



Humanism With Reference to Rabindranath Tagore

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Abstract:

This paper is trying to discuss about the humanistic attitude of Rabindranath Tagore. Humanism means respect for the dignity of man, concern for his welfare and the all round development of mankind. Though Tagore was not a systematic philosopher in the sense of the term; yet he was regarded as a great humanistic philosopher as his poems reflect his philosophy of humanism by pointing out the Divinity in Man. In his philosophy man has been given a very key status. He conceives man in such a manner that without affecting the Godness of God, he gives to man also a special dignity and uniqueness. His humanism is considered as spiritual and universal; because he believed that man is an embodiment of body, mind and soul and his philosophy primarily deals with the analysis of the universal nature and creative existence of man.

Keywords: *Humanism, Surplus in Man, Nature, Freedom, God, Universal etc.*

1.1 Introduction:

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) was one of the best known international figures of the intellectual world in the first decade of the 20th century. He became the first ever Asian writer to be awarded a Noble Prize for literature in 1913. He was mainly a poet, writer, educationist, social reformer; but not a systematic philosopher. He has always considered himself to be a poet and neither a scholar nor a philosopher. He acknowledges that his religion is essentially a poet's religion. Though he did not write a systematic philosophical treatise but his life itself was a philosophy and authored many essays and lectures in which he depicts his worldview in a poetic way and from this we can derive his philosophical views. He has a vision of the world including with the mysteries of man and of nature. Therefore, we can call Tagore a philosopher. His philosophy revolved round mankind, which is known as 'Humanism.' He is a firm believer in the evolution of man to a higher destiny. According to him, man has an inner power within him which enables him to realise his unity with the whole of the Mankind, with Nature and also with God.

1.2 Objectives: The main objectives of this study are —

- To discuss about general meaning of Humanism.
- To discuss about the humanistic view of Rabindranath Tagore.
- To discuss about the concept of Man.
- To discuss about the relationship of Man and Nature.
- To discuss about the importance of Humanism.

1.3 Methodology:

The proposed study is based on secondary sources. The secondary data are collected from the different sources, viz. books, articles, internet, library etc. To sort out the data we have gone through descriptive method.

1.4 Humanism:

The word 'Humanism' derives from the Latin word 'Humanitus'; which means a search for perfection of the human soul and the development of the full potential of man. Therefore, humanism states that in each human soul there is a great power, which can be awakened and inspired to reach the ideal of perfection. Generally, it refers to a focus on human well-being and advocates for human freedom, autonomy and progress. It is a rationalist outlook or system of thought attaching prime importance to human rather than divine or supernatural matters. According to humanist, human beings have the right and responsibility to give meaning and shape to their own values and lives.

The humanism that we have seen in thoughts of Contemporary Indian Philosophers is different from the Western humanism. Western Humanism though do not reject the importance of ethics for human beings, give more importance to material nature of man than to spiritual. But the Indian humanism is primarily spiritual. Indian humanist does not take man to be material being but as one with spirit, mind, life and body. It aims at the fulfilment of the aspirations which are physical, vital, mental and spiritual in nature. In Contemporary Indian Philosophy we have seen Gandhi speaks of the upliftment of every individual in all spheres of life including social, political, economic, moral and spiritual. Again Swami Vivekananda is also a great humanist philosopher. He considers Man as the Son of Immortality. For him, man is the manifestation of the Supreme Spirit, pure Consciousness. He strongly criticizes the evil practice of untouchability, caste discrimination, religious tyranny etc. Radhakrishnan also believes that we live at the dawn of new era of universal humanity. Man exists for a higher cause than merely growing up, mating, producing and passing out. This is an aspiration to grow better, to become better humans. He regards man as essentially spiritual. Here, I have discussing about the concept of Humanism with reference to Rabindranath Tagore.

1.5 Tagore's Concept of Man:

Rabindranath Tagore was a humanist, a prophet of love, sympathy and cooperation. He is often described as primarily a philosopher of humanity, because in his philosophy man has been given a very key status and his poems reflect his philosophy of Humanism by pointing out the Divinity in Man. He conceives man in such a manner that without affecting the Godness of God, he gives to man also a special dignity and uniqueness.

Tagore's humanism was based on spiritual foundations. According to him, man has a bipolar existence. He believed that Man is an embodiment of body, mind and soul. Man combines in himself the physical nature with the spiritual nature. According to Tagore, "Man is earth's child but heaven's heir." Therefore, man is both *Finite* and *Infinite*. These are the two essential aspects of man's nature; which is also called the lower or the physical aspect and the higher or the spiritual aspect of man. Finite aspect of man's nature can be explained in terms of natural and environmental factors, i.e. biological, physiological and psychological factors. Though some thinkers deny the reality of the finite self; Tagore says that a rejection of the finite self will naturally mean a rejection of the infinite self also. Because, it is in and through the finite; infinite can be realised. The infinite aspect is expressed in longings and aspirations of a higher kind. This aspect is also called by Tagore, the '*Universal*' in man, the '*Surplus*' in man, the element of '*Divinity*' present in man etc. This aspect is constantly impels the individual to go beyond. For this aspect man has a yearning for *Mukti* or immortality. This aspect is basically creative and for that man's personality is dynamic and ever-growing. Man's natural urge for realising the Truth, Good and Beautiful is an expression of Joy. Joy makes man realise his affinity with Nature, and it also makes him moral or religious or noble. Joy constitutes the higher, the spiritual aspect of man's nature.

Tagore's humanism is universal as it deals with the analysis of universal nature and creative existence of man. For him, the finite-infinite man is the individual-universal man. Every individual is different from each other due to their own individual peculiarities. Again, man has an inner power within him which enables him to realise his unity with the whole of Mankind, with Nature and also with God. He conceives this inner power as the divinity latent in man which is characterised by him as the Universal Man.

1.6 Relationship of Man and Nature:

According to Tagore, nature is the best teacher to man. There is a strong relationship between man and nature. Tagore believes in kinship between man and nature. Even he humanises nature or the world. According to him, nature apart from man's appreciation and understanding is only dumb mass having no significance at all. He thinks that human mind reveals the meaning and significance of things. Both nature and man are created by Supreme Power. Tagore believes that moral and spiritual education is more important than only bookish knowledge for an integral development of human personality and it is possible through natural circumstances. Nature helps man to develop his personality and man also helps nature to reveal its beauty. With the help of nature man can create his own nature, beauty and art and become an architect of his own destiny. Therefore both man and nature have equal importance for Tagore. Nature always helps man to realise his goal. According to Tagore, nature is manuscript of God. It will provide spontaneous development and natural growth of children.

1.7 Freedom of Man:

Tagore's idea of human freedom is an important characteristic of Infinite aspect of man's nature. It is the integral part of human development. Even physically man enjoys some amount of freedom than other living creatures, but that, according to Tagore, is like the freedom inside a cage. The physical man is basically limited by the limitations of the physical body. Therefore, Tagore emphasises on the spiritual freedom of man; which can break the shackles of the finite body and to aspire for the realisation of oneness or unity. According to Tagore, perfect freedom is possible only through the perfect harmony of relationship; i.e. the realisation of the Universal within the individual.

1.8 Humanism of Tagore:

Tagore was considered as a great humanist as he gives importance on all round development of human being. Without harming the humanity of man Tagore has given it a divine status and without harming the divinity of God he has given it a human touch. Tagore humanises not only nature and objects, but also God. Therefore, in his book '*Religion of Man*', while describing the purpose of the book he says, "The idea of the humanity of our God, or the divinity of man, the Eternal, is the main subject of this book." Tagore said, at times, man is raised higher to the status of God, at other time, God is brought down to man in so far as divinity is said to be discernible in the heart of man. Tagore's God is somehow God and man at the same time. He humanizes God to make possible the divinity of man in the world. Therefore, instead of worshipping a transcendent God he has turned to man, whom he has called *Manab-Brahma*, where a man through the realization of a universal consciousness or infiniteness, becomes '*Divine*' and God as infinite potentiality also becomes human through his perfect manifestation and realisation in human life. According to Tagore, man apart from God is empty and God apart from man is abstraction. For him, reality is human reality and truth is human truth. God depends on human beings for realizing the fullness of his creation.

Tagore's humanism is just the application of the belief that feeling anything as human—in the human way is a source of joy. Only human mind can reveal the meaning and significance of things. Therefore, Tagore's 'Idealism' is humanistic. He says, "It is almost a truism to say that the world is what we perceive it to be. We

imagine that our mind is a mirror, that it is, more or less, accurately reflecting what is happening outside us.” According to him, truth and beauty are also dependent upon man.

According to Tagore, God is also a personal being like man. The conception of the divinity in man or “*Nara-Narayana*” is developed in his philosophy of the Religion of Man. He avoids the formal religions with their rituals, superstitions and mythologies. For him, God is there in every life; which is called by him as *Jivan Devata*. It means God in man, the element of divinity present in man, and as such, it is this element that makes man God-like. He believes that God is to be found not in temples or mosques but in humanity itself. Therefore, he emphasises basically on the service and love towards mankind. According to him, the state of realising our relationship with all through the union with the divine is the ultimate end and fulfilment of humanity.

Tagore says, the outer world is nothing but ‘a cradle for the human spirit.’ So, in his thought the notion of life, rhythm, beauty, harmony, love, music etc have become important. All these are human concepts and they become meaningful when they are related to human values. Tagore says, there is an intimate relation between God and self. He believes that it is only through the finite we can realise infinite.

Tagore glorifies man throughout his philosophy of humanism. In his philosophy man has been given a key status. By giving emphasizes on the divinity in man and humanity in God he gives the theory of spiritual humanism. He is a prophet of harmony and fellowship. By raising man to the status of God he feels the presence of love, harmony and fellowship in the human world. Again, by bringing down God to man and considering God as the discernible entity of human heart he gives more prominence to humanity and its service. He considers man as the only unique model of God. So, in this world only human beings deserves love, affection and service. Tagore believes that by loving and serving humanity one can show his love and service to God. For him, true religion means the service of humanity; sympathy and affection for the helpless people.

1.9 Importance of Humanism:

We can see the importance of Humanism even from its meaning. Humanism gives more emphasis on man, human unity and the development of full potential of man. In our society we can see various problems and discriminations such as; caste discrimination, religious discrimination, gender biasness etc. which can only be removed by the spiritual development of human being. We should realise our oneness with every other things; the Nature, the God also our fellow-beings. We should realise that all of us are created by one Supreme Reality; therefore ultimately one. Once one can realise this truth then all the evil thoughts and works that prevail in day-today society can be removed. According to Tagore, “In today’s eternity none of us are different from another but rather we should have feelings that every human being is identical between each other. We should not possess any vicious feelings about others.” Tagore emphasises on the service and love for mankind; which can develop the feelings of some noble qualities; i.e. co-operation, sympathy, benevolence, brotherhood etc. and then only it is possible for us to live in a harmonious society. We have faces many problems today due to the lack of spirituality and morality in our mind, even we cannot deny the destructive consequences of some of our works and conflicts. Therefore, through the notion of Humanism we can overcome these problems and can develop and realise spiritual and moral aspect of life that makes possible all round development and progress of human beings.

Conclusion:

From the above discussion we can find that the great humanist Rabindranath Tagore gives more emphasis on human being. He conceives man in such a manner that without affecting the Godness of God, he gives to man also a special dignity and uniqueness. According to him, man is both finite and infinite; but he places more emphasis on the spiritual and moral aspect of human being. Therefore, his humanism is called spiritual. His humanism is also called universal as he deals with the analysis of the universal nature and creative existence of

man. In his humanism he humanises Nature as well as God. He perceives God in every human being. For him, God and Man go together. He raises man to the status of God and man also brings God to man. Therefore, he believes that service and love for mankind is the service and love for God.

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