best understood when it is seen as leading to maximum freedom for the will. "The inner meaning of creation—which we call Will—is found in life, which is freedom. Matter could not express the language of Will, till life came to its aid."[125] However, Evolution did not stop with life, but had to go on to mind. The freedom which the emergence of life registered was after all very partial and meagre. It expressed itself merely in physical gain at the expense of Nature. But then "man appeared and diverted the course of evolution from physical aggrandisement to a subtler freedom."[126]

To have acted morally is "to have chosen that act, to have consented to it." As Muirhead says, a compulsory morality would be equivalent to having no morality at all, and would in no way elevate man above nature.[127] And the pursuit of truth, as much as the pursuit of goodness, depends upon freedom. The fact of knowledge, Tagore says, is itself a refutation of determinism. "We must know that freedom and truth are twins, they are closely associated. When there are obstacles for our mind against receiving

truth, they take shape in our outward world forming barriers against freedom of action."[128]

Thus Rabindranath, like T. H. Green, believes that man, as acting upon Nature, is free from Nature's dominion. His actions follow from his Will, even though they may be directed towards Nature. "An act may be a necessary act.....but the agent is not a necessary and therefore not natural agent."[129] Green repeatedly warns us against the confusion "that if the act is a necessary result of the agent, the agent must also be 'necessary', i.e., an instrument of natural forces."[130]

Increase in freedom corresponds with shifting of the emphasis from the outer to the inner. "From the outer universe we gradually come to the inner realm and one by one the gates of freedom are unbarred," till "the screen is finally lifted on man's appearance on earth."[131] Human freedom is not merely physical but spiritual and moral. "*Our* outer freedom is freedom from the guidance of pleasure and pain; *our* inner freedom is from the narrowness of self-desire."[132] This inner freedom enables us to break not merely nature's barriers, but also the self-erected barriers which hamper our moral progress.[133]

This distinction between outer and inner freedom saves us from the erroneous idea that Freedom is altogether opposed to Law or Restraint. Rabindranath is careful to emphasise that Freedom and Restraint are not opposites, but are mutually related parts of the Moral Order. Some kind of necessity there always will be; only that necessity will be consciously self-given. As Spinoza says, "freedom is the recognition of necessity." In the moral system of Tagore, freedom and control complete

each other. Kant says, "The moral law lifts us out of the order of Nature and asks us to regard ourselves not as under no law but as under no External law."[134]

There is a law of proportion which holds true in all departments of life, and which is at the root of morality. "Any attempt to overcome the law of proportion altogether" is not freedom but "absolute separateness and rebellion."[135] Freedom from all restraint cannot be our ideal because freedom itself is a kind of restraint, and restraint itself is meaningless except in relation to a free person. Rabindranath says: "Truth has freedom on one side and restraint on the other. Its one aspect declares: 'By fear of him fire burns.' Its other aspect proclaims: 'From joy are all things born.' To reject the law on the one side is to deny the possibility of making use of the freedom which is on the other side. The Absolute Himself is both free and not-free. He is bound by his Truth, and he is free in virtue of his joy. We too can gain the enjoyment of freedom fully only if we accept the bonds of truth."[136]

It is readily seen that in social and political organisation rights and duties go hand in hand. The same is true of individual life, where freedom is necessary to prevent the misuse of restraint, vice versa"[137] "He who knows that joy and freedom express themselves in Law," says Rabindranath, "has already transcended Law. Not that he is no longer bound by any law, but rather that the bond itself is an instrument of joy, like the arms of his beloved encircling him."[138]

In another passage Rabindranath writes, "Of

course there is law, but that law does not stand up, proudly erect, demanding obedience. That law is expressed in joy in freedom. There is freedom for the poet which is expressed in rhythm, which is Law. Rhythm has metre, but it is of the poet's own choosing."[139] Thus Rabindranath accepts self-determinism as the compromise between rigid determinism and anarchic libertarianism. He offers the analogy of tuning a musical instrument. The strings are necessary bonds to the player, but it is he who adjusts them. When law is adjusted to truth, there is an increase of freedom. When strings are tuned to the truth of music, the player is *more*, not less free. The musician's freedom lies not in breaking the strings but in tuning them.[140]

There is no such thing, therefore, as absolute freedom Even God is not free in this aggressive, defiant sense. Has not God bound himself in the very process of creating the world?[141] All things and individuals are bound up by subtle bonds of relationship which cannot be isolated. Paradoxical as it may sound, the highest freedom lies in the capacity to surrender freedom. In the soul of man, will seeks its manifestation in will, and freedom turns to win its final prize in the freedom of surrender."[142]

This idea is developed by Rabindranath in his essay on "The Spirit of Freedom." He recalls how the advent of Buddhist thought in India produced a freedom of mind which was "expressed in a wealth of creation, spreading everywhere in its richness."[143] Freedom is not a passive, self-satisfied feeling of apathy. It is creation, it is the enlargement of humanity. For, "unless we have true faith in freedom, manfully taking all its risks, not only do we lose

the right to claim freedom, but also lack the power to maintain it."[144]

IMMORTALITY

It is in the light of this principle of freedom as being the essence of the inner spirit of man that one must approach Tagore's ideas about immortality.

Evidently, when Tagore spoke of immortality, he did not refer to the crude concept of rebirth or transmigration which he, like his father the Maharshi, frankly dismissed as a 'ridiculous fairy-tale.' And yet immortality was the favourite theme of many of his sermons. and he has on more than one occasion quoted the Upanisadic verse: "Yenaham namrtasyam kimaham tena kuryam" ("What shall I do with that which does not lend me immortality?") What then did Tagore imply by this word?

As mentioned above, the meaning becomes clear in the light of the significance attached to freedom. The eternal, the deathless, the immortal is that which is essentially free; while the perishable or the mortal is that which is bound.

In the course of a letter, Tagore writes: "....In the region of Freedom, the Present cannot imprison man.....There, by the light of hope and faith, the Self wanders freely in the eternal future....

"Death rules only in the land of the immediate Present where at every step there is decay, frustration, and sorrow. Bound up within the tentacles of the narrow Present, the human soul suffers in agony. For men are 'children of the Immortal,' they are 'dwellers of the Divine City'....

"....Our real bondage is the bondage of time. When we suffer, we are imprisoned within the moments to which that suffering attaches, so that we are prevented from transcending the present...."[145]

In this fashion, Tagore connects Freedom with Immortality. The greatest freedom is freedom from the limits of time; the greatest bondage is the bondage of the Present.

Man, on this view, is 'mortal' when he is related to the 'merely natural' (for in Nature necessity is king); he is immortal where he is related to the Infinite. "Man's multi-cellular body is born and dies, his uni-cellular personality is immortal."[146] The present is not for him the be-all and end-all of things. Humanity's moral ideal is reflected in "the World-Man to whom past, present and future equally belong."[147] It is from the point of view of this World-Man, this Infinite Principle in us, that Tagore has most assurance of Immortality. Kant argued for Immortality on the ground that a single life is not adequate for the realisation of all the virtues. Not for Tagore this mathematical calculus of sufficient time.

Personal immortality is not immortality of the small Ego. "The individual soul", as *D. G. Ritchie* says, "is not immortal as a necessarily existing atom. The life of the individual is only in the universal soul." What we have to accept is "not an individual immortality irrespective of the will of God, but individual will dependent on His will."[148] This is the same as Rabindranath's attitude, especially as expressed in the poems of "Naibedya", assuming of course that "God's will" is not an arbitrary caprice, but realisation of the Good.

The idea of immortality, on this view, is only the deepest expression of the Infinite in man. It is something we "immediately realise and feel" 'just as we feel the presence of God within us. "Men are the children of light. Whenever they fully realise themselves they feel their immortality. And as they feel it, they extend their realm of the immortal into every region of human life."[149] As the Upanisad says attainment of immortality is the same as realisation of the Absolute.[150] Man is co-eternal with God. "Thou hast made me endless, such is thy pleasure".[151]

How can this faith in Immortality be reconciled with the obvious fact of death and destruction all around us? Rabindranath meets this objection not by ignoring the fact of death or calling it an 'illusion', but by boldly declaring that death itself is an aspect of life, a phase of the life-process. "The problem of death," says Royce, "arises because something with a meaning seems to come to an end before that meaning is worked out to its completion or expressed with its intended individual wholeness".[152] Rabindranath's answer to this is that 'coming to an end' in this sense is itself a step towards the working out of the meaning.

In the life of nature Rabindranath sees that death is a necessary harbinger of ever-new life. Explaining the real meaning of his play "Phalguni",Rabindranath wrote in the journal Sabuj-Patra: "This play is meant to show that there is eternal life in Nature, and that so-called death is but the prelude to new life."[153] Dr. Sachin Sen says, "From Nature, Rabindranath has learnt that Death is not the extinction of life but rather a preface to life. Just as darkness reveals light, and winter announces the advent of spring, even

so is death the messenger of life. There is no destruction, but only transformation."[154] In Rabindranath's own words: "Once we have to die completely; only then can we be reborn in God."[155]

THE ETHICS OF SELF-REALISATION

Faith in the immortality of the ethical self both presupposes and is reinforced by the ideal of the highest realisation of Self as the object of Morality. In "Sadhana", and "Personality", Rabindranath preaches the ethics of self-realisation. Many of his poems, particularly in "Nai bedya" and "Gitanjali" are devoted to the same idea, and the human Self also figures symbolically in some of the plays.[156] Above all, the entire ethical argument of the Hibbert Lectures is aimed at developing a theory of self-realisation.

Self is the central truth of man. It is the subject with reference to which alone objects and actions have significance. As in the region of knowledge, so in that of moral consciousness man must clearly realise some central truth giving him an outlook over the widest possible field. That is why Upanisads say: "Know thy own self" — Realise the one great principle of unity that there is in every man".[157] And further—'Nothing is dear for itself. Everything is dear for the sake of the self'.

Rabindranath is here thinking not of the "*transcendental synthetic* unity of apperception" which is presupposed by knowledge, but of that active entity which directs human action, and is capable of distinguishing between good and evil. The 'realisation' of Self means the maximum growth of this 'capacity for good-evil distinction,'

opening out the possibilities of a harmonious life. "For a man who has realised his Self there is a determinable centre of the universe around which all else can find its proper place, and from thence alone can he draw and enjoy the blessedness of a harmonious existence."[158]

This Self has to be clearly distinguished from the Ego, which is really what corresponds to the lower self of man. "All our egoistic impulses, our selfish desires, obscure our free vision of the soul; for they only indicate our narrow self. When we are conscious of our Soul, we perceive the inner being that transcends our ego and has its deeper affinity with the All."[159] The first requisite of self-realisation is the conscious distinction between Self and Ego, "Wherever I go, I find that this lower self follows me like a black shadow. I wish to trample it underfoot. I can realise the Infinite only when I have got rid of the lower self."[160] When we confuse between Self and Ego we begin to fear that self-realisation would only be a disguise for selfishness. Marteneau says, "In asserting that our estimates originate in self-reflection, I do not mean that a solitary human being can have them; or that there are two appreciable stages of our actual experiences —— first of self-judgment and then, after an interval, of judgments directed upon others."[161] Unless the self is regarded as the highest human reality, self-realisation would indeed sink into selfishness. But Rabindranath says " I refuse to call realisation of self,—self-sufficiency".[162]

There is thus no conflict between self-realisation and self-transcendence. It is, as Rabindranath says, the transcendence of the little self, and the realisation of the big self. In moral life the best way to find oneself is to lose oneself.

All social life, all progress would come to an end unless self-transcendence were included in self-realisation. Creation, itself possible "only through the continual self-surrender of the unit to the universe". "The spiritual universe of man also claims renunciation from the individual units"[163] Just as the true purpose of oil is realised only when it feeds the flame, similarly the Self can fulfil itself only by yielding itself. "Our Self has no means of holding us, for its nature is to pass on; and by clinging to this thread of Self, which is passing through the loom of life, we cannot make it serve the purpose of cloth into which it is being woven."[146]

It may be asked whether Rabindranath, in restricting the Self to "the highest part of man", identifies it with what the Intuitionists call "conscience". Does Self-realisation, in the Ethics of Rabindranath, mean absolute obedience to Conscience? Undoubtedly, there are some poems and passages in which Rabindranath seems to speak of the Conscience in this manner.But we cannot attribute to Rabindranath any systematic "theory of conscience". If by Conscience is meant "the whole true Self claiming to legislate for its parts" (Muirhead) [165], then alone is Rabindranath an Intuitionist. But he does not look at Conscience as a moral 'faculty', and does not advocate the "moral sense theory of Ethics". The conscience cannot be accepted simply as one function among others of the ethical man. It is not, in the words of T. H. Green, "a mysterious entity, apart from all particular thoughts, desires, and feelings. If these latter are abstractions apart from the Self, so is the Self apart from them."[166] Rabindranath does not narrow down the Self to the Conscience; he does not empty the Self of its concrete content,. Hastings Rashdall, condemning Newman's belief about

"the self-sufficiency of conscience", says, "The very idea of conscience or of the morality which conscience proclaims, is unintelligible in isolation from other elements of our knowledge, both of ourselves and of the world."[167] Rabindranath too does not believe in the supremacy of any abstract, contentless principle, whether it is termed Self, Conscience, or Soul.

The word "self" does not signify the 'empirical ego', or the 'moral faculty'. It really indicates what is more suggestively called 'personality'. Rabindranath's theistic inclinations inevitably lead him to an emphasis on the value of finite, human personality. And what he calls Self may be looked upon as the ethical counterpart of the wider term personality. "Moral judgment is not properly passed upon a thing done, but upon a person doing". Rabindranath's ethics, like the ethics of Christianity, is based upon recognition of the boundless worth of the human individual. And the highest moral progress of mankind is only the fullest development of each human personality. As Dr. S. N. Dass Gupta puts it, "The universe, in Rabindranath's view, reflects the development of all human selves, as a lotus the blooming of a hundred different petals, each one being important for the beauty of the flower."[168] The problem of personality has been dealt with in our times more from the psychological than from the ethical standpoint. Writers like R. H. Gordon have tried to analyse threadbare the constituents of human personality, and have frankly related them to the nervous system. [169] Rabindranath, however, looks at personality not from the psychological or the 'medical', but from the ethical point of view. For him, as for Royce, "personality is an essentially ethical category. A person

is a conscious being whose life, temporally viewed, seeks its completion through deeds."[170]

MORAL PROGRESS

It is in the light of these ideas about self-realisation that we have to consider Rabindranath's view of Moral Progress. Man's moral history, he says, "is the history of his journey to the unknown in quest of the realisation of his immortal Self-his Soul....Man is marching from epoch to epoch towards the fullest realisation of his Self, the Self that is greater than the things he accumulates, the deeds he accomplishes, the theories he builds....the Soul whose onward course is never checked by death of dissolution."[171]

This 'onward course of the Soul' is beset with difficulties. Self-realisation is no easy ritual to be performed, no mechanical formula to be obeyed. It demands supreme and sustained effort. The Upanisad tells us that 'the Self is not to be gained by the weak' ('Nayamatma balahinena labhyah'), and further that 'the path of Self-realisation is as difficult as the sharp edge of a razor'. In the history of humanity, therefore, there are inevitable periods of moral stagnation. But these are always followed by periods of great moral effort, because stagnation itself impresses the human Self with the necessity of rousing its dormant powers. "When the imperfect marches on towards the perfect, there is not weariness but joy in the journey".[172]

Rabindranath also stresses the 'wholeness' of the moral ideal. If personality means the 'whole Self' and if the moral ideal is personal, it follows that progress cannot mean the development of only one side of our nature. "Man must realise the wholeness of his existence....He must know

that hard as he may strive, he can never create his honey within the cells of a single hive, for the perennial supply is outside".[173] The emphasis on 'wholeness' indicates Rabindranath's loyalty to the traditions of Indian philosophy. W. S. Urquhart says: "Tagore carries with him into his teaching the ancient Indian philosophy of 'one-pointedness'; but his stress is on the positive rather than the negative aspects of the doctrine of unity".[174] Rabindranath was fond of saying that the Asrama-ideal of ancient India did not imply one-sided development, as is sometimes wrongly imagined. On the other hand, the moral life of the forest-civilization aimed at "bridging the chasm between man and nature," and helping us to obtain a more balanced view of life. The moral force is a unifying, balancing force—it is "a force that harmonises all our warring elements", so that "all our isolated impressions reduce themselves to wisdom, and all our momentary impulses of heart find their completion".[175]

Moral development must not, therefore, exclude intellectual development. "Moral life", as the Bhagavata says, "must combine knowledge, wisdom and renunciation"[176] True spirituality lies in the correlation of the within and the without. In 'Religion of Man', Rabindranath further elaborates this ideal of 'wholeness', and emphatically protests against the craze for specialisation "which is a mutilation of the complete ideal".[177] Good life must be the complete life. Bradley says: "The Good is not the whole, and the whole as such is not good".[178] Rabindranath would never accept such a view. For him the good is not good at all unless it is also the whole. Fortunately, in modern philosophy we see an increasing tendency to accept this principle. The

German philosopher *Dilthey*, for instance, speaks of the 'immediately apprehended coherence of life' as the criterion of morality.

Thus, accepting self-realisation as the ideal, and wholeness as the criterion of morality, Rabindranath has a profound and unshakable faith in the moral progress of the human race. There are sceptics in Ethics who would deny the very notion of progress. Mr. C. E. M. Joad is one of them. "All that can be said of moral values and moral criteria", Mr. Joad maintains, "is that they change. It cannot be said that they progress".[179] As against this sceptical attitude, Rabindranath has a "conviction, which no individual instances to the contrary can shake, that the progress and direction of humanity is from evil to good.....Good is the positive element in man's nature, and in every age and every clime what man values most is his ideal of goodness",[180]

REFERENCES

TO

CHAPTER VIII AND IX

1. *Sadhana*, p. 56.
2. Samuel Alexander: *Moral Order and Progress*, p. 50.
3. See Gitanjali, poem No. 61.
4. Vaihinger: *The Philosophy of As If.*
5. From a letter to C. F. Andrews: See 'Golden Book of Tagore' p. 4.
6. *Creative Unity*, p. 106.
7. Ibid., p. 107.
8. *Personality*, p. 80.
9. Ibid., p. 81.
10. Rashdall: *Theory of Good and Evil*, Vol. II, p. 291.
11. From *Amar Dharma.*
12. See 'Sabuj Patra,' 1324.
13. L. T. Hobhouse: *Morals in Evolutions*, p. 497.
14. Religion of Man Ch. VI.
15. *Sadhana*, p. 57.
16. *Creative Unity*, p. 100.
17. Bosanquet: *Some Suggestions in Ethics*, p. 24.
18. Leslie Stephen: *The Science of Ethics*, p. 219.
19. Tagore often expressed his surprise at the popularity of Nietzsche among the youth.
20. Nietzsche: *The Genealogy of Morals*—Preface.
21. *Sadhana*, p. 29.
22. See 'Gitanjali' poem No. 89.
23. Nietzsche: *The Antichrist*—XVII.
24. Cf. the poem 'Shantimantra' from *Chaitali.*
25. *Sadhana*, p. 55.
26. Ibid., p. 19.
27. Ibid., p. 27.
28. *Gitali* poem No. 60.
29. *Sadhana*, p. 60.
30. *Santiniketan*—14th Series.
31. *Man*, p. 47.
32. Rogers: *Short History of Ethics*, p. 116.
33. *Creative Unity*, p. 39.
34. Ibid. p. 46.
35. D. G. Ritchie: *Philosophical Studies*, p. 239.
36. *Personality*, p. 42.

37. *Alochana.*
38. *Sadhana*, p. 56.
39. *Alochana.*
40. *Dharma*, p. 12.
41. From *Prabhat Sangit.*
42. 'Mangal Geet' from *Kari o Komal*:
Jatra kari manaver hridayer majhe
Prane la'ye premer alok;
Ay go jatra kari jagater kaje
Tuchchha kari nija dukha-shok.
43. *Personality*, p. 47.
44. *Sadhana*, p. 39.
45. Ibid., p. 57.
46. *Man*, p. 41.
47. *Creative Unity*, p. 8.
48. *Personality*, p. 48.
49. *Creative Unity*, p. 107.
50. *Personality*, p. 4.
51. *Sadhana*, p. 12.
52. *Creative Unity*, p. 4.
53. *Sadhana*, p. 100.
54. *Man*, p. 6.
55. *Religion of Man*, p. 16.
56. *Creative Unity*, p. 117.
57. *Man*, p. 30.
58. *Personality*, p 82.
59. John Dewey: *Psychology*, p. 299.
60. *Man*, p. 11.
61. Ibid., p. 12.
62. *Dharma*, p. 23.
63. *Religion of Man*, p. 44.
64. *Personality*, p. 10.
65. Ibid., p. 11.
66. Muirhead "*Elements of Ethics*, p. 103.
67. *Sadhana*, p. 109.
68 *Creative Unity*, p. 3.
69. Ibid., p. 24.
70. Ibid., p. 23.
71. Benedetto Croce: *Aesthetic*, p. 89.
72. *Creative Unity*, p. 16.
73. Ibid., p. 98.
74. Ibid., p. 86.
75 *Asunite punarasmasu caksuh*
Punah pranamiha no dehi bhogam
Jyok pasyema suryamuccarantam
Anumate mrdyanah swastih.

76. Ritschl: *The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation*, p. 612.
77. The same idea runs through poems like 'Paraspathar,' 'Akasher Chand' etc.
78. Gough: *Philosophy of the Upanisads*, p. 266.
79. Cf., for instance, 'Taittirya Upanisad' I, I5.
80. Das Gupta: *History of India Philosophy*, Vol. I, p. 490.
81. *Santiniketan*, 14th Series.
82. *Balaka* poem No. 24.
83. Ramananda Chatterji in the *Golden Book of Tagore.*
84. *Grahan evam varjaner bhitar diya-i amader praner kriya chalite thake. Kendranuga evem kendratiga, ei duto shaykti-i amader pakshe saman gouraver* (*Santiniketan*, First Series.)
85. H. Rashdall: *Theory of Good and Evil* Vol. II, p. 71.
86. *Dhanya ami heritechhi swaryer alo,*
Dhanya ami jagatere basiyachhi bhalo
(The poem 'Prabhat' in *Chaitali*)
87. Dr. Sachin Sen: *Rabindra Sahityer Parichaya*, p. 55.
88. *Reminiscences*, p. 238.
89. *Naibedya*, No. 30.
90. 'Ebar phirao more' in *Chitra.*
91. *Sadhana*, p. 129.
92. *Amar Dharma.*
93. From *Chaitali.*
94. From *Kari o Komal.*
95. *Sadhana*, p. 123.
96. Ibid. p. 132.
97. Ibid. p. 134.
98. *Gitanjali*, No. 26.
99. *Kurvanneveha karmani jijivisechtam sama.*
100. *Sadhana*, p. 122
101. R. B Perry: *Philosophy of the Recent Past*, p. 160.
102. *Sadhana*, p. 131.
103. *Gita*, III, 25-26.
104. *Naivedya*, No. ?.
105. Rudolph Eucken: *The Problem of Human Life.*
106. *Santiniketan* Fourteenth Series.
107. *Gitali*, No. 22.
108. Cf. William James: 'Is Life Worth Living?' from *The Will to Believe.*
109. *Amader swabhave bhava-vachya o karma-vachya dui vachya achhe* (*Santiniketan*-Fourth Series).
110. *Sadhana*, p. 120.

111. *Hater ma jhe sabar sathe milan ha'be* (*Gitanjali*).
112. However, too much stress on action is also condemned: *Karma jakhan debata ha'ye jure base pujar bedi Mandire tar pashan prachir abhrabhedi Tari madhye jiban jakhan shukiye ase dhire dhire....*
113. Bradley: *Appearance and Reality*, p. 262.
114. Ibid., p. 256.
115. *Sadhana*, p. 57.
116. Bradley: *Appearance and Reality*, p. 365.
117. *Sadhana*, p. 11.
118. Lotze: *Microcosmus*, Vol II, p. 672.
119. *Gitali*, No. 24
120. *Sadhana*, p. 42.
121. T. H. Green: *Prolegomena to Ethics*, p. 85.
122. *Sadhana*, p. 41.
123. Martineau: *Types of Ethical Theory*.
124. *Reminiscences*, p. 201.
125. *Man*, p. 60.
126. *Religion of Man*, p. 14.
127. *Muirhead: Elements of Ethics*, p. 38.
128. *Towards the Future* in *Modern Review*, June 1920.
129. Green: *Prolegomena to Ethics*, p. 121.
130. Ibid., p. 124.
131. *Man*, p, 61.
132. *Personality*, p. 82.
133. Cf. *Gitanjali*, No. 144.
134. E. Caird: *Critical Philosophy of Kant*, Vol II, p. 242.
135. *Creative Unity*, p. 32.
136. *Santiniketan*, Fourteenth Series.
137. *Naibedya*, No. 55.
138. *Santiniketan*, Fourteenth Series.
139. Ibid.
140. Ibid.
141. *Apani prabhu srishti-bandhan pare*
Bandha sabar kachhe
(*Gitanjali*, No. 119).
142. *Sadhana*, p. 41.
143. *Creative Unity*, p. 137.
144. Ibid., p. 139.
145. Letter to Dr. Amiya Chakravarty. Published in *Vaisakhi* (1351)
146. *Religion of Man*, p. 15
147. *Man*, p. 9
148. D. G. Ritchie: *Philosophical Studies*, p. 23

149. *Personality*, p. 31
150. Cf. *Hrda manisa manasabhiklpto yaetatviduramr-taste bhavanti*
151. *Gitanjali*—This is the well-known first line of the English edition.
152. Royce: *World and the Individual*, Vol. II, p. 439
153. *Sabuj-Patra* (Aswin-Kartik, 1324)
154. Sachin Sen: *Rabindra Sahitya Parichaya*, p. 99
155. *Santiniketan* —Sixth Series
156. *Raja*, for instance.
157. Quoted in "Creative Unity", *Dharma etc.*
158. *Sadhana*, p. 34
159. Ibid., p. 27
160. *Gitanjali*, No. 141
161. Martineau: *Types of Ethical Theory*, Vol II, p. 31
162. *Reminiscences*. p. 201
163. *Religion of Man*, p. 23
164. Ibid.
165. Muirhead: *Elements of Ethics*, p. 78
166. T. H. Green: *Prolegomena to Eth cs*, Sec. 111
167. Rashdall: *Theory of Good and Evil*, Vol II, p. 221
168. Dr. S. N. Das Gupta: *Rabi Dipita*, p. 24
169. R. H. Gordon: *Personality* (Hutchinson)
170. Royce: *World and the Individual* Vol. II, p. 418
171. *Sadhana*, p. 33
172. From: *Punascha*
173. *Sadhana*, p. 10
174. *Golden book of Tagore*, p. 259
175. *Sadhana*, p. 35
176. *Bhagavata* I, ii, 12
177. *Religion of Man*, p. 33
178. Bradley: *Appearance and Reality*, p. 363
179. C. E. M. Joad: *Commonsense Ethics*, p. 88
180. *Sadhana*, p. 53