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TAGORE'S VIEW ON THE HUMAN NATURE OF GOING BEYOND

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Rabindranath Tagore is considered as a philosopher of humanity. He has depicted human beings in many respects God-like, though they are the creatures of this world. On the other hand, he has conceived God as a person. He must be the Supreme person for controlling and guiding the world. God has been made as the ideal of human aspiration, nearer to humans, the spiritual mirror to man's life. The relation between God and humans is of intense love, of feeling oneness, of an all-comprehensive. In traditional Indian Philosophy it is accepted that humans have two aspects and these are called 'body' and 'soul'. Though a man is the combination of these two aspects, namely body and soul, these are quite different from each other, these are poles apart. The characters that the soul represents are rigidly absent in body, and vice-versa. Rabindranath Tagore, one of reputed contemporary philosophers, holds different position from the traditional view, and he names these two aspects as the finite aspects and the infinite aspects of humans. The finite aspects are, more or less, akin to the bodily aspects, but include the spiritual tendency of transcending self-position which really belongs to the infinite aspects. Thus, the difference between the traditional view and Tagore's view about the human nature is that Tagore does not accept the water tight demarcation between the finite aspects and the infinite aspect, while in traditional philosophy the body and the soul remain antithetic to each other, one is accepted instead of rejecting others. Tagore takes the soul in wider sense, has included the infinite aspects in bodily aspects which is known as finite aspects. He shows the way for transcending finite aspects staying within the finite. Living within the finite in proper manner is the only way of achieving the infinite, as the infinite is not something rigidly different from the finite, rather the infinite is inherent in the finite. "The Infinite and the finite are one as song and singing are one."¹ If the finite would not be related to the infinite, the finite human beings will not be able to reach the infinite in any way.

Due to man's finite existence most of his actions and behaviours are performed in mechanical and instinctive way like other animals. In the process of evolution all other species except humans entirely give in to the mechanical and physical forces, they begin to struggle for fulfilling the demands of environment. The responses of other animals are determined by the environment. They have no capacity to guide their instinct, they response to the nature automatically. Only men have the power for changing their behaviours and their responses to the changed situation are not pre-determined,

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cannot be automatic. They can change themselves with their inner power. Only they have the capacity to control and reform the instincts within the realm of changed environment. Tagore finds out the journey of humans in the process of evolution from physical to inner power of humans for having freedom from animal mechanism. Though humans share some features and behaviours of animals, they have the capacity to train and to restrain their senses from undesirable sensations. Within the realm of finite aspect, they have the similarity with animals in some respects, but they can change their attitude and behaviour as they are bestowed with the possession of mind. In this respect their finite aspect is superior to that of animals. For this reason, they can tame other animals. The power of going beyond the mechanical level and getting into the inner freedom is the spiritual feature only humans can have. This spiritual nature merely belongs to man. So, it makes man unique. It is his infinite aspect. From the above discussion it is clear that the man has received the biological and the physical nature from evolution, these are the finite aspects of human nature. At the same time, he is bestowed with some inner power, with mental activity which is called spiritual nature, by which he acquires some amount of freedom, by which he is capable of going beyond himself. It is his infinite aspect. Tagore designates it as 'surplus' in man. "As an animal he is still dependent on nature, as a man he is a sovereign who builds his world and rules it"² Humans, of course, depend on nature, but they have the capacity to transcend themselves, have some amount of freedom to overcome their limitations, have the power to modify themselves for proper adjustment with the changed environment.

The finite aspect consists of physiological, biological and psychological elements, and science can only capture and explain this aspect with its empirical equipment. On the other hand, the spiritual aspect cannot be accessed by science because it is rooted in higher type of aspiration, where scientific experiments are unable to reach. For example, when a man's heart is filled with joy of creating a poem, enjoying a sweet music, this type of joy cannot be measured in any way by the scientific method or any usual way of explanation. Even no usual method of experiment can capture the reason of love and compassion. Thus, the existence of the infinite aspect in human nature can be denied in no way. But Tagore is not in favour of rejecting the importance of finite aspect entirely like that of the Traditional Philosophy. He thinks that the infinite is realized through the finite. If the finite aspect is rejected, no base will remain to prove the infinite aspect. Both the finite aspect and the infinite aspect are in human nature, both are equally important for proper development of man. The realization of the infinite is possible not through the rejection or annihilation of the finite aspect, but through the proper guidance and reformation of it.

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The finite aspect is the individuality and the infinite aspect is the universality of man. Both the individuality and the universality can explain a man completely. Individuality makes a man different from others, on the other hand universality helps a man to make kinship with others. Man is a social being and the society is his greater body, and he himself is the part of that body. Any part of our body may do its work independently, but should not be inconsistent with total mechanism of the body. Likewise, we, as the part of the society, must have our individual wishes, must hunker for individual gain and compete with others for this reason. But these individual desires should not be antithetical to social interest, social welfare. When our individual demands ignore the welfare of the society, we go to astray and are caught in the net of worldly sufferings. If our individual development does not go against the social development, it goes forward to transcend personal present barriers and meets the universal achievement which is the infinite side. The sense of separateness, which is the finite aspect of the self, fetters humans in own aggrandizement, but proper harmony with social welfare, the infinite aspect of the self, brings its perfection. True personality can be made with proper harmony between these two aspects. Man's personality is ever-forwarding. With the power of creativity, he is always creating and adding something new to his past. All the consequent stages are adding something afresh to the former stage. This type of growth proves that beyond the bodily growth, he has the power of creating something novel. This is the artistic side of man and in this respect all men are, more or less, artists. The artistic feature helps men to transcend the finite aspect, physical appetite, worldly desire and to reach the infinite aspect with their creative power.

The finite aspect renders the evidence of potential spirituality in humans. They are ego-centric, but they can guide their ego for social benefits, sometimes they are impelled for making a bond with others, creating a relationship with others. If the ego is properly directed, it goes forward to the universal from individual. Man, always remains busy in accumulating things he desires for, and his desires for possessions limit no bounds. Though his desire for possession is entirely physical, his journey for having more and more possessions makes himself more developed than before, undertakes pains and sufferings to have his desires fulfilled. Even within the periphery of the finite aspect, he is always trying to lag others behind in having more possessions than before. This power of defeating others, of transcending his own previous worldly position is the symbol of divinity working incessantly in his finite activities. Thus, the finite aspect proves human power to transcend, which is spirituality or divinity present in him.

Rabindranath Tagore calls the ego by different names- like self, individuality etc. He, unlike traditional Indian Philosophy, does not want the annihilation of ego, rather he wants to make humans

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free from the fetter of *avidyā* or ignorance which compels them to think that the self is real, an end in itself, and the ultimate destination of life. When they free themselves from *avidyā*, they come to attain the knowledge; they begin to realise their true nature inherent in them and try their best to fulfil innermost nature, which is called *dharma*. “The sankrit word *dharma* which is usually translated into English as religion has a deeper meaning in our language. *Dharma* is the innermost nature, the essence, the implicit truth, of all things. *Dharma* is the ultimate purpose that is working in our self. When any wrong is done we say that *dharma* is violated, meaning that the lie has been given to our true nature.”³ Thus the real meaning of the ego can be had through the attainment of *dharma*. It is, like the vessel, used to carry *dharma* to the ultimate goal in right way. Due to *avidyā* when ego displays itself, its apparent nature; it gives importance only on huge accumulation of possessions and remains blind to its true nature. But, if *avidyā* is removed by true knowledge, it is able to transcend itself and reveal its *dharma*, its true nature, it begins to express itself through the sacrifice of everything to all. “Such a lamp is our self. So long as it hoards its possessions it keeps itself dark, its conduct contradicts its true purpose. When it finds illumination, it forgets itself in a moment, holds the light high, and serves it with everything it has; for therein is its revelation.”⁴ With selfish desire, compulsion when one does its work, accumulates possessions, he has stayed in his limitations, but revelation of *dharma* with love helps to give away. The desire impels one to dive into bondage, but love works without any compulsion and brings freedom. The love motivates ego to give away freely. Thus, only pure love can impel ego for going from the individuality to the universality, from the finite to the infinite. Ego is the base for having spirituality. “In its finite aspect the self is conscious of its separateness, and there it is ruthless in its attempts to have more distinction than all others. But in its infinite aspect its wish is to gain that harmony which leads to its perfection and not its mere aggrandisement.”⁵

Man’s individuality is not his ultimate truth; his highest truth is his universality lies within. If he begins to consider his self as the only factor, as his only world, he will be imprisoned within a limitation. His joy begins to grow more and more when he learns to live in union with all humans. He is hurt and feels pain when his individual desires confront with the universal law, which is common to all. If he is in unison with the universal law, in relation to all, in proper adjustment with the universal, he can consider all worldly pain flimsy. When he realizes that his individuality is not the highest end of his being, in him there is the universality which is immortal, beyond death and all mundane sufferings. “When we reach that state wherein the adjustment of the finite in us to the infinite is made perfect, then pain itself becomes a valuable asset.”⁶ When the finite aspect chafes against the infinite aspect, individuality stands against universality; human becomes morally weak, suffers worldly pains and spiritual life is stunted. When individual desires become inconsistent with the universal rules,

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humans face artificial barrier around them to have universal happiness. As the individuality or ego stands against universality inherent in humans, individual naturally distracts from society. Humanity entirely develops within the proper adjustment of the finite to the infinite, of the individual power to the universal power, of the individual will to the universal will. To live in perfect harmony, one must have to realize the infinite inherent in him.

The life of soul is finite in its expression, but infinite in its principle. Humans must have to go through the tunnel of death for realizing the infinite. Death is monistic it has no life in it. But the feature of life is dualistic. Life is the combination of appearance and truth. Death, which is inseparable part of life, is the appearance which is called *māyā*. As our ego always develops itself, changes itself in its journey, it faces both death and life in a continuous process at the same time. Its previous state is death and the newly developed state is birth. Ego goes ahead through the continuous process of death and birth. The life of ego ceases to develop only when humans give it a perpetual shape. The annihilation of the finite body, which popularly known as death, takes place and an eternal life, the infinite aspect starts its journey independently.

Aspiration for *mukti* or immortality is the pivotal factor for proving infinity in man. The man knows well about the certainty of death. In spite of his obvious experience of death, he tries his best to have immortality. He realises that death is not the end of his life. This type of realization proves that beyond the body, the finite aspect, there must have an infinite aspect in humans. Humans, staying in the finite aspect, always try to achieve immortality, which is infinite by nature, through the proper reformation of finite aspect.

The infinite is equipped with morality. Due to morality, they feel that they should be more than what they are. They realize that they have to do a lot beyond what they have already done. Their will dominates their wishes, will motivates them to go beyond the present stature. They begin to distinguish what they immediately want from what is good. Goodness belongs to their greater self, and is connected with the wholeness of life. The concept of goodness impels humans to have what is not present before them. They are not satiated with what they are, they try to be what they are yet to be. They do not count only present, they feel their future. Moreover, beyond their personal interest humans are instigated to merge themselves with the interest of other individuals. For this reason they sometimes sacrifice their own interest for the welfare of others, sometimes become hurt either physically or mentally or both to please somebody else. The person, who is very much selfish, is compelled to sacrifice his selfishness for the sake of others. When humans feel their infinite aspect, they come out of their individual limitation, and become great. They eschew their selfishness for being unselfish to

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some extent. This is the morality which is the unique feature of humans which belongs to the infinite aspect. Any man who is trying to get an immoral intention successful, much have to be dependent on some moral base. Immorality presupposes morality. Immoral is imperfectly moral. What is immoral is moral to some extent, otherwise it cannot be immoral. In this sense humans are different from other animals. “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 that only means that it must have a moral basis. What is immoral is imperfectly moral, just as what is false is true to a small extent, or it cannot even be false.”⁷ Self-restrain and moral life, which belong to the acceptance of law, help to reach the infinite from the finite, the soul from the self. The law itself is not bondage, not an end by itself. Rather law helps to get rid of the bondage of the finite and reach the infinite which is manifesting itself through the finite forms of law.

Our physical and mental barriers detach us from the world, from the nature where we are born. We cannot be the man of universe, only become man. We are unable to realize our kinship with the universe. We live in cage and create many artificial problems, and find no way to solve these problems. With the proper realization of eternal spirit in everything, that of the essential harmony between the soul of universe and the individual soul; humans discover their true significance, they piss off narrow necessities and shift their vision from the finite to the infinite. Thus, the realization and touch of the infinite show the way to healing from all worldly problems. The consciousness of the infinite helps humans to cross the narrow attitude of individual, to become a universal man. Their feeling of one with everything in the universe brings immorality, finds no difference between life and death. The ultimate truth of oneness harmonizes all outward matters keeping away all heterogeneous complexity and multiplicity. If one becomes conscious of his own soul, he can possess the capacity of knowing all men and entire universe at one stroke. Only egoistic impulses, selfish desires are the impediment for having true consciousness of soul, of the unity having affinity with everything. People, who guide the self for all, for the mankind, realize true purpose of the soul. They only rely on the soul, not the self. Through the realization of their own soul, they become united with all humans, with humanity.

Now the question is “How are the finite and the infinite co-existed in the same place and at the same time?” Some Traditional Indian Philosophers try to solve this problem saying that *Māyā*, an illusory power, creates appearance as finite; but really there is nothing as finite. The infinite is only reality, the only truth. The appearance is the opposite of the truth. But the word ‘*Māyā*’ is mere name. There is no strong explanation behind the co-existence of appearance and truth in one place and at the same time. The problem can be solved with the principle of unity, with the principle of harmony that

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though the appearance is the opposite of the truth, the finite is the opposite of the infinite; they do not act for getting better of each other. The finite is inseparably related to the infinite; one infinite appears as many finites. There is a unison, a harmony between these two human aspects, like the harmony between our two eyes, though they are acting from opposite directions under the principle of unity.

The goal of man is a journey from the self to the soul- consciousness, from the finite to the infinite. But what is the means of having soul-consciousness? Intellect may help humans to have worldly knowledge, but cannot help to have the nature of reality, unable to enter the realm of the infinite. Though intellect helps us to have the law of unity, like the law of gravitation, makes us liberated from many similar individual facts, homogeneous facts, which are crowded in our memory and create a lot of problems. The one law can explain so many facts of similar nature. The unity comprehends the multiplicity. But this type of unity discovered by the intellect confines us to a particular type of facts, is applicable to only some homogeneous facts, suitable for only a particular department of nature; can do nothing for having all-comprehensive unity. The intellect exclusively works in the finite world for imparting departmental knowledge, for binding our distracted sensations of a particular department in one unity with the help of law; but does nothing for framing an all-inclusive unity to have soul-consciousness. Intellectual awareness of details can give only partial unity of nature, not absolute unity. All-comprehensive unity can only be had through vision. Vision is defined as “a sudden spiritual outburst from within”.⁸ The realization of the unity comprehends the universe as a whole. How can this vision be had? It is only love through which our consciousness is enlarged. Soul is lover and always active in search of beloved. The union of lover with beloved is possible when love becomes intensified. In love no difference between lover and beloved persists, lover finds herself in beloved. When we love someone, we really find our own soul in him/her. In love all the differences between subject and object are fused. This state of fusion causes joy, and so joy is another name of love. As true love goes beyond all egoistic impulses, works beyond all types of egoistic motives. Another aspect of love is sacrifice which belongs to the unity. The unity impels to sacrifice everything, to work for all who are united in love. Here the sacrifice knows no purpose and reason, only creates ecstasy which knows no bounds. So, love is the universal vehicle which helps humans to transcend the barriers of narrow finite worldly impulses and gain the auspicious touch of the infinite through the union of individual with others.

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