

**REFORMATION OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY AFTER FOLLOWING  
DWIJENDRANATH TAGORE**

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**Abstract:**

Dwijendranath Tagore, the eldest son of Maharṣi Debendranath Tagore, has played a vital role in reforming the Indian philosophy, culture, religion, literature and art. Though he had deep respect for the Indian scriptures but he failed to believe the scriptures as they are stated. He has given the highest importance to reason. According to him, it is important to judge the scriptures on the basis of reasons.

At the ancient period, the ancient philosophers used to show respect towards the scriptures by believing blindly and following the scriptures as they are stated. They were very much rigid about the scriptures and also their philosophical stand. For an example, Bhāsarvajña was a prācīna Naiyāyika but he has explained Nyāya Sutra in his own way with sufficient reasons. His explanation was very much related to our everyday life but completely different from the conventional Nyāya theory. That does not mean, he has shown disrespect towards the system. But for that reason, some people called him ekadeśa (partly) Naiyāyika and some other did not accept him as a Naiyāyika.

On the other side, Dwijendranath Tagore never believed that whatever comes from the West is to be renounced. He avoided two extreme positions- 1. Whatever has been stated in the scriptures are to be admitted unquestionably.

2. Whatever have been incorporated in the scriptures are to be thrown away.

According to me, whatever you are going to believe, that must be judged on the basis of reasons. This is an attempt to reform and restore our philosophy, culture, art and all. Rigidity is not a way of showing the respect towards the scriptures or their philosophical stand.

**Keywords:** Rigidity, Upaniṣada, Justification, Reason, Spiritual freedom.

Dwijendranath Tagore, the eldest son of Maharṣi Debendranath Tagore, was born at Jorasanko in 1840. He has played a vital role in reforming the Indian culture, philosophy, religion, literature, art and all. Though he was very much influenced by the progressive philosophical and social thought of the West, still he had deep respect for the Indian scriptures, but failed to believe the scriptures as they are stated. Actually, he has given the highest importance to reason. According to him, it is very much important to judge the scriptures on the basis of reason. He believed that it is not necessary that the scriptures always state the truth, it may contain falsehood also.

Now I'll discuss about the ancient philosophers and the importance of the scriptures in their lives as well as in their philosophy also. They used to show respect towards the scriptures by believing and also following the scriptures as they are stated. They were very much rigid about the scriptures and also about their philosophical stand. For an example, Bhāsarvajña was a *prāchīn* Naiyāyika but he has explained *Nyāya Sūtra* in his own way. He has also provided sufficient logic or reason behind his explanation. If we do study on him rather his writing, we will find that his explanation was very much related to our everyday life and updated with the time but it was different from the conventional theory of Nyāya philosophy. The traditional ancient Nyāya philosophy was very much text based or theoretical. Bhāsarvajña has tried to apply that theory in practical life in his own way or he has found some practical values of that theory provided by other ancient Nyāya

philosophers. He has put his energy, knowledge and everything to make the *sūtras* easier. So that the ordinary people can relate themselves with the scriptures and apply them in their regular life. Whatever he has done that does not mean that he has disrespected the scriptures and the school of philosophy rather he has tried to maintain the glory of that school with the change of era. He had deep respect for the scriptures and also for the propounder of Nyāya philosophy, which I have come to know from his writing. Still some people did not accept him as Naiyāyika and some people called him *ekadeśa* (partly) Naiyāyika. This is just an example of the rigidity of the ancient philosophers.

On the other side, Dwijendranath Tagore avoided two extreme positions-<sup>1</sup>

1. Whatever has been stated in the scriptures are to be admitted unquestionably.
2. Whatever have been incorporated in the scriptures are to be thrown away.

The young educated people of Bengal developed an attitude of disrespect and distrust for their own culture and society. They were against of all the rituals and everything. That time Maharṣi Debendranath Tagore realized the spiritual purity of India because mainly he was a follower of Raja Rammohan Roy. He realized that the treasure is hidden in the teaching of Veda as well as the Upaniṣadas. He felt that there is a need of reconstructing the Indian scriptures in the light of the Western science and knowledge. Though he has admired his mother tongue and worked for its

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<sup>1</sup> Dutta Sharma, Ratna, 2020, “Dwijendranath methods for Ascertaining Values”, pg-77

development but he found that it's important to learn English. He has opposed the total admission of the scriptures without any question. Asking question is not a challenge but to put some relevant question on some certain point, this is the proper way to enquire. Without doing enquiry, we cannot be intelligent and also cannot make any progress. Therefore, he was not ready to admit whatever have been said in the scripture. He has tried to translate the Upaniṣada and different textbooks in Bengali so that the ordinary people and also young English educated people can understand those scriptures easily. Dwijendranath Tagore followed his father in this context. He also never believed that whatever comes from the West is to be renounced. He made a distinction between the imitation of the outward behaviour and the adoption of English education for the sake of gaining knowledge. The imitation of the external behaviour only makes a man imitative or fake. Those who followed blindly and adopted others culture, they cannot justify their position. He admits that each and every human being is equal, but everyone is different from each other in nature. If we can educate ourselves in our mother tongue then we may establish the foundation of freedom. He also said that it is absolutely not possible to improve any foreign language without knowing one's own language properly. In this way, he has shown the necessity of learning English, but he has emphasized on learning one's own language first.

Dwijendranath Tagore believed in the sole reality of Brahman. So, we can easily say that he believed in the philosophical stand of Advaitins. But he did not

follow their philosophy blindly. According to him, we cannot deny the world and the reality of the finite beings. He found that the material things are very much essential for our everyday life. Besides that, man has a spiritual need also. So, no one can neglect both of these two needs. He believed that the enjoyment of material object is transitory. The ultimate end of life is to attain bliss through the realisation of the actual nature of the self. Not only that the view of Taittirīya Upaniṣada also reflects on his philosophy. According to him, *Prakṛti* independent of *Puruṣa* cannot be the cause of this world and *Puruṣa* independent of *Prakṛti* is also not the cause of this world. In this way he avoided these two extreme positions regarding the creation of this world. The cause of this world is *ānanda*, the combination of *Prakṛti* and *Puruṣa*.

We know that there are stated a lot of customs, rituals, etc in scriptures to follow in our everyday life. Dwijendranath Tagore believed some of those rituals, customs, believes and etc will be changed with the development of knowledge. He made a distinction between two different types of customs, rituals, etc. One is eternal and unchangeable, which does not depend on the time and the other one is non-eternal and changeable, which depends on the time. He has given a beautiful example in this context- “We have to wear woollen clothes during winter, not

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always. But that we should wear clothes favourable to our health is universal in nature, not being true of a definite space and time.”<sup>2</sup>

Here we need to remember one thing that we should accept all the rituals, customs and all on the basis of reason, not of antiquity. Because according to him, there are a lot of non-sense things passing through ages in the name of antiquity. After following him we can say that modernity does not mean the complete denial of the tradition. He believed that whenever the stagnant condition becomes intolerable the change automatically occurs. So, from this discussion he has opposed the uncritical admission and rejection both. He never admitted that everything in our country (philosophy, culture, religion, etc) was good and he also never admitted that everything in our country was bad. There were both good and bad things in our country. We have to judge them on the basis of reason then make our best effort to preserve the good and reject the bad things. He believed that the main teaching of all the religions is same. They may practise different religions but all of them are actually worshipping the same Divine power. So, there is no scope for rivalry. He also believed that there are a lot of superstitions among the people of this country. If they try to get rid of those superstitions then it'll definitely be a matter of hope.

According to Dwijendranath Tagore, spiritual freedom is the real freedom. He opposed the sense of freedom as it is ordinarily admitted. After following him we

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<sup>2</sup> Tagore, Dwijendranath, 1920, *Prabandhamālā*, pg-88

can say that it is necessary to know one's own nation before knowing any other nation. He has given the primary importance to one's own nation and the secondary importance to other nations. He believed that there are two factors- (i) mercy of God and (ii) self-power, on which the development of human being depends. Mercy of God is the primary factor and self-power is the secondary factor here. From this discussion we can easily say that Dwijendranath Tagore was an original thinker. His philosophical thought may help people to overcome the crisis they faced in every aspect of their life.

Now we may conclude the discussion in this way, whatever you are going to believe, that must be judged on the basis of reason. Blind following of others may increase the difficulty in every aspect. This is just an attempt to reform and restore our philosophy, culture, art and all. Dwijendranath Tagore has shown the way of making a progressive mind so that the people in the modern era become able to build a society on the basis of reason by maintaining the tradition of our country. Rigidity is not a way of showing respect towards the scriptures and also the philosophical stand one believed.

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