RABINDRANATH TAGORE

By Ramananda Chatterjee

On the twenty-fifth of Baisakh of the Bengali year, corresponding to the eighth of May, 1941, Rabindranath Tagore completes eighty years of his life. Lives eighty years long, though not common, are not extremely rare either. But it is not the length of a life but its quality that really matters. We read in the Yoga-Vāsishtha:

Taravopi hi jwanti, jwanti mṛgopakšīyāḥ.
Sa jwati mano yasya mananaṃ hi jwati.

"Plants also live, and birds and beasts live; But he lives (truly) whose mind lives by thinking."

Rabindranath Tagore's life has been eminently such a life of thought and of action in accordance with his thought.

Within the compass of a magazine article it is not possible to give an adequate idea of the genius, personality and achievements of such a person—they are so great and varied. But an attempt is made in the following pages to give some idea, however inadequate, of his personality and varied achievements, as a humble token of the participation of the writer in the festive functions of the occasion.

The poet writes in one of his poems:

Do not in this way see from the outside—
Do not look for me in externals:
You will not find me in my sorrow and my joy,
Do not seek in my bosom for my anguish,
You will not find me in my joy.

The poet is not where you seek him:
You will not find the poet in his life-story.¹

¹ English translations of the Bengali originals quoted in this article are by the writer. Where the translation is the Poet's own, reference is made to the English publication where it appears.
Then there is that unclassifiable work *Pancha Bhuter Diary* ("Diary of the Five Elements"), imaginary conversations which are like a transcript of his own talks in Bengali. He is the creator of some dance-plays, too. The aggregate of what he has done for the Bengali language and literature exceeds what any other author has done. It is remarkable that in the decade following 1930, during the latter part of which he has been twice seriously ill, he has produced some three dozen new books, including primers, nursery rhymes, nonsense verses and picture books for children, and several dance-dramas. Two books of poems and a book of reminiscences of his boyhood days have appeared during his present period of convalescence. Two more are to be shortly issued. Many new songs have been composed during this period. The articles and essays written during this period have not yet been published in book form.

All this he has been able to do, not merely because he is a man of genius but also because he is a scholar whose range of reading is very extensive and varied. In addition to what he has read in Bengali and Sanskrit, and of English literature proper and of the literature of other countries in English translations, he has read English books, as a glance at his reading shelves reveals, on the following and other subjects:

- Farming, philology, history, medicine, astro-physics, geology, bio-chemistry, entomology, co-operative banking, sericulture, indoor decorations, production of hides, manures, sugar-cane and oil, pottery, looms, lacquer-work, tractors, village economics, recipes for cooking, lighting, drainage, calligraphy, plant-grafting, meteorology, synthetic dyes, parlour-games, Egyptology, road-making, incubators, wood-blocks, elocution, stall-feeding, jiu-jitsu, printing.

Milton wrote in his day, when knowledge was neither so vast nor so varied and specialized as today, that the poet should take all knowledge as his province. Rabindranath Tagore's ideal has been similar to that of Milton.

Had he not been famous as a great poet and prose-writer, he would have become famous for the range and variety of his
studies. Yet such is the genuine humility of the poet that in a poem written the other day and translated as *The Great Symphony*, he declare:

How little I know of this mighty world.
Myriad deeds of men, cities, countries,
rivers, mountains, seas and desert wastes,
so many unknown forms and trees
have remained beyond my range of awareness.

Great is life in this wide Earth
and small the corner where my mind dwells.

An impression seems still to prevail in some quarters that Rabindranath Tagore’s genius was not recognized even in Bengal before he won the Nobel Prize. It is quite wrong. On his completing the fiftieth year of his life, all classes, all professions and ranks, the representatives of the spirituality, character, culture and public spirit of Bengal, combined to do him honour in the Calcutta Town Hall in a way in which no other author in Bengal had been honoured before, or, has been since. There were also other magnificent celebrations of the occasion. And all this took place before the Nobel Prize in literature had been awarded to him. The fact is, he became famous outside Bengal after winning the Nobel Prize, but was already famous here before that event.

Some works of his have been translated into more languages of the world than those of any other modern Indian author or perhaps of any other author of the world. Many works and some kinds of works of his in Bengali, e.g., those which are full of humour and wit, have not yet been translated into English or thence into other Western and Eastern languages. In the translations of the works which have been translated, much, if not all, of the music, the suggestiveness, the undefinable associations clustering round Bengali words and phrases, and the aroma, racy of Bengal and India, of the original have been lost. No doubt, the translations of the poems and dramas, particularly when done by the poet himself, have often
gained in directness, in the beauty and sublimity of simplicity, and in the music and strength belonging to the English or other language of the translations. But admitting all this, one is still constrained to observe that, for a correct estimate and full appreciation of Rabindranath's intellectual and literary powers, his gifts and genius, it is necessary to study both his original works in Bengali and their English translations, as well as his original works in English, like Personality, Sadhana, The Religion of Man, etc. A study of his works in their Bengali originals is essential for a correct estimate of his genius and literary achievement.

His hymns and sermons and some of his other writings on spiritual subjects let us unconsciously into the secret of his access to the court of the King of kings, nay to His very presence, and of his communion with Him. His devotional songs and other writings in a spiritual vein have brought solace and healing to many a soul in travail and anguish.

Insight and imagination are his magic wands, by whose power he roams where he will and leads his readers, too, thither. In his works Bengali literature has outgrown its provincial character and has become fit to fraternize with world literature. Currents of universal thought and spirituality have flowed into Bengal through his writings.

In philosophy he is not a system-builder. He is of the line of our ancient religio-philosophical teachers whose religion and philosophy are fused components of one whole. His position as a philosophical thinker was recognized by his selection to preside and deliver the presidential address at the First Indian Philosophical Congress in 1923, and also when he was asked to deliver the Hibbert Lectures, which appeared subsequently as The Religion of Man. Both his poetry and prose embody his philosophy.

The theme of The Religion of Man has been thus explained by the Author:

India has ever nourished faith in the truth of the Spiritual Man, for whose realization she has made in the past innumerable
experiments, sacrifices and penances, some verging on the grotesque and
the abnormal. But the fact is she has never ceased in her attempt to
find it, even though at the tremendous cost of losing material
success. Therefore I feel that the true India is an idea, and not a
mere geographical fact. I have come into touch with the idea in far-
away places of Europe, and my loyalty was drawn to it in persons
who belonged to countries different from mine. India will be
victorious when this idea wins the victory—the idea of 'The Infinite
Personality, whose light reveals itself through the obstruction of
Darkness.' Our fight is against this darkness. Our object is the
revelation of the light of this Infinite Personality of Man. This is
not to be achieved in single individuals, but in one grand harmony of
all human races. The darkness of egotism which will have to be
destroyed is the egotism of the Nation. The idea of India is against
the intense consciousness of the separateness of one's own people from
others, which inevitably leads to ceaseless conflicts. Therefore, my
own prayer is, let India stand for the co-operation of all peoples of
the world.

My religion is the reconciliation in my own individual being
of the Super-personal Man, the Universal human spirit. This is the
theme of my Hibbert Lectures.

Rabindranath is not simply a literary man, though his
ceminence as an author is such that for a foreigner the Bengali
language would be worth learning for studying his writings
alone.

It does not in the least detract from his work as a musician
to admit that he is not an ustād or "expert" in music, as that
term is usually understood, though he was trained in Indian
classical music. He has such a sensitive ear that he appears
to live in two worlds—one, the world of visible forms and
colours, and another, which one may call the world of sound-forms
and sound-colours. His musical genius and instinct are such
that his achievement in that art has extorted the admiration of
many "experts". This is said not with reference only to his
numerous hymns and patriotic and other songs and the tunes to
which he has himself set them, or to his thrilling, sweet, soulful
and rapt singing in different periods of his life, but also in
connection with what he has done for absolute music. He is not only the author of the words of his songs, possessed of rare depth of meaning and suggestiveness and power of inspiration, but is also the creator of what may be called new airs and tunes.

It is said that among European musicians Franz Peter Schubert holds the record for the number of songs composed by him. The Encyclopaedia Britannica (Eleventh Edition) says of Schubert that "He was the greatest songwriter who ever lived." His songs "number over 600, excluding scenes and operatic pieces."

According to a rough estimate Rabindranath Tagore has composed some 2,000 songs, all of which he has set to music. These do not include his dance-plays and operas. He continues to compose new songs, never repeating himself.

About fifteen years ago, I had the good fortune to be present at some of the meetings in Germany and Czechoslovakia where he lectured and recited some of his poems. To such a meeting at Dresden I have briefly referred in my article on "Rabindranath Tagore at Dresden." His recitations were such that even though the poems recited were in a language not understood by the vast majority of the audience, he had to repeat them several times at their earnest request. Those who have heard him read his addresses and deliver his extempore speeches and sermons in Bengali know how eloquent he could be as a speaker, though his delivery in years past was often so rapid and his sentences branched out in such bewildering luxuriance as to make him the despair of reporters. No wonder, he shines also as a conversationalist. His humorous and witty repartees and his improvised playful poems are unrivalled.

"He is a master and a consummate teacher of the histrionic art. Those who have seen him appear in leading roles in many of his plays have experienced how natural and elevating acting can be. From the prime of his manhood upwards he has been in the habit of reading out his new poems, discourses, short
stories, plays and novels to select circles. On such occasions, too, his elocution and histrionic talents come into play.

If it is true that the credit of reviving the performance of music in public by respectable women goes to the Brahmo Samaj, that credit belongs in great part to the Tagore family and Rabindranath Tagore. They have also made it possible for girls and women of respectable classes to act in public. The poet has also rehabilitated in Bengal dancing by respectable girls and women as a means of self-expression and innocent amusement and play. The new dances he has created, in which he has personally trained many girl students of Santiniketan, are entirely free from the voluptuousness and worse features of many prevalent dances. In the course of a letter written to His Excellency President Tai Chi Tao on the significance of artistic education in Visva-bharati, the Poet says:

Tonight we shall present before you another aspect of our ideal where we seek to express our inner self through song and dance. Wisdom, you will agree, is the pursuit of completeness; it is in blending life’s diverse work with the joy of living. We must never allow our enjoyment to gather wrong associations by detachment from educational life; in Santiniketan, therefore, we provide our own entertainment, and we consider it a part of education to collaborate in perfecting beauty. We believe in the discipline of a regulated existence to make our entertainment richly creative.

In this, we are following the ancient wisdom of China and India; the Tao, or the True Path, was the golden road uniting arduous service with music and merriment. Thus in the hardest hours of trial you have never lost the dower of spiritual gaiety which has refreshed your manhood and attended upon your great flowerings of civilization. Song and laughter and dance have marched along with rare loveliness of Art for centuries of China’s history. In India Sarasvati sits on her lotus throne, the goddess of Learning and also of Music, with the Golden Lyre—the Veena—on her lap. In both countries, the arcana of light have fallen on divinity of human achievements. And that is Wisdom.

Tagore’s patriotic songs are characteristic. They are refined
and restrained, and free from bluff, bravado, bluster and boasting. Some of them twine their tendrils round the tenderest chords of our hearts, some enthroned the Motherland as the Adored in the shrine of our souls, some sound as a clarion call to our drooping spirits filling us with hope and the will to do and dare and suffer, some call on us to have the lofty courage to be in the minority of one; but in none are heard the clashing of interests, the warring passions of races, or the echoes of old, unhappy, far-off historic strifes and conflicts. In many of those written during the stirring times of the Swadeshi agitation in Bengal more than three decades ago, the poet spoke out with a directness which is missed in many of his writings, though not in the Kathā-o-Kāhini ballads, which make the heart beat thick and fast and the blood tingle and leap and course swiftly in our veins.

To Andrews Fletcher of Salton, a famous Scottish patriot, is attributed the authorship of the observation that "if a man were permitted to make all the ballads, he need not care who should make the laws of a nation." He is generally quoted, however, as having said so with respect to songs. Both ballads and songs have much to do with the making of nations. Rabindranath's songs and ballads—the former to a greater extent than the latter, have been making and shaping Bengal to no small extent and will continue to mould the character of her people, literate and illiterate, town-dwellers and village-folk, and their culture and civilization.

But it is not merely as a maker of songs that he has taken part in the Swadeshi movement. His socio-political addresses, the annual fairs suggested or organized by him, are part of the same national service. He has worked earnestly for the revival of weaving and other arts and crafts of the country, particularly village arts and crafts, and contributed his full share to making education in India Indian as well as human and humane in the broadest sense, and to the sanitation, reconstruction, reorganization and rejuvenation of villages. Even official reports have
praised him as a model landlord for his activities in these directions in his estate.

His scheme of constructive "non-co-operation", or, properly speaking, of constructive self-reliance, in education, revival of village crafts, village reconstruction, etc., as outlined in some of his writings and addresses more than thirty years ago, was part of his Swadeshi-movement politics. It is to be found in his lecture on Swadeshi Samaj, delivered on 22nd July, 1904, and in his presidential address at the Bengal Provincial Conference at Pabna, 1908. The "No-Tax" movement adumbrated in his plays Prāyaschitta ("Expiation") and Parītrān ("Deliverance") and the joyful acceptance of suffering and chains by its hero, Dhananjaya Bairagi, a Mendicant, embody his idea of what the attitude of leaders and the rank and file should be on such occasions. Both plays are dramatic renderings of an earlier work, a historical romance named Bou-Thākurnār Hāt ("The Bride-Queen's Market"), published in 1884. Of these plays Prāyaschitta is the earlier one, published in May, 1909. Translations of some portions of its dialogues and of some of its songs are given below.

Dhananjaya Bairagi, a Sannyāsi, and a number of villagers of Madhabpur, going to the King:

THIRD VILLAGER: What shall we say, Father, to the King?

DHANANJAYA: We shall say, "we won't pay tax."

THIRD VILLAGER: If he asks, "why won't you?"

DHANANJAYA: We will say, "if we pay you money starving our children and making them cry, our Lord will feel pain. The food which sustains life is the sacred offering dedicated to the Lord; for he is the Lord of life. When more than that food—a surplus, remains in our houses, we pay that to you (the King) as tax, but we can't pay you tax deceiving and depriving the Lord."

FOURTH VILLAGER: Father, the King will not listen.

DHANANJAYA: Still, he must be made to hear. Is he so unfortunate because he has become King that the Lord will not allow him to hear the truth? We will force him to hear.
FIFTH VILLAGER: Worshipful Father, he (the King) will win, for he has more power than we.

DHANANJAYA: Away with you, you monkeys! Is this a sample of your intelligence? Do you think, the defeated have no power? Their power stretches up to heaven, do you know?

SIXTH VILLAGER: But, Father, we were far from the King, we could have saved ourselves by concealment,—we shall now be at the very door of the King. There will be no way of escape left if there be trouble.

DHANANJAYA: Look here, Panchkari, leaving things unsettled in this way by shelving them, never bears good fruit. Let whatever may happen, happen; otherwise the finale is never reached. There is peace when the extremity is reached.

Let us take next what passes between Dhananjaya, the Sannyāśi, leader of the people, and King Pratāpāditya.

PRATAPADITYA: Look here Bairagi, you can't deceive me by this sort of (feigned) madness of yours. Let us come to business. The people of Madhabpur have not paid their taxes for two years. Say, will you pay?

DHANANJAYA: No, Maharaj, we will not.

PRATAPADITYA: Will not? Such insolence!

DHANANJAYA: We can't pay you what is not yours.

PRATAPADITYA: Not mine!

DHANANJAYA: The food that appeases our hunger is not yours. This food is His who has given us life. How can we give it to you?

PRATAPADITYA: So it is you who have told my subjects not to pay taxes?

DHANANJAYA: Yes, Maharaj, it is I who have done it. They are fools, they have no sense. They want to part with all they have for fear of the tax-gatherer. It is I who tell them, "Stop, stop, don't you do such a thing. Give up your life only to Him who has given you life (that is, die only at the Lord's bidding, but not by depriving yourselves of the food which He has given you);—don't make your King guilty of killing you (by allowing him to take from you the food which is necessary for keeping your bodies and souls together)."

I do not wish to add to the length of this article by quoting similar passages from the play Paritrān, based on the same story. Let me take some other passages from Prāyaschitta, the other play.
Pratapaditya: Look here, Bairagi, you have neither hearth nor home; but these villagers are all householders—why do you want to lead them into trouble? (To the villagers) I say, you fellows all go back to Madhabpur. (To Dhananjaya) You, Bairagi, have to remain here (that is, he will be arrested and jailed).

Villagers: No, that can’t be so long as we are alive.

Dhananjaya: Why can’t that be? You are still lacking in sense. The King says “Bairagi, you remain.” You say, “No that can’t be.” But has the luckless Bairagi come floating like flotsam (that is, is he not master of himself with a will of his own)? Is his remaining here or not to be settled only by the King and yourselves?

(Sings)

Whom have you kept by saying ‘he remains’?
When will your order take effect?
Your force will not endure, brother,
That alone will endure which is fit to endure.
Do what you please—
Keep or kill by bodily force—
But only that will be borne which He will bear
Whom all blows strike.
Plenty of coins you have,
No end of ropes and cords,
Many horses and elephants,—
Much you have in this world.
You think, what you want will happen,
That you make the world dance to your tune;
But you will see on opening your eyes,
That also happens which doesn’t usually happen.

(Enter Minister.)

Pratapaditya: You have come at the nick of time. Keep this Bairagi captive here. He must not be allowed to go back to Madhabpur.

Minister: Maharaj—

Pratapaditya: What! The order is not to your liking;—is it?

Udayaditya: (Pratapaditya’s son and heir)—Maharaj, the Bairagi is a saintly man.

Villagers: Maharaj, this cannot be borne by us! Maharaj, evil will follow from it.
DHANANJAYA: I say, you all go back. The order has been given, I must stay with the King for a few days; the fellows can't bear this {good luck of mine}!

VILLAGEB: Did we come to petition His Majesty for this? We are not to have the Yuvaraj (heir-apparent), and are to lose you, too, to boot?

DHANANJAYA: My body burns to hear what you say: What do you mean by saying you will lose me? Did you keep me tied up in a corner of your loin-cloths? Your business is done. Away with you now!

Owing to an accidental conflagration, the jail where Dhananjaya was imprisoned is reduced to ashes. He has come out.

DHANANJAYA: Jai, Maharaj, Jai! You did not want to part with me, but from where nobody knows, Fire has come with a warrant for my release! But how can I go without telling you? So I have come to take your order.

PRATAPADITYA (sarcastically): Had a good time?

DHANANJAYA: Oh I was so happy. There was no anxiety. All this is His hide-and-seek. He thought I could not catch Him concealed in the prison. But I caught Him, tight in my embrace; and then no end of laughter and songs unending. I have spent the days in great joy—I shall remember my Brother Prison.

(Sings)

O my chains, embracing you I enjoyed
The music of your clanking.
You kept me delighted, breaking my pride.

Playing games with you,
The days passed in joy and sorrow.
You encircled my limbs
With priceless jewellery.
I am not angry with you,—

* If anybody is to blame, it is I,
Only if there be fear in my mind,
I regard you as terrible.
All night long in the darkness
You were my comrade.

Remembering that kindness of yours
I salute you.
Pratapaditya: What is it you say, Bairagi! What for were you so happy in prison?
Dhananjaya: Maharaj, like your happiness in your kingdom was my joy in prison. What was lacking (there)? (The Lord) can give you happiness, but can’t He give me any joy?
Pratapaditya: Where will you go now?
Dhananjaya: The road.
Pratapaditya: Bairagi, it strikes me at times that your way is preferable; my kingdom is no good.
Dhananjaya: Maharaj, the kingdom, too, is a path. Only, one has to be able to walk aright. He who knows it to be a path (to the goal), he is a real wayfarer; we Sannyasis are nothing in comparison with him. Now then, if you permit, out I go for the nonce.
Pratapaditya: All right, but don’t go to Madhabpur.
Dhananjaya: How can I promise that? When (the Lord) will take me anywhere, who is there to say nay?

All the passages quoted above are free translations from the original. It is also to be noted that the poet has named the leader of the people in these two plays “Dhananjaya”, which means, “He who has conquered (the desire for) riches.” One may take that to indicate the poet’s idea of the essential qualification of a leader of the people.

As the poet has denounced Nationalism in his book of that name, taking the word to mean that organized form of a people which is meant for its selfish aggrandizement at the expense of other peoples by foul, cruel and unrighteous means, and as he is among the chief protagonists of what is, not quite appropriately, called Internationalism, his profound and all-sided love of the Motherland, both as expressed in words and as manifested in action, has sometimes not been evident perhaps to superficial observers. But those who know him and his work and the literature he has created, know that he loves his land

with love far-brought
From out the storied Past, and used
Within the Present, but transfused
Thro’ future time by power of thought.
His penetrating study of, and insight into, the history of India and Greater India have strengthened this love. Especially noteworthy is his essay on the course of India's history.

The origin of what is called his Internationalism has sometimes been traced to his revealing and disappointing experiences during the Anti-partition and Swadeshi movement of Bengal of the first decade of this century. Such experiences are not denied. But his love of the whole of humanity and interest in their affairs are traceable even in the writings of his boyhood when he was in his teens. And in maturer life, this feature of his character found distinct expression in a poem, named "Prabāsi", written more than forty years ago, which begins with the declaration that his home is in all lands, his country in all countries, his close kindred in all homes there, and that he is resolved to win this country, this home and these kindred.

In his patriotism there is no narrowness, no chauvinism, no hatred or contempt of the foreigner. He believes that India has a message and a mission, a special work entrusted to her by Providence.

He writes in "Our Swadeshi Samaj":

The realization of unity in diversity, the establishment of a synthesis amidst variety—that is the inherent, the samāsana, Dharma of India. India does not admit difference to be conflict, nor does she espy an enemy in every stranger. So she repels none, destroys none, she abjures no methods, recognizes the greatness of ideals, and she seeks to bring them all into one grand harmony.

Again:

In the evolving History of India, the principle at work is not the ultimate glorification of the Hindu or any other race. In India, the history of humanity is seeking to elaborate a specific ideal to give to general perfection a special form which shall be for the gain of all humanity; nothing less than this is its end and aim. And in the creation of this ideal type, if Hindu, Moslem or Christian should have to submerge the aggressive part of their individuality, that may hurt their sectarian pride, but will not be accounted a loss by the standard of Truth and Right.
Tagore's ideal is the same as that of Rammohun Roy, who, he says, "did not assist India to repair her barriers, or to keep cowering behind them,—he led her out into the freedom of Space and Time, and built for her a bridge between the East and the West."

This statement of India's ideal is supported by Mr. C. E. M. Joad in the following passage in his book, *The Story of Indian Civilization*, published, much later, recently:

Whatever the reason, it is a fact that India's special gift to mankind has been the ability and willingness of Indians to effect a synthesis of many different elements both of thoughts and of peoples, to create, in fact, unity out of diversity.

Rabindranath is above all sectarianism, communalism and racialism, as is evident from his poem "Bhārata-Tirtha", of which a few lines are translated below:

No one knows at whose call
How many streams of humanity
Came from where, in irresistible currents,
And lost their identity in this (India's) ocean of men.

Here Aryan, here non-Aryan,
Here Dravid and Cheen,

Hordes of Saka, Huna, Pathan and Mughal
Became merged in one body.
The door has opened in the West today,
All bring presents from there,
They will give and take, mix and mingle,

Will not turn back—

In this India's great
Human ocean's shores.

Come O Aryan, come, non-Aryan,
Hindu-Muslim,

Come, come today, you English,
Come, come, O Christian.

Come, Brahmans, purifying your mind,
Clasp the hands of all,
Come, O ye outcasted and 'fallen',
May the burden of all ignominy
Be taken off your backs.
Come, hasten to the Mother's anointing;
For the auspicious vessel has not yet been filled
With water from all shrines.
Purified by the touch of all
(castes, creeds and classes).

The poet has never denied that other countries, too, may have their own special messages and missions. He does not dismiss the West with a supercilious sneer, but respects it for its spirit of enquiry, its science, its strength and will to face martyrdom in the cause of truth, freedom and justice (now, alas! gone to sleep), its acknowledgement and acceptance of the manness of the common man (now also, alas! not manifest), and its activities for human welfare, and wishes the East to take what it should and can from the West, not like a beggar without patrimony or as an adopted child, but as a strong and healthy man may take wholesome food from all quarters and assimilate it. This taking on the part of the East from the West, moreover, is the reception of stimulus and impetus, more than, or rather than, learning, borrowing, aping or imitation. The West, too, can derive advantage from contact with the East, different from the material gain of the plunderer and the exploiter. The study of his writings and utterances leaves us with the impression that the West can cease to dominate in the East only when the latter, fully awake, self-knowing, self-possessed and self-respecting, no longer requires any blister or whip and leaves no department of life and thought largely unoccupied by its own citizens.

His hands reach out to the West and the East, to all humanity, not as those of a suppliant, but for friendly grasp and salute. He is, by his literary works and travels, among the foremost reconcilers and uniters of races and continents. He has renewed India's cultural connection with Japan, China, Siam, Islands-India, Iran and Iraq by his visits to those lands. His
extensive travels in Europe and America also have established cultural and friendly relations with the peoples of those lands. The Greater India Society owes its inception to his inspiration.

In spite of the cruel wrongs inflicted on India by the British nation, and whilst condemning such wrong-doing unsparingly, he has never refrained from being just and even generous in his estimate of the British people. Therefore it is that his disillusion has been so agonizing, as revealed in his eightieth birthday pronouncement on the Crisis of Civilization.

It will be recalled that he was the first to publicly condemn the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre, and that he gave up his knighthood in protest.

His politics are concerned more with the moulding of society and character-building than with the more vocal manifestations of that overcrowded department of national activity. Freedom he prizes as highly and ardently as the most radical politician, but his conception of freedom is full and fundamental. To him the chains of inertness, cowardice and ignorance, of selfishness and pleasure-seeking, of superstition and lifeless custom, of the authority of priestcraft and letter of scripture, constitute our bondage no less than the yoke of the stranger, which is largely a consequence and a symptom. He prizes and insists upon the absence of external restraints. But this does not constitute the whole of his idea of freedom. There should be inner freedom also, born of self-sacrifice, enlightenment, self-purification and self-control. This point of view has largely moulded his conception of the Indian political problem and the best method of tackling it. He wishes to set the spirit free, to give it wings to soar, so that it may have largeness of vision and a boundless sphere of activity. He desires that fear should be cast out. Hence his politics and his spiritual ministries merge in each other. Quite appropriately and characteristically have the lips of such a poet uttered the prayer:

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;
Where knowledge is free;
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;
Where words come out from the depth of truth;
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit;
Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever widening thought and action—
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake. (Gitanjali)

Age and bodily infirmities have not made him a reactionary and obscurantist. His spirit is ever open to new light. He continues to be a progressive social reformer. His intellectual powers are still at their height. His latest poetic creations of the month—perhaps one may sometimes say, of the week or the day—do not betray any dimness of vision, any lack of inspiration or fertility; nor are there in any of them signs of repetition. He continues to be among our most active writers. This is for the joy of creation and self-expression and fraternal giving, as he loves his kind, and human intercourse is dear to his soul. His ceaseless and extensive reading in very many diverse subjects, including some out-of-the-way sciences and crafts, and his travels in many continents enable him to establish ever new intellectual and spiritual contacts, to be abreast of contemporary thought, to keep pace with its advance and with the efforts of man to plant the flag of the master who knows in the realms of the unknown—himself being one of the most sanguine and dauntless of intellectual and spiritual prospectors and explorers.

When Curzon partitioned Bengal against the protests of her people, the poet threw himself heart and soul into the movement for the self-realization and self-expression of the people in all possible ways. But when popular resentment and despair led to the outbreak of terrorism, he was the first to utter the clearest note of warning, to assert that Indian nationalism should not stultify and frustrate itself by recourse to such violence. Such warnings have been given by him on other occasions, too.
Though he has had nothing to do with active politics for decades, he has not hesitated to give the nation the advantage of inspiring messages and outspoken pronouncements from the presidential chair at meetings on momentous and critical occasions. He has been unsparing in his condemnation of the predatory instincts and activities of nations, whether of the military or of the economic variety. He has never believed that war can ever be ended by the pacts of robber nations so long as they do not repent and give up their wicked ways and the spoils thereof. The remedy lies in the giving up of greed and promotion of neighbourly feelings between nation and nation as between individual men. Hence the poet-seer has repeatedly given in various discourses and contexts his exposition of the ancient text of the *Isopanishad*:

*All this whatsoever that moves in Nature is indwelt by the Lord. Enjoy thou what hath been allotted to thee by Him. Do not covet anybody’s wealth.*

In pursuance of this line of thought, while the poet has expressed himself in unambiguous language against the use of violence by the party in power in Russia, and while he holds that private property has its legitimate uses for the maintenance and promotion of individual freedom and individual self-creation and self-expression and for social welfare, he sees and states clearly the advantages of Russian collectivism, as will be evident from his book *Rashiar Chitti* in Bengali and the following cabled reply to a query of Professor Petrov of V.O.K.S., Moscow:

*Your success is due to turning the tide of wealth from the individual to collective humanity.*

*How the poet feels for the humblest of human beings may be understood from many of his poems and utterances *, e. g., the following from *Gitanjali* :

*Pride can never approach to where thou walkest in the clothes of the humble among the poorest, and lowliest and lost.*

*My heart can never find its way to where Thou keepest company with the companionless among the poorest, the lowliest and the lost.*
He is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground and where
the path-maker is breaking stones. He is with them in sun and in
shower, and His garment is covered with dust. Put off thy holy
mantle and even like Him come down on the dusty soil.

In spite of all his genuine sympathy and love for the poor
and the down-trodden, he feels in all humility that he is not one
with them. In The Great Symphony he mourns:

Not everywhere have I won access,
  my ways of life have intervened
  and kept me outside.
The tiller at the plough,
the weaver at the loom,
the fisherman plying his net,
those and the rest toil and sustain the world
with their world-wide varied labour.
I have known them from a corner,
  banished to a high pedestal of society
  reared by renown.
Only the outer fringe have I approached,
  not being able to enter
  the intimate precincts.

Thirty-one years ago he wrote a poem, included in the
Bengali Gitānjali, addressed to the Motherland, referring to the
treatment accorded to the “untouchables”. Its first stanza runs
as follows (translation):

O my hapless country, those whom thou hast insulted—
To them shalt thou have to be equal in thy humiliation.
Those whom thou hast deprived of the rights of man,
Kept them standing before thee, not taking them in thy lap,
All of them shalt thou have to equal in humiliation.

As regards the poet’s ideal of womanhood, the passage in
Chitra, beginning,

I am Chitra. No goddess to be worshipped, nor yet the object
of common pity to be brushed aside like a moth with indifference. If
you deign to keep me by your side in the path of danger and daring,
if you allow me to share the great duties of your life, then you will know my true self.

is well known. But to get a complete idea of what he thinks of Woman, many other poems and prose writings of his have to be read. For instance, among poems, “Sabala” (“The Strong Damsel”) in Mabua, not yet translated, written with reference to the word “Abala” (“The Weak”), a Sanskrit word denoting woman, the series of poems named “Nāmni” in the same work, “Nāri” in Arogya, etc. Gora and some of his other novels and many short stories enable the reader to know his ideals of womanhood, though he writes as an artist, not as a preacher.

Regarding our unfortunate sisters, stigmatized as fallen women, though their betrayers, ravishers, and exploiters are not called “fallen” men, read the poet’s “Patiṭā” (“The Fallen Woman”) in Kāhini, and “Karunā” (“Compassion”) and “Sati” (“The Chaste Woman”) in Chaitali. These, too, have not yet been translated into English.

A– an educationist, he has preserved in his ideal of Visva-Bharati, the international residential university, the spirit of the ancient ideal of the tapovanas or forest-retreats of the Teachers of India—its simplicity, its avoidance of softness and luxury, its insistence on purity and chastity, its spirituality, its interplay of influence between teachers and students, its reverence for the Infinite Spirit, its practical touch with Nature, and the free play that it gave to all normal activities of body and soul. Up till his last serious illness, whenever he was at Santiniketan he would periodically conduct the service and prayers in the Mandir and pour out his soul in elevating and inspiring discourses. While the ancient spirit has been thus sought to be kept up, there is in this open-air institution at Santiniketan no cringing to mere forms, however hoary with antiquity. The poet’s mental outlook is universal. He claims for his people all knowledge and culture, whatever their origin, as their province. Hence, while he wants the youth of India of both sexes to be rooted in India’s past and to draw sustenance therefrom, while he has been practically
promoting the culture of the principal religious communities of India as far as the resources of the institution permit, he has also extended a friendly invitation and welcome to the exponents of foreign cultures as well. China’s response has taken the concrete shape of the Cheena-Bhavana for the study of Chinese culture. Chinese, Tibetan and Islamic studies—and, of course, the study of Hindu and Buddhist culture and of the teachings of the medieval saints of India, have long been special features of Visva-Bharati. All this has made it possible, for any who may so desire, to pursue the study of comparative religion at Santi-niketan. He wants that there should be no racialism, no sectarian and caste and colour prejudice in his institution.

Visva-Bharati stands neither for merely literary, nor for merely vocational education but for both and more. Tagore wants both man the knower and man the doer and maker. He wants an intellectual as well as an artistic and aesthetic education. He wants the growth of a personality equal to meeting the demands of society and solitude alike. Visva-Bharati now comprises a primary and a high school, a college, a school of graduate research, a school of painting and modelling and of some crafts, a music school, a school of agriculture and village welfare work, a co-operative bank with branches and a public health institute. Here students of both sexes have their games and physical exercises. The poet’s idea of a village is that it should combine all its beautiful and healthy rural characteristics with the amenities of town life necessary for fullness of life and efficiency. Some such amenities have already been provided in his schools. There is co-education in all stages. It is one of the cherished desires of the poet to give girl students complete education in a woman’s University based on scientific methods, some of which are the fruits of his own insight and mature experience.

When he is spoken of as the founder of Visva-Bharati, it is not to be understood that he has merely given it a local habitation and a name and buildings and funds and ideals. That
SINGING TO HIS FATHER

Collection: Kalabhavan

By Gaganendranath Tagore
he has, no doubt, done. To provide funds, he had, in the earlier years of the school, sometimes to sell the copyright of some of his books and even temporarily, or for good, to part with some of Mrs. Tagore's jewellery. His subsequent efforts to collect funds are well known. In the earlier years of the institution, he took classes in many subjects, lived with the boys in their rooms, entertained them in the evenings by story-telling, recitations of his poems, games of his own invention, methods of sense-training of his own devising, etc. Many a day at that time would Mrs. Tagore, who was an expert in the culinary art, regale the boys and their teachers with dishes prepared by herself. In those days when the number of teachers and students was small, the institution was like a home for them all. Even more recently the poet has been known to take some classes. And he continues to keep himself in touch with the institution in various ways.

Student self-government, unsectarian prayers and worship, and Season Festivals are characteristic features of Visva-Bharati. The poet also introduced the "honour system" of keeping no watch over his students in examinations. The opportunities which the pupils of Santiniketan have had to render service to the neighbouring villages, have resulted in the establishment of the Prasād Vidyālaya and the Pearson School for the Santals.

That Tagore is an independent thinker in education has been recognised. But one of the group of institutions constituting Visva-Bharati, namely, Sikshā-Satra, has not received due public attention, and is perhaps practically unknown even to Indian educationists. It was founded in 1924. Its origin and principles were stated when it was founded, and re-stated by Mr. L. K. Elmhirst in Visva-Bharati Bulletin No. 9, December, 1928, from which I make a few extracts below.

To dig our own cave in the earth, where we could creep out of sight, much to the disgust of the matter-of-fact gardener, to chop sticks with a real axe, to be given a pair of boots to polish, a fire to light, or some dough to knead and bake—these were our keenest joys; yet only too often had we to be content with toy bricks, toy houses,
toy tools or toy kitchens; or, if serious work was provided, it was in the nature of sweated labour, which fatigued without giving play to our creative instincts.

The aim, then, of the Siksha-Satra is through experience in dealing with this overflowing abundance of child life, its charm and its simplicity, to provide the utmost liberty within surroundings that are filled with creative possibilities, with opportunities for the joy of play that is work,—the work of exploration; and of work that is play, —the reaping of a succession of novel experiences; to give the child that freedom of growth which the young tree demands for its tender shoot, that field for self-expansion in which all young life finds both training and happiness.

As regards the age at which the child’s education at the Siksha-Satra should begin, it is stated:

It is between the ages of six and twelve that the growing child is most absorbed in gathering impressions through sight, smell, hearing and taste but more especially through touch and the use of the hands. From the start, therefore, the child enters the Siksha-Satra as an apprentice in handicraft as well as housecraft. In the workshop, as a trained producer and as a potential creator, it will acquire skill and win freedom for its hands; whilst as an inmate of the house, which it helps to construct and furnish and maintain, it will gain expanse of spirit and win freedom as a citizen of the small community.

Some of the crafts which the pupils can learn are mentioned in the Bulletin. It is stated that,

From the earliest years it is well to introduce to the children some special craft, easily grasped by small hands, which is of definite economic value. The product should be of real use in the home, or have a ready sale outside... In the carrying out of every one of these crafts, again, some art, some science, some element of business enters in.

Rabindranath has been a journalist from his teens. He has often written with terrible directness. In years past the poet successfully edited several monthlies and contributed, and still contributes, to numerous more. He has written for many weeklies, too. He is the only man in Bengal I know who was capable of filling a magazine from the first page to the last with
excellent reading in prose and verse of every description required.

His contributions to periodicals have been copious all along, and in such work he has been regular, punctual and methodical. It is easy and pleasant to read his beautiful handwriting. As an editor, he was the making of many authors who subsequently became well-known, by the thorough revision to which he subjected their work.

His beautiful Bengali handwriting has been copied by so many persons in Bengal that even those who have had occasion to see it very frequently cannot always distinguish the genuine thing from its imitation.

There is an impression abroad that no English translation by Rabindranath of any of his Bengali poems was published anywhere before the *Gitanjali* poems. That is a mistake. As far as I can now trace, the first English translations by himself of his poems appeared in the February, April and September numbers of the *Modern Review* in 1912. This is how he came to write in English for publication. Some time in 1911 I suggested that his Bengali poems should appear in English garb. So he gave me translations of two of his poems by the late Mr. Lokendranath Palit, i.c.s. Of these “Fruitless Cry” appeared in May and “The Death of the Star” in September, 1911, in the *Modern Review*. When I asked him by letter to do some translations himself, he expressed diffidence and unwillingness and tried to put me off by playfully reproducing two lines from one of his poems of which the purport was, “On what pretext shall I now call back her to whom I bade adieu in tears?”, the humorous reference being to the fact that he did not, as a schoolboy, take kindly to school education and its concomitant exercises. But his genius and the English muse would not let him off so easily. And I, too, had not ceased to remind him that his Bengali poems should be translated by himself. So a short while afterwards, he showed me some of his translations, asking me playfully whether as a quondam school master I considered
them up to standard. These appeared in my Review. These are, to my knowledge, his earliest published English compositions. Their manuscripts have been preserved.

He has been all along very diffident in writing English, though even when he was a student of Henry Morley in his teens that strict judge of English praised his style and diction before his British classmates. The subject of what Rabindranath wrote and submitted to the professor was "Englishmen in India", who came in for much criticism in his composition. Henry Morley asked his British students to note what Rabindranath had written, as many of them were likely in future to serve in India in some capacity or other.

I have referred to his beautiful hand. All calligraphists cannot and do not become painters, though, as Rabindranath burst into fame as a painter when almost seventy, the passage from calligraphy to painting might seem natural. I do not intend, nor am I competent, to discourse on his paintings. They are neither what is known as Indian art, nor are they any mere imitation of any ancient or modern Oriental or European painting. They are unclassed. One thing which may perhaps stand in the way of the commonalty understanding and appreciating them is that they seldom tell a story. They express in line and colour what even the rich vocabulary and consummate literary art and craftsmanship of Rabindranath could not or did not say. He never went to any school of art or took lessons from any artist at home. Nor did he want to imitate anybody. So, he is literally an original artist. If there be any resemblance in his style to that of any other schools of painters, it is entirely accidental and unintentional. In this connection I call to mind one interesting fact. In the Bengali Santiniketan Patra ("Santiniketan Magazine") of the month of Jyaistha, 1333 B. E., published fifteen years ago, Dr. Abanindranath Tagore, the famous artist, described (pp. 100-101) how his uncle Rabindranath was instrumental in leading him to evolve his own style of indigenous art. Summing up, Abanindranath writes:
Bengal's poet suggested the lines of Art, Bengal's artist (i.e., Abanindranath himself) continued to work alone along those lines for many a day. (Translation).

It was my happy privilege some twenty-three years back to live at Santiniketan as the poet-seer's neighbour for long periods at a stretch. During one such period, my working room and sleeping room combined commanded an uninterrupted view of the small two-storied cottage, "Dehali", in which he then lived—only a field intervened between. During that period I could never at night catch the poet going to sleep earlier than myself. And when early in the morning I used to go out for a stroll, if by chance it was very early I found him engaged in his daily devotions in the open upper storey verandah facing the east, but usually I found that his devotions were already over and he was busily engaged in some of his usual work. At mid-day, far from enjoying a siesta, he did not even recline. During the whole day and night, he spent only a few hours in sleep and bath and meals, and devoted all the remaining hours to work. During that period I never found that he used a hand-fan or allowed anybody to fan him in summer. And the sultry summer days of Santiniketan are unforgettable!

His late serious illness and the infirmities of age have necessitated changes in his habits. But even now he works longer than many young men. Not long ago during Mahatma Gandhi's visit to Santiniketan, he had to exact a promise from the poet that he would take some rest at mid-day.

I have all along looked upon him as an earnest "Sādhak". He is not, however, an ascetic—nor, of course, a lover of luxury. His ideal of life is different. "Deliverance is not for me in renunciation," he has said in one of his poems.

Deliverance is not for me in renunciation. I feel the embrace of freedom in a thousand bonds of delight.

Thou ever pourest for me the fresh draught of thy wine of various colours and fragrance, filling this earthen vessel to the brim.
My world will light its hundred different lamps with thy flames and place them before the altar of thy temple.

No, I will never shut the doors of my senses. The delights of sight and hearing and touch will bear thy delight.

Yes, all my illusions will burn into illumination of joy, and all my desires ripen into fruits of love. ( Gitanjali ).

The poet has been so reticent regarding his personal relations that, before Srimati Hemlata Devi, eldest daughter-in-law of his eldest brother, wrote an article on “Rabindranath at Home”, little was known of his home life. Her pen picture revealed what a loving and devoted husband, what an affectionate father and what a kind and considerate master to his servants he was and is. He has been a widower since November 23, 1902. We can here extract only a few sentences from Srimati Hemlata Devi’s article, beginning with his ascetic experiments.

Sometimes the Poet would begin dieting for no earthly reason with such rigid determination that the whole family would feel concerned... On occasions when his dieting reached almost the “starvation level”, we would approach his wife to exert her influence and prevent a catastrophe. She knew her husband better and so she did nothing of the kind. I remember she once said: “You do not know, he insists on doing what he is asked not to do: one of these days his body itself would protest and then he will take to his food.”

He is an affectionate father. He nursed his first child—a baby daughter—with a mother’s care... We have ourselves seen the Poet feeding the baby, changing her linen and making the bed.

And then this sacred picture of the poet tenderly nursing his wife during her last illness:

Members of the family still remember the picture of the Poet patiently sitting by the sick bed, nursing his wife literally day and night close on two months before death finally released her from her pain. His constant ministering to her comfort was instinct with love and concern. Electric fans were not known in those days; I see a distinct picture of the Poet moving a palm-leaf hand-fan, to and fro, fanning his wife to sleep with tender care. In those days in affluent households it was almost a custom to engage paid nurses. The Poet’s house was perhaps the first exception.
RABINDRANATH AS VEDANTIST

By Hirendranath Datta

It is, I believe, no exaggeration to say that the Vedanta is the crown and consummation of Indian thought. As the Rev. J. Tyssul Davies has rightly pointed out, "no great soul has appeared in India during the last 3,000 years that has not accepted the call of the teaching of the Vedanta, the spirit of the oldest and most enduring religious philosophy, based not on speculation but on real experience and summed up in three words—Tat tvam asī, 'Thou art Brahman'.”

Rabindranath is assuredly one of the greatest souls who have appeared in India in recent times and being what he is, he too, like his great predecessors, has "accepted the call of the teaching of the Vedanta,”—as I propose to show in this brief study.

Now, what is the Vedanta? No doubt, we have heard of the Prasthanā-Traya, the three Piṭakas or receptacles which hold the Vedānta, viz. the Upanisads, the Brahma-Sutras and the Bhagavad Gita. But when all is said and done, it is the Upanisads which are the primary Vedānta—Vedānto nāma Upanisad—and the ancient wisdom of the Rishis is truly enshrined therein.

Why is the Vedanta so called? Not only because it is the acme of all Vidyā (called "Veda" in the old days)—being itself the Parāvidyā—but because it is last in order of sequence in the Vedic Canon. It has been spoken of as Sarva-Vidyā-Pratiṣṭhā, the root-base of all the Sciences and Arts, which indeed derive their validity from it. It is verily like a lamp in a dark place, Cahanādhakāresviva Dipadarśanam—illuminating with its arc-light the darkest and most dismal problems of life.

Rabindranath, as far as I know, has never made a detailed study of the controversial aspects of the Vedānta, as we find them expounded by the famous commentators or in such jaw-
breaking Vedântic treatises as *Advaita Siddhi*; but that he is steeped through and through in the spirit of the Vedânta, none will dispute who has made even a cursory study of his works. From his boyhood upwards, as the son of a great Vedântist (Maharshi Debendranath Tagore), Rabindranath breathed the aroma of the Upanisads and were I a believer in the Darwinian theory of transmission of acquired qualities (a theory which the Neodarwinians have wholly repudiated), I would have claimed Rabindranath as a Vedântist by inheritance and would have said that the Vedânta runs in his blood. More than that: I can say from personal knowledge that he is thoroughly at home in the Upanisads.

Some time ago, I had occasion to write a review of the *Ten Principal Upanisads*—put into English by Purohit Swami and W. B. Yeats, which book the publishers introduced to the world in these words: “The translations hitherto available are out of date and are written in a style which fails to convey the magnificence of the poetry of the original.” Yeats was a master of English and naturally the translation sponsored by him is good—but only in parts. His great limitation was that he did not know one word of Sanskrit and made the translation “as though the original had been written in common English”; but common English, I venture to think, is hardly adequate in this case, for not only are the Upanisads mysticism and philosophy, but in the words of Yeats himself they are “most beautiful as literature”. In my review, after pointing out certain shortcomings of the translators, I suggested that if the translation was to breathe the spirit of the original, the translator should be a poet and a mystic at the same time, and I said that the only person I could think of in that connection, was Rabindranath and I prayed that he might make time some day to undertake a translation of the principal Upanisads, using as the vehicle of translation, not the “common English” of Yeats but the vibrant and sonorous English of his own *Gîtâjâli*.

When later I met Rabindranath at Kalimpong, I repeated
my prayer to him and almost persuaded him to accede to it,—but illness intervened and my whole scheme has, alas! “gone agley”.

I have been speaking of Rabindranath as a Vedāntist. But be it noted that, in the words of Ophelia, he “wears his rue (I mean his Vedānta) with a difference”. For instance, he does not believe in asceticism—V’airāgya.

বৈরাগ্যাধনে যুক্তি, সে আমার নয়।

রুষ্ট করি যোগাসন, সে নহে আমার।
যে কিছু আনন্দ আছে তৃষ্ণ গচ্ছে গানে নতুন আনন্দ রবে তার মাঝানে।

“Deliverance is not for me in renunciation,
I feel the embrace of freedom in a thousand bonds of
delight.”

“No, I will never shut the doors of my senses.
The delights of sight and hearing and touch
will bear Thy delight.” (Gītānjali.1)

So he exclaims—

মনিতে চাহি না আমি শুনর ভুবনে,
মানবের মাঝে আমি বংচিবারে চাই।
এই বুদ্ধিকর এই পুষ্পিত কাননে
জীবন্ত জ্ঞানমাঝে যেন স্থান পাই।

“I do not wish to die in this beautiful world,
I wish to live on in the world of men.
May I find my place in the light of the sun,
In these flowering gardens, in the midst of living hearts!”

1 Wherever possible the poet’s own rendering into English has been given, and the name of the book wherein it appears quoted.
What appeals to him is

ঠাং কখন সম্বাজেলায়
নাম-হারা ফুল গহ এলায়,
প্রভাতবেলায় হেলাভেলে করে অরুণ কিছু কিছু
উদ্ভূত যত শীতানী শিখারে রতোভেন্দুন গুহে গুহে।

"When of a sudden in the evening
The nameless flower spreads out its fragrance;
When in the early morn clusters of rhododendrons,
Swaying on the crest of the upraised branches,
Rival the glory of the dawn
In an easy abandon of pride."

Thus in his poem "Chitrā" he speaks of Prakriti in this wise:

সমাগতের মাঝে কত বিচিত্র তুমি হে
তুমি বিচিত্র রাগিণী।
.
.
.
মূঢ় মূঢ় বাঁধিয়ে মূঢ় আকাশে,
অলক-গঙ্গ উঠিয়ে মন বাড়ানে,
মূঢ় মূঢ় নিদর্শন-চিন্তে বিকাশে
কত মঞ্চ রাগিণী।

"Endlessly varied art thou in the exuberant world,
Lady of Manifold Magnificence! Thy path is strewn with
lights, thy touch thrills into flowers; that trailing skirt
of thine sweeps the whirl of a dance among the stars, and
thy many-toned music is echoed from innumerable worlds
through signs and colours." (The Fugitive.)

Mayā-Vāda, which is an integral part of Śankara's Vedānta,
is anathema to him:

হা রে নিরানন্দ দেশ, পরি জীব জন,
বহি বিজ্ঞতার বোধা, ভাবিতেছ মনে।
“Alas, my cheerless country, donning the worn-out
garment of decrepitude,
Loaded with the burden of wisdom, you imagine
you have seen through this fraud of creation.”

“Millions of living beings make up the vast fair of
this world
And you ignore it all as a child’s play!”

More than that: for him, Mukti is not the slipping of the dewdrop
into the shoreless sea to be lost therein:

यथा तत्तः स्फन्दित: सबुध्रे
अस्ति विभूति नामहे विधाय।

—“As the rivers moving into the ocean disappear, losing both
name and form.”

How then may he be regarded as a Vedāntist? Well, if
one has made a deep study of the Upanisads, he must be aware
that they are irrigated by two parallel streams of thought: (a)
the negative, impersonal, detached, indescribable perception of
the ineffable Brahman where the Absolute is spoken of as Neti
Neti, as the a-sabdam, a-spaśtam, etc.; and (b) the positive,
personal, intimate, adorable orison of the Godhead, when
Brahman is regarded as a wondrous Personality, Who closer than
breathing, nearer than hands and feet, reveals Himself as such to
the intuition of man—where He is Mahān Prabhūvai, Puruṣah:
the sovereign Lord, the supreme Person and is realised as
Love, as Rato vai sab, and as
"dearer than child, dearer than wealth, dearer than anything else."

Naturally it is this latter aspect which appeals to Rabindranath, and diving deep into the temple-cave of his own heart he speaks of Brahman as

সুদর হিমিরপূর্ণ তুমি নন্দন ফুলহার
তুমি অনন্ত নব বসতি অন্তরে আমার।

"Thou art the beautiful one, thou bringest delight to
my heart,
Thou art the garland of the flowers of paradise,
Thou blossomest as eternal spring in my heart."

and apostrophises Him thus in his intimate way:

ওহে অন্তরতম,
মিটেছে ফি তব সকল তিয়াব আসি' অন্তরে মম।
হংসমৃদ্ধের লক্ষ ধারায়
পাত ভক্ষিয়া দিয়েছি তোমায়,
নিঃসূন পীড়নে নিতেছি দেহ দলিত আমার মম।

"Thou dweller of my heart,
Art thou satisfied now that thou hast taken abode
in my soul?
In a thousand streams of grief and joy I filled your cup,
squeezing my heart like crushed grapes."

Again—

সীমার মাঝে অসীম তুমি বাঁধাও আপন মূর্ত
আমার মধ্যে তোমার প্রকাশ তাই এত মূর্তঃ

বোলো আজি তারে
চিনিয়াম তোমায়ে আমারে।
"Infinite art thou, playing thy tunes in finite modes,
That is why thy revelation in me is so beautiful."

"Tell him, now I have known
the mystery of thee and me.
O guest, ever expected,
Thou camest time and again
stealthily as a shadow to my door."

Does not that remind one of the Upanisadic passages—

\[ \text{गुहाहिंदे गाहरेह} \]
\[ \text{हरि भयम} \]
\[ \text{हुसा मनीषा मन्नासामिक्ल्लु} \]

"Cave-dweller is He—seated in the cavity, He is in the heart. By the heart, by intuition, by the illumined mind is He to be known."

More than that. He calls upon Him—

\[ \text{आहारे करो। तोमार नीण} \]

"Take me up Master-Musician! and make me thy harp. Let your delectable fingers sweep over my heart-strings and produce divine melody."

For we have to bear in mind that first and foremost Rabindranath is a poet and that good poetry, as Milton told us, must be simple, sensuous and impassioned. Rabindranath’s poetry has all these qualities but above all it is sensuous, which, of course, is not the same as sensual.

The Upanisads speak of the awesomeness of God—"He is like a lifted thunderbolt"—

\[ \text{महुर्मय्ये वक्ष्णुहल्ल} \]
“The wind blows for fear of Him and the sun rises. The fire burns, the lord of the Devas energises and Death proceeds too for fear of Him.”

Rabindranath is familiar with all this—for he has seen it and felt it—

रूढ़ि ! तोमार दारुण दौर्योगी
एसेहे छुयार भेदिया।

. . . . .
एसन समये ईशान ! तोमार
बिषय उठेहे बाजिया।

. . . . .
भैरव ! तुम्ही कि बेशे एसेहे
ललाटें कुसिंहे नागिनी;
रक्तमलाए एहि कि बाजिल
सुगृहसेत्रे रागिनी ?

“O Rudra, your awe-inspiring effulgence has come breaking through the door;

“While your trumpet, O Itâna, thunders.

“What a garb you have assumed, O Bhairava, ¹
The serpents are hissing on your brow.
Is this the music of the auspicious morn on your vînâ ?”

What appeals to him however is not this Aîtvarya but the Madhurya of Brahman—not His “majesty” but His “humility”.

¹ "Rudra", "Itâna" and "Bhairava" are names of Siva.
So he says:

"From afar I thought you were the merciless one,
under whose invincible sway the whole world
rocks in fear.
I thought you to be the terrible one,
whose tongue of fire flames in the broken heart of
the wretched.
When the trident in your right hand rose to the
storm-clouds to bring down thunder,
when the thunderbolt in your hand was ready to
be flung down,
I took you to be mightier than I.
Now that to strike me you have come down to
my own little world,
You have grown small and I am afraid no longer."

What a fine Vedântic, or shall we say Vaisnavic, touch!
Last but not least Rabindranath is a Vedântist by his
living sense of the abiding presence of God in all things.
Like Tennyson, he also has a constant feeling "of the actual
immanence of God in the infinitesimal atom as in the vastest system."

এ আমার শরীরের শিরায় শিরায়
যে পাঙ্ক-ভক্তমালা রাজিদিন ধায়
সেই প্রাণ ছুটিয়াছে বিষ-দিবিজ্জে,  
সেই প্রাণ অপরূপ জন্মে তালে লয়ে  
নাচিছে ভুবনে।

"The same stream of life that runs through my veins  
night and day  
runs through the world and dances in rhythmic measure."

( Gitānjali. )

Again:

হে নাথ, অবন্ত করি যাও নাই ফিরে  
আমার সে ধূলায়ক খেলাধুলে দেখে।  
খেলা মাঝে গোলিতে পেয়েছি থেকে থেকে  
যে চরণধরি, আজ গুনি তাই বাজে  
রপৎ-সরীব সাথে চক্রনৃত্য মাঝে।

"Thou didst not turn in contempt from my childish play  
among dust,  
and the steps that I heard in my playroom are the same  
that are echoing from star to star."

( Gitānjali. )

In the Upanisads, we read of the Rishi who addressing all  
"the sons of immortality" proclaims that he has known the divine  
effulgence beyond the depths of darkness—to know whom is  
the only path to immortal life.

• বেদাহম্ পর্জন্য মহানসম্

• আত্মিয়ক্ষে ত্বস্তঃ পরস্যাশ্চ।

"Verily have I known the great Purusa, the sun-hued one,  
beyond the darkness."

And the Rishi piles up salutation to Him who pervades and  
permeates the universe:
“To Him be salutation ever more—He who is in the fire, in the waters, in the plants and in the forest trees, who is everywhere.”

Rabindranath also has a similar vision and apostrophising the universal Lord, he addresses Him thus:

“Lord God of the universe!
in what form today
    art thou revealed before my eyes!
I have seen thee in the eastern sky,
ever bright in clear light,
Bestowing the boon of fearlessness
    thy hand rises as the Himāchal
    in silent blessing;
The sea touches thy feet and washes away the dust;
On thy breast lies at rest
the gleaming Ganga as a chain.''
(Shafee: N. Gupta’s rendering.)

Now from this sense of the immanence of God follows
as an inescapable corollary the solidarity of man—the feeling
that we are all rooted in the One Life so that the lowest is the
highest—Brabma Dāsāh Brabma Kitabāh—“God is in the sinner
as He is in the saint”, and the poet naturally inveighs against the
treatment meted out by the less enlightened among his country-
men to the Parias and the Panchamas:

हे मौर छँह्वाका देश, याहेदें करेंह अपमान,
अपमाने हँटेत हेबे ताहादेंके सबार समान
मान्हुसे अधिकारे
बर्कित करेंहेबे यादेन,
समुहे छाड़ौं के नेहे अकोले दाओ नाइंह स्थान,
अपमाने हँटेत हेबे ताहादेंके सबार समान॥

“O my unfortunate country, those whom you have debased,
they will drag you down to their own level,
those whom you have deprived of their human rights,
who stand before you but find no room in your lap,
they will drag you down to their own level.”

And to bring this lesson home to all and sundry, the poet tells
us in the poem, देशतार बिदाय (The Deity’s Farewell):

सद्याहे तत्त्वब करिलेन तारे
“आरे आरे अपबित, शुर हँटेबे यारे।”
से करिल “चलिलाम”—चंकेर विमेषे
विधारी धरिल मृप्ति देशतार वेश।

“Shrinking with disgust, the devotee cried,
‘Impure one, get thee gone!’”
'So be it,' He answered,
and in the twinkling of an eye,
the beggar has assumed the Deity’s shape.”

To clinch the matter the poet invites everyone to the grand ‘general-assembly’ of humanity in the poem, মহামানবের সাগর ভীরে (On the Sea-shore of Humanity):

এস ব্রাহ্মণ শুচি করি মন
ধরে হাত সবাকার
এস হে পতিত, হোক অপনাইত
সব অপমান ভার।

“Come Brahmin, chasten your heart
and stand in line with all;
Come outcaste, let your humiliation
be wiped out for ever.”

Note, however, that this is not merely the democratic equality of men but something deeper and more fundamental—for the poet realises in his heart of hearts that,

মোর মহুম্মত সে তো তোমারি প্রতিমা
আমার মহত্তে মম তোমারি মহিমা। মহেশ্বর।

“My humanity reflects the divine.
In the greatness of my soul,
He, the great Lord, proclaims Himself.”

That strikes—does it not? the fundamental note of the Vedânta. The same note rings out even when the poet is singing his patriotic songs:

হে রূপবীর, বাঙ্ঙা বাঙ্ঙা বাঙ্ঙা
হুণা করি মুরে আছে হারা আঞ্জা
বন্দ নাশিনে তারাতো আলিবে
“Let the harp of Rudra ring out!
Those who stand aloof in contempt,
even they shall come
when the obstacles fall away
and the path is made clear for them
— to stand in a ring on the sea-shore
of this vast humanity of India.”

And in ‘Jana-gana’, in which Rabindranath reaches the loftiest height of patriotic aspiration, he as a true Vedântist calls upon the Eternal Charioteer to lead our Nation to inevitable victory with the clangour of His conch-shell:

“Eternal Charioteer, thou drivest man’s history
along the road rugged with rises and falls of Nations.
Amidst all tribulations and terror
thy trumpet sounds to hearten those that despair
and droop,
and guide all people in their paths of peril and pilgrimage.

Thou Dispenser of India’s destiny,
Victory, Victory, Victory to thee!”

(The poet’s own rendering.)
THE POET IN PHILOSOPHY AND AFFAIRS

By James H. Cousins

It is characteristic of expression from the consecrated imagination that the complete import of its idea may be touched at any point in its utterance. The inner life of the supreme artist in literature may be figured as a sphere whose totality rests on every point on its surface. I found the total inner Rabindranath when, stretched on grass on a hillside in the Nilgiris on a vacation nineteen years ago, I read his new book entitled “Creative Unity” which had just reached me with the author’s own delicately bold signature, dated April 20, 1922, the very date of the writing of this article, again on the Nilgiris. In that small but immensely significant book I found the same clue to the entire life-work of Rabindranath, both before and after it, as I did to the life-work of AE in his equally small and equally significant “Song and its Fountains” ten years later, and both books sit together on my shelf in a companionship of revelation that has in it, I believe, the possibility of a revolution of world-values, in the art of the poet, and in the application of the poet’s thought and imagination to the affairs of humanity.

In “Creative Unity” Dr. Rabindranath Tagore has given to the world a volume which, by virtue of its transcendent qualities of utterance and content, takes rank among the masterpieces of literature; a volume which sets the profoundest synthetic thought close to the world’s vast problem of disease and agony today, and out of an unflinching but compassionate diagnosis prescribes for temporal ills heroic remedies from the pharmacopeia of eternal Truth. He has rendered a signal service to both literature and philosophy by giving his unique gifts of brilliant ideas, of splendour and vividness of metaphor and phraseology, to the expression of an urgent and world-embracing purpose, and by releasing philosophy from the bare prison of textualism and scholastic history, and setting it to the testing of
the activities of life with the warning, pleading, counselling trumpet of high literature at its lips. He has made it impossible for any who have ears to hear the resonant and shining message of this book to acquiesce any longer in the indolent and uncritical acceptance of literature as a polite mental and emotional libertinism and philosophy as its medicine and penance.

The central message of "Creative Unity" is its author's plea for the establishment in human relationships of a unity which, by participating in the universal function of creation, attains peace and joy; a creative unity in contradistinction to the present world-wide religious, racial and social disunity which, because it is essentially uncreative, and merely productive and destructive, is vowed to spiritual abasement, intellectual and emotional poverty and physical misery as its inevitable sequelae.

To realise the full significance of Rabindranath's call to creative unity in human affairs, it is necessary to understand the implications which he puts on the words "creative" and "unity". In the mind of India, of which Rabindranath is one of the most widely heard voices, there is postulated in the universe a creative Power, and a Substance which, in being capable of response to the Power, has within itself also the principle of creation. All activity of a creative kind is seen as the making of new combinations within limited areas of the unlimited possibilities of variation in life, substance and their forms. Creation in this sense is not simple reproduction or multiplicity, but the setting up of a process which draws around a special centre of energy certain related expressions in substance and quality, and the "making" of some new object of art that thrills both maker and beholder with joy in the disclosure through things finite of the wonder and beauty of the Infinite. Artistic creation is possible only through acts of unification in materials and qualities: social creation, instead of the vast antagonistic proliferations of today, is possible only through acts of unification in the thoughts
and feelings, the aims and movements, of human beings. Says Rabindranath:

We feel that this world is a creation; that in its centre there is a living idea which reveals itself in an eternal symphony played on innumerable instruments all keeping perfect time. We know that this great world-verse, that runs from sky to sky, is not made for the mere enumeration of facts; it has its direct revelation in our delight. That delight gives us the key to the truth of existence; it is personality acting upon personalities through incessant manifestations.

When a great seer and sayer points his finger towards “the truth of existence”, it behoves those who have set out with open eyes on exploration for that very Truth, to pay close heed to all that is involved in the crucial statement that “the truth of existence” is “personality acting on personalities. . . .” This full-minded attention is all the more necessary here because it happens that, through the exigencies of a language in which the mental and material solidity of the ancient Greek genius is predominant, the only word “personality” that Rabindranath could find for the full expression of that ultimate Being, or Life, or Consciousness within which “our little systems” and the incalculable universes revolve, is commonly used as meaning the reverse. And this workaday meaning of the word “personality” has come down through two thousand years of verbal custom from the days of the theatre of Greece and Rome, when, as in the Noh-drama of Japan today, the actor hid himself behind a persona, or mask (Latin, per, through; soro, to speak; that through which the actor spoke).

In the vocabulary of “Creative Unity” the derivation of “personality” is taken further back, from the thing spoken through, to the living speaker; and this deepening of meaning refers not only to the personalities that are as cells in the body of the Great Personality, but also to the Great Personality Itself. Within the totality of existence and within its details there is consciousness, feeling, activity. No one of these terms gives full expression to the entity in whom these functions are co-
ordinated and given unity of life. The word "personality" is taken as coming nearest to adequacy of meaning.

It is obvious that a mind to which this "truth of existence" (personality acting on personalities within the "Divine Personality" that contains them, as Rabindranath avers) is not merely a literary idea but a statement of reality, cannot but look with disapproval on any human activity whose tendency is towards exclusiveness or the building of obstructions against the flow of the Universal Life. There is within each human being the impulse to creative unity. Says Rabindranath:

It is the object of this Oneness within us to realise its infinity by perfect union of love with others. All obstacles to this union create misery, giving rise to the baser passions that are expressions of finitude, and of that separateness which is negative and therefore 

māyā.

Now the word "love" used in the foregoing quotation from "Creative Unity" is not a mere evaporation from the surface of a fluid sentimentality. It is the poet's expression of the fact that in the Universal Life there is a principle of cohesion through which it maintains its identity and continues its activity. Take away the cohesive principle of love from the Universal Being, and it would disintegrate into nothingness—but the notion is absurd, for Life and Love are fundamental; you cannot get around them, or behind them, or through them, or beyond them. "In love we find a joy which is ultimate because it is the ultimate truth."

Love, too, was the ultimate truth to Rabindranath's immortal brother-poet, Shelley; but it is characteristic of the different approach of West and East to "ultimate truth" that to Shelley love was the means to personal liberation, while to Rabindranath it is the cord of individual, social, national and international binding. In the ultimate both reach the same end. The freedom of love that Shelley dreamed of was freedom for love to find its full expression and voluntarily to seek its affinities; the binding that Rabindranath affirms is the voluntary merging of
the self of illuminated human beings with others through love. The one dreamed of love attainable; the other affirms love present, and invincible if put into action. The western poet, from the side of humanity capable of Divinity, says, "We must be free in order to love"; the eastern poet, from the side of Divinity in humanity, says, "We must love in order to be free", and affirms the recognition of the essential unity of humanity as the measure and test of all movements that take to themselves the sacred name of freedom.

This measure and test is central in Rabindranath's message to the world in its application to the world-struggle now going on. The real struggle at every stage of human history, whether between nations, as between Britain and India, or within nations, as between the falsely rival communities in India, has been, he says, "between the living spirit of the people and the methods of nation-organising"; between the expanding soul of humanity in India or England, and mechanical limitations that refuse to adapt themselves to that expansion. Growth is inevitable, but "growth is not that enlargement which is merely adding to the dimensions of incompleteness"; it is "the movement of a whole to a yet fuller wholeness", a movement that implies flexible organisation at every stage of the process; the shaping service of a limitation that is yet free from rigidity, "some spiritual design of life" which curbs antagonistic activities, and transforms apparently incongruous groups into an "organic whole".

This organic condition of human society implies harmonious relationships. When "Creative Unity" was written, the political leaders of Europe were seeking a false harmony through a balance of power. Rabindranath saw that this attempt was doomed to failure, as we see today. He saw and declared that the strong think only of the strong and ignore the weak, wherein, he said, lay the peril of their losing the harmony at which they aimed, and of collapsing in a welter of still greater destruction than that from which they were then, after the war of 1914-1918, blindly trying to extricate themselves. He summed
up the situation at that time in a passage that is not only literature at its highest, but a prophecy and warning whose fulfilment we are witnessing today in Europe, and to some extent in Asia.

Politicians calculate upon the number of mailed hands that are kept on the sword-hilts; they do not possess the third eye to see the great invisible hand that clasps in silence the hand of the helpless and waits its time. The strong form their league by a combination of powers, driving the weak to form their own league with their God. I know I am crying in the wilderness when I raise the voice of warning; and while the West is busy with its organisation of a machine-made peace, it will continue to nourish by its iniquities the underground forces of earthquake in the eastern continent. The West seems unconscious that science, by providing it with more and more power, is tempting it to suicide and encouraging it to accept the challenge of the disarmed; it does not know that the challenge comes from a higher source.

What is the way of escape from the universal catastrophe that was inherent in the circumstances pointed out by Rabindranath twenty years ago and that is now upon the nations? An indication of the way has moved by implication through the book. The solid clear-edged path of constructive idealism is under every step of the poet’s criticism. He declares that “all systems produce evil sooner or later when the psychology which is at the root of them is wrong.” He does not put his faith in systems or institutions but in individuals “all over the world who think clearly, feel nobly and act rightly...” For such individuals,

the highest purpose of this world is not merely living in it, knowing it and making use of it, but realising our own selves in it through expansion of sympathy; not alienating ourselves from it and dommitating it, but comprehending and uniting it with ourselves in perfect union.

Two means at hand to this end are education and art; in the first, but in a different form and spirit from that obtainable in India today, can be found a meeting-ground between persons and groups of persons “where there can be no question of con-
flicting interests”, but only a common pursuit of truth and a common sharing of the world's heritage of culture; in the second is the means of attainment of expression, which is fulfilment.

In everyday life our personality moves in a narrow circle of immediate self-interest, and therefore our feelings and events, within that short range, become prominent subjects for ourselves. In their vehement self-assertion they ignore their unity with the All... But art gives our personality the disinterested freedom of the eternal, there to find it in its true perspective.

There are other means, political, economical and the like, but to some of us education including art appears to be fundamental and essentially inclusive, and we give Rabindranath our gratitude for his objective efforts towards the establishment of true education in India.

In an address at Santiniketan, that home of the spirit in which I have had the happiness of staying occasionally, Rabindranath recently spoke of his approaching departure from this planet. But whatever he takes with him, there are and will be a vast company to whom his beautiful and sagacious spirit will be a perpetual presence through the utterances of his mind and imagination:

The wisdom which is wiser than things known,
The beauty which is fairer than things seen,
Dreams which are nearer to eternity
Than that most mortal tumult of the blood...

as Arthur Symons wrote; and of that company in the remainder of this life and in lives to come I shall be one.
ON THE EIGHTIETH BIRTHDAY OF POET
RABINDRANATH TAGORE

The Indian poet, old and wise,
Is young with eighty years behind.
Like Buddha, rich in hope of life,
He breathes world-love to every mind.
O voice of a culture as old as mine!
Whose truth remains for us to find.
Forever, like the Ganges stream,
You sing with words severe and kind.

Chen Li-Fu

Dr. Chen Li-Fu is the Minister of Education of the National Government of China.
TAGORE’S SONGS

By Dhurjati Mukherjee

In Indian music, little distinction has been made so far between composition and execution. The specialties of the system, its nuances and nature of improvisation, were not favourable to notation that could divide the labour. Oral tradition was the rule here as in all other branches of learning which the Indian understood more as techniques of experiencing than ways of knowledge. A general feudal atmosphere was also congenial. The immediate reason, however, was that both poetry and music served religion. Bhaktas and Sādhakas would not distinguish the functions of the two arts so long as their chants were the outpourings of their devotion. It is strange but true that practically the entire corpus of pre-British Bengali poetic literature, the Dohas, the Mangala Kavyas, the Padāvalis, the Shyamā and Umā cycles were paens of praise of gods and goddesses. But, probably, the music of these chants, except where it was touched by that of the courts, was not of a high standard. On the other hand, the Pathan and the Mughal courts had taken up music seriously, and a good deal of accessory values was shed. Not that in Dhrupad and Dhamār (Hori) fine sentiments, religious and lyric, were lacking, but the gods retreated before the monarchs who could excite loyal feelings but not high poetry. In Kheyal, the pieces had to be composed with an ear for improvisation. Later on, words became pegs to hang the melody upon. The public never took kindly to this separation. In the country-side, the old devotional styles were popular, though they were fast losing their pristine quality of directness. At this stage, composers did appear, particularly, in the South. But the prestige of Durbari music was so great in the North that there could be no equivalent to Thyagaraja’s Kirtans. Even now, ‘songs’ have a lower prestige than say ‘ālāp’ with an audience that has
pretensions to musical culture. Bhajan, Ghazal and Thumri, though they be of Mira Bai, Iqbal or Kadar Piya are banned from pucca programmes. The sophisticated audience of the North would much rather listen to the mispronounced and half-muttered half a line of Sadarang spread over half an hour or to a Tirana that has no meaning and go in raptures over its execution than waste their appreciation over the loveliest lyrics of Kabir or Bihari. Though the state of things marked the self-government of music as a distinct art, it could not have any future, as it was eating up its own resources. Autarchy had to be broken in the interests of freedom; the development of music necessitated composers. Tagore’s contribution to Indian music is to be primarily understood in this context of the dynamics of growth.

Tagore’s own development as a composer has largely followed the needs of the development of Indian musical forms. This is as it should be. A great man cannot but repeat in himself all the vital stages of life and culture. He pushes some ahead and releases the energies of others. But he exploits them all. There are at least four milestones in the history of his composition. In the first, he was following the behests of practice and writing poems to well-known melodic patterns. Conformity was the rule. Even then, the earlier pieces had two elements of novelty. They gave little scope to ‘tāns’ and ‘kartabs’. Much of this restriction was due to the Dhrupadic structure of the songs, to the richness of the poetry, and to the peculiar deficiency of the language as he found it then in the matter of vowels, the preponderance of consonants and abrupt endings of words. Besides, they would describe the dramatic features of the story-element, e. g., the songs of Bālmiki-Pratibha and Māyār Khela. Hindusthani music also possesses elements of surprise in permutations and combinations of notes, in murchhanā, cbhut, gamak, etc. Among these the first, viz., Kartab-tāns are almost excluded in Dhrupad. So the others alone can be used, and they were used. But, and this is the
touch of Tagore, when these existing dramatic conventions were not sufficient, Tagore was not averse to the adaptation of European airs for his purpose. It was of course more than mere passive adaptation, it was an authentic act of creation. Pluck out the words of these songs with 'foreign' airs, and you get the skeleton of the Indian rāga, often in a different key. Yet, taking all the songs that he wrote before, say 1900, the general feature was an elastic orthodoxy rather than a controlled heterodoxy. In fact, the musicians and the 'cultured' audience had not yet cursed Tagore with bell, book and candle; nay, his Brahmo Sangeets were popular with the Ustāds.

Gradually, however, Tagore's heresy was peeping out. He was blending airs, mixing up castes. From its early days, the Indian musical system has been classified into 'jātis', 'rāgas' and 'rāginis'. The essence of the scheme is the fixation of the genus and the species according to structures. In the 'ṭhāṭs', as the genus may be called, the bare essentials are indicated in a sequence of notes, and any aberration therefrom in the development is regarded as an offence against basic values. At the same time, however, latitude has always been given to admixture in the execution of characteristic phrases of two or three cognate 'rāgas' or species within the same 'ṭhāṭ' or genus. This was at once a concession to the physical limitations of the voice, to the inner impulse to cross artificial barriers and a recognition of emotive affinities. In Darbari Kanada and Bahar the difference in 'ṭhāṭ' is transcended by a fundamental similitude that comes out in tāns. The various texts (Shastras, as they are called) did come to terms with the realities of the situation and recognised these alliances with trans-frontier rāgas. Throughout the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, practising artists had been preparing all kinds of mixtures of species. Some like Jhinjit-Khambaj became very popular, a number like Gaud-sarang, Nat-kedar, Puriyadhyansri were taken unto the bosom of the elite, while others like Bhairon-bahar, Eman-bilawal remained to prove the unique virtuosity of certain families. It is no exaggeration to say that
there are few species in Hindusthani music which are anthropologically pure, though the Ustâds are always swearing by purity. Tagore demolished this myth by the very principle of the growth and the very practice of the art of music. Objectively, that principle had remained long in the dark, and become radioactive. In this way, at least twenty new species or Râginis have been sponsored by him and their survival value tested.

The third period marks the consummation of Tagore’s experiments. His choice was clear: either he would remain content with what he had achieved in the way of new combinations of melodies and wait for time to antiquate the opposition to his novelties and be classed in future with the master-composers, like Tânsen or Thyagaraja, or he would push on to the creation of further forms driven by the urge of newer drives. A genuine revolutionary that he is, he could not but take the next step forward, even if it was further away from the ken of the classicist’s approval. The drives came from ‘folk-songs’, as they were called, but which were highly sophisticated in their way. Hindusthani music was always conscious of their separate existence and called them ‘Deshi’ or ‘Artha-sangit’. In other words, they were laden with literary values. From one point of view, they were like the native states where Indians were Indians as they would like to be known by non-Indians. Their stress was on words and their meaning, on devotion and its accessories, love and its aphrodisiacs, and life with its realities. Music as such was a subordinate factor there; only a means to an end. In short, these Deshi songs had both a popular and a collective appeal in its meaning-side. But they had certain other qualities which the Mârga or the Durbari style did not possess.

Springing from that great protestant movement of the Middle Ages, the Deshi-songs partook of the directness of individual approach to the Divine, i.e. without the help of intermediaries. Therefore, their spirit was not only congenial to Tagore’s spirit of dissent, but his philosophy of life. As a râga in the Mârga style was a generic structure of notes and thus disregardful of
individual emotions that a song could convey, its protest in the Deshi style would naturally take the line of particularising the generalities of classical modes through words that conveyed specific meanings. Two results ensued therefrom. First: instead of the prolonged development of a mode, as in 'ālāp' or in 'āsthāyi,' the infinite variety of the mode was expressed in different compositions that conformed to the essentials of the rāga and yet did justice to its shades of differences. It is, as it were, instead of Bhairavi being spread over on one plane and over one stretch of long period, its multiplicity would be specified in a dozen songs in Bhairavi, differing between themselves in moods and nuances and communicating the distinctions through appropriate meanings in words. The second result was the birth of the art of composition as such. As has been indicated above, the art of composition had fallen to a low level, even in Bengal, where the poetic tradition was richer than elsewhere and closely allied to some form of music or other. But in the British period, barring one or two men, and they too insufficiently, no writer of songs had either fully considered the musical value of words or the verbal appropriateness of musical feeling. The heaviest rāgas had light bodies and the lightest rāgas had armours of medieval knights. No wonder that the Lady of music remained in the Ogre's castle. Tagore released her from the bondage through the tactics of proper equipments. His Todi and Malhar clothed dignified sentiments and his light songs got their Khambaj and Pilu. The Bengali language offered difficulties, no doubt, but they were surmounted easily by the wizard who had in more than one sense created that language itself. Here came the importance of the Deshi melodic patterns. They demanded simplicity and directness; individual and specific moods; and an upsurge of feeling. Tagore provided them with all that they wanted. If in the meanwhile they took him away from well-trodden familiar paths, he could quote the lessons of music's own history in our land and refer to that superior logic that impels worn-out forms to seek life
from the soil or be damned otherwise. Was not Dhrupad, as we know it, the regional style of Agra and Gwalior?—Was not Deshi itself a classical mode?

In the last phase, through which he is passing, his musical genius discovered new dimensions. Throughout his long career, he has been throwing up musical dramas in which the members of his family, at first, and later on, the gifted members of Santiniketan were rendering him every assistance. From the time of Fālguni, Calcutta has been looking forward every year to the Santiniketan festivals in which dignified acting, beautiful dresses, artistic scenes would be harmonised by lovely music. India has also had her lavish share in the glory of this mosaic. Here also Tagore’s development has been striking. What might be called the preponderance of music has been controlled by dance and drama into perfect proportions. The organic integrity of Chitrangada cannot be split up into component parts. It is something more than an opera, as is usually understood; the subtlety of its sentiments and the extreme refinement of its lyrics would in any case raise it to a higher level. Within the limitations of Indian music, the drama is fully conveyed. Dance and dresses contribute to the totality of its musical effect. Indian music has at last corresponded, as far as it can, to the subtleties of Indian life.

I have deliberately used the word ‘composer’ and ‘composition’ in this essay, and the reason is important. Tagore is no mere writer of songs, as many would wrongly believe. Excepting some of the very early period, he has seldom written a poem to be set to music at leisure. Poems and their musical forms come to him complete, at one and the same moment. This is possible because he is an executant himself, and of no mean order. The process of fusion has been further facilitated by the fact that his poetry has crossed similar hurdles to reach open spaces; it has released similar energies in literature; and both have been impelled by a common urge to freedom. A composer’s final test is the aptness of the fit between form and content.
Separately, the musical pattern should have as high a distinction as the poetical. That is to say, each is valuable *per se*. No appraisement of the place of Tagore's compositions in the history of Indian music need take away anything from their individual achievements either as poetry or as musical pattern. Here I can only point out the exquisite workmanship of the latter in the context of the whole composition.
OLD MEMORIES

By Indira Devi Chaudhuri

In my school days, I remember we used to sing a song beginning with the lines:

O Memory, sweet Memory!
When all things fail, we fly to thee.

Unfortunately, by the time all other things fail, Memory, our last refuge, begins to fail also. And perhaps it is just as well.

Some people's lives don't seem to make much impression on themselves, and I believe I belong to that category. Yet looking back, I can hardly remember a time when our family life did not include my uncle Rabindranath, and when we were not influenced by him, in our work and play, in our music, reading and festive gatherings. I am afraid children are apt to take greatness for granted, and it doesn't make much difference to them, even when seen at close quarters. And besides, he wasn't so great then as to make the whole world kin. So we had him more to ourselves.

I remember going with him to Bankim Chatterjee's house as a little girl, and accompanying him to meetings and such like places, though what I could possibly understand about it all, Heaven alone knows. You know the way children stick to those who are fond of them.

Another early memory is connected with going to Jessore with a family party bent on seeking a bride for my uncle, and the various houses we visited. Jessore has always been the happy hunting-ground for brides of the Tagore family, as being a Pirali 2 colony; and I must say the selection made mostly by maid-

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1 Daughter of Satyendranath Tagore, the Poet's older brother.—Ed.
2 Particular sect of Brahmins.
servants in former days, did credit to their taste. Jessore happens to be my maternal home also, and this visit will always stand out as one of the rare occasions when I have seen the countryside of Bengal; and to mention another purely personal and trivial incident, when two of my uncles taught me how to tell time by the clock!

Music has always played and still plays an important part in our family, and some of my earliest recollections cluster round that magical art. My mother had that supreme gift in a woman called centrality, and was able to gather round her the diverse members of a large joint-family and make them co-operate in many a private theatrical performance; so that we almost lisped in songs. I still remember singing a song as a mere child, the first line of which may be roughly translated as—“Speak to me of love no more”—which came out of one of my uncle Jyotirindra’s dramas (where are those once popular dramas now?—Consigned to the limbo of oblivion, alas!) and which rejoiced in the title of Italian Jhinjhit,—much to the amused astonishment of my listeners, I presume. But what can you expect of children brought up on the love-ditties of Bhanusinha?1 Dinendranath2 also put his foot into it badly once, when his grandfather overheard him singing one of the latter’s own compositions, not quite suited to his age. But children are only pretty Pollies after all, and it is for their elders to mind their p.’s and q.’s before them!

In his early youth Rabindranath was not averse to singing English songs, though he never took any special training. But then in what subject has he ever undergone the usual training, if you come to think of it? I remember that, when an obstreperous school-boy once pleaded as his excuse for failing that Rabindranath had not passed the Matriculation, I replied:

1 Pseudonym under which Rabindranath published one of his earliest books of lyrics (1885).—Ed.
2 The Poet’s grand-nephew, who wrote the notations of most of his songs. One of the most gifted musicians of his time.—Ed.
"It may be that Rabindranath hasn’t passed the Matric, but not passing that examination won’t turn one into a Rabindranath!" However, that is by the way. My memory in this case goes as far back as England in the seventies, when we were tiny tots, and my uncle used to sing "Won’t you tell me Mollie darling", and "Darling, you are growing old" to us. Perhaps these songs were then the rage, as "O my darling Clementine" or something else may be now. But I had better not date myself by mentioning names. Later on, when I was old enough to accompany him on the piano, "Come into the garden, Maud", "Goodbye sweetheart, goodbye", and "In the gloaming" were some of the songs he used to sing,—the old fashioned names of which will probably evoke a supercilious smile on the lips of post-Victorian singers, if there be any such who happen to have even heard of them. The old songs are still there, but who will sing them now, —or ever? Even a piece of paper, with care, will outlast the longest life. The simple airs of Scotch and Irish ballads have influenced his music to a certain, though very little, extent; and he has also set words to some of them, after the necessary adaptation.

Rabindranath had a high tenor voice in his younger days, and his natural pitch was the key of F; whereas nowadays D sharp (with a short d!) —I have often wondered why the Bengali name for that note was never considered good enough!—seems to be the usual pitch for amateurs; and girls prefer a note or two (or even three) lower than the normal middle C. Which reminds one of the old story in Punch, in which the singer begins the song "Deeper and deeper still" in the key of C, and ends somewhere around A flat,—having evidently taken his words too literally!

Though Rabindranath has been composing songs from childhood, yet his former output bears no comparison in quantity with the everlasting fount of song which seems to have been released after his return from Europe in or about 1912, and which has been welling forth unremittingly almost to this day. Even the stalwart Dinendranath was unequal to the stupendous
task of coping in print with this unending flow of composition; though the pains he has taken to note down the major portion has earned him the gratitude of all Bengali music-lovers and admirers of the Poet. I have done a fair share of notation in my time also; and it was one of my standing quarrels with Dinendranath, that in the matter of old songs I refused to admit his authority, though as far as my uncle's modern songs went, I was ready to bow to his decision. It is a well-known fact that Rabindranath is forgetful and cannot reproduce his own compositions correctly, so that a constant controversy rages round the correct rendering and notation of his songs. Though the gap left by Dinendranath is impossible to fill, yet it is heartening to see that music-lovers are not wanting in Santi-niketan, who are persevering and competent enough to carry on his labours of love. The starting of an amateur association in Calcutta, styled the Geetali, with the object of teaching the Poet’s songs correctly, is worth mentioning here, as it has received his benediction. Perhaps the tenderest spot in his heart is reserved for his songs.

As the years roll on, variegated pictures flit across the screen of memory, comprising monthly services of the now moribund Adi Brahmo Samaj, where again I accompanied Rabindranath on the organ; occasional visits to my father on the Bombay side, including the pretty harbour of Karwar, from where my uncle came home to marry; and the advent of his children, one by one. How fair his eldest daughter Bella was, and how like a wax doll she looked with her curly hair and rosy cheeks, when she came in the carriage one day to fetch me from school, on their return from Darjeeling! They made their home with us occasionally, and even at Jorasanko my mother assisted at every childbirth, and also looked after the younger children, when they became motherless, years afterwards. Was ever a man so stricken in his family life as Rabindranath, and so glorified in public at the same time? Most of his children and his only grandson have left him before their time, his only surviving son
is childless, and there will be practically none in future to carry
on his name,—that name he has so covered with lustre both at
home and abroad.

Then come at random, as we grow older, scenes of more
private theatricals, both at Jorasanko and our house, in some of
which perhaps we take part. Rabindranath of course has always
been a consummate actor, and so were his nephews Gaganendra
and Dinendra. Two plays that may be mentioned out of many,
are the oft-repeated yet ever-popular Vālmiki Pratibba, which
is my ideal of what an opera should be; and the first perfor-
ance of Visarjan, held for the benefit of the University Institute.
Most probably the present members of that body are ignorant
of the debt they owe to the previous generation. The tuneful
opera Māyār Khela was also composed in aid of a charitable
institution, and its catchy numbers were much appreciated even
by Europeans. Then there were the meetings of the Kham-
kejali Club, with its original and artistic decorations of the
festive floor. In fact, Art and Music have gone hand in hand
throughout Rabindranath’s life, and have stamped him as the
favourite child that he is of the divine mother Saraswati. It is a
pleasure to see his son and daughter-in-law, such worthy followers
of his, in the cult and quest of beauty.

Pleasure-trips in my uncle Jyotirindra’s steamers should
perhaps have been mentioned earlier, but the correct sequence of
events does not matter in rambling recollections such as these.
Unfortunately, the pleasure was short-lived, as he lived to rue
the day when he bought the first hulk as a business proposition.
But we were too young then to understand these money matters,
and the sweets we used to gorge ourselves with on board were
more in our line. I must say river-air does what one’s appetite!

Social gatherings at the Vichitra,—that home of my uncle’s
which was home to him no longer—bring us down to compara-
tively modern days. Many of the present generation will
remember the pleasant literary and musical evenings that were
held there, and the constant stream of friends and visitors that
flowed towards it, whenever my uncle happened to be in Calcutta. The era of *Sabuj Patra* also must not be forgotten. Bolpur then used to divide the honours with Calcutta, and it is only when Rabindranath went to settle in Santiniketan for good, that he became as it were public property, and more or less a stranger to his own kith and kin. If there is a twinge of jealousy in the above remark, it is only as natural as it is for a child to leave his mother’s lap to become a man, and for a man to leave his family circle to become a greater man; and the greater the man, the greater will be the world for him to conquer and make his own.

Personally speaking,—and one cannot eliminate the first person singular altogether—I shall always account it one of my proudest privileges that some of his loveliest poems,—the triad beginning with “This sea-girt earth that swings in heaven’s expanse”—were addressed to me. And in this first and last public tribute of mine, I cannot help associating with me that other one so near and dear to my uncle, who would have responded with such alacrity to a similar call, had he not gone before.

In the evening of his life and ours, what are the qualities that strike one in Rabindranath’s personality, and that stand out all the more clearly owing to this very distance? To put it concisely, I should say his versatility and vitality. It is almost bewildering to think of the manifold facets of human intelligence and activity that have been illumined by the touch of his genius, the wonderful zest and energy which refuse to succumb to the inevitable curse of old age and disease, and the firm faith which continues to believe in the ultimate triumph of good, in the face of overpowering odds.

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1 A literary monthly, started in 1914 and edited by the writer’s husband, Sj. Pramatha Chaudhury. Many of Rabindranath’s writings of that period were first published in it.
2 The reference is to the writer’s brother, Sj. Surendranath Tagore, who was closely associated with his uncle’s literary activities. He passed away in May 1940.
So let us leave him, unimpaired in mind, if not in body, crowned with inward glory and the homage of his countrymen. Must such an eye and ear needs become enfeebled, such a hand also lose its cunning?—Verily, inscrutable are the ways of Providence. Life is at once too long and too short, too frail and too tenacious. To end as I began with the words of an old song, the sweet tune of which raises it above the commonplace:

Meeting and parting, in this world must ever be,
Meeting and parting,—parting on life's mystic sea.

May he rest in peace here and hereafter!
TAGORE AS SEER AND PROPHET OF ARYA DHARMA

By S. K. Maitra

I thank the Editor of the Visva-Bharati Quarterly for asking me to write something for the Special Number of his Journal, as it gives me an opportunity of offering my humble tribute to Dr. Tagore on the occasion of his eightieth birthday. Dr. Tagore’s genius is so many-sided that it is difficult to choose a subject on which to write on an occasion like this. Ten years ago, on a similar occasion, I chose as the subject of my paper for the Golden Book of Tagore his philosophy of personality. To-day, ten years later, when, in fullness of years and richness of spiritual experience, he looks a perfect picture of our ancient Rishis, I can think of no better subject than the one I have put on the top of this page. Yes, it is as seer and prophet of Arya Dharma that Tagore appears to us to-day, and my object in this paper is to exhibit this character of his as revealed in his writings. As the space at my disposal is extremely limited, I propose to confine myself to what we can gather from the volumes of his religious essays and sermons that were published under the titles, respectively, of Dharma and Santiniketan.

Dr. Tagore has indicated in the essay “The simple Ideal of Religion” in his book Dharma what his conception of Arya Dharma is. In sublimity of thought and grandeur of expression, it is difficult to find a better exposition of Arya Dharma than what is presented in this essay. In this essay he says that the ideal of religion is simplicity, not complexity. It is however, the bane of human civilization that it renders the simplest things most complex. This is nowhere more evident than in religion, where by setting up what are called religious institutions, man has crushed the true religious spirit under a heap of soulless forms.
Why has this been so? The reason is that instead of ourselves conforming to the spirit of religion, we have made religion conform to ourselves. In other words, we have employed religion as a tool, as a mere instrument for the realization of our practical purposes. And it is for this reason that religion, far from being a unifying force, has become a disruptive agency.

How can we prevent this? How can religion be again made a unifying force? The poet’s answer may be summed up in these pithy words: If religion becomes a Dharma and ceases to be a mere religion. What, however, is a Dharma? What is its distinguishing feature? The word Dharma is derived from the Sanskrit root dhr, to hold. It is therefore that which holds the universe together. If it relates to a part of the universe, if it becomes a matter for this race or that community, then it degenerates into a mere religion, and causes the strifes and discords, the disastrous effects of which we feel only too palpably to-day.

To keep Dharma in its pure state what is necessary is that we should be in perpetual contact with the infinite. We should not erect walls around us so as to prevent the light of the infinite from reaching us. The poet gives here a beautiful example. He says a house is necessary for man, but equally necessary for him is open air. If he wants to cover the whole space with masonry, without leaving any opening for the outside air to enter his house, then the house ceases to be a house and becomes a prison. So also we become merely prisoners of our own conventions if we stop all access to the light of the infinite. This is, in fact, what the institutional religions have done; they have made us prisoners of artificial forms.

A true picture of the ideal of religion we get in the Gāyatrī verse. The poet then gives a magnificent exposition of this verse which every Hindu ought not only to read but also to digest, as the Gāyatrī mantra is the most sacred mantra of the Vedas. The verse begins with the words \( \text{ॐ मुर्गुः स्वः} \). This
portion of the verse is called ‘vyāhṛti’. The word ‘vyāhṛti’ means gathering from all round. It means, as the poet beautifully explains, gathering the bhūrloka, bhūvarloka, svārloka, in other words, the whole universe, within the mind, contemplating oneself as a citizen of the whole universe, and not merely of this or that country. In this way, the poet continues, the true Aryan at least once a day places himself in the midst of the sun, the moon and the stars and realizes his essential unity with the whole universe. And while doing so, he utters the mantra तत्स्वाछिन्दुतरं र्गर्गादेवस्य चिन्ताहि “We contemplate the glorious light of the god Savitri.”¹ But on what principle are we to contemplate the glorious light? What is the thread by which we are connected with the Lord of the universe? The answer is given in the concluding portion of the verse: अयो येव न: प्रकृति सत्वम् “May he direct our intellect!”² It is therefore through our intellect that we are to contemplate him. The poet explains this beautifully as follows: “How do we know the light of the sun? We know it by the rays which the sun itself is giving us. Similarly, we know the generator of the whole universe with the help of the power of the intellect which he has given us—that power by virtue of which I cognize myself as well as everything that goes on in the outer world. This power of the intellect is his gift, and with its help I realize his power in the inmost essence of my being. Just as in the outer world, I realize him as the generator of the lokas, so in the inner world, I realize him as the constant director of my intellect. Outside, the world, and inside, my intellect—these two are manifestations of the same power. Knowing this, and realizing in this way the intimate relationship of the universe with my mind and my mind

¹ I have faithfully followed the poet’s translation of this line, with one exception, and that is that I have translated bhārgas as ‘light’ and not as ‘power’ as the poet has done.

² It is curious that neither Griffith nor Wilson translated dhīyah as intellect. Griffith translated it as ‘prayer’ and Wilson as ‘pious rites’. Wilson, however, has admitted in a footnote that the word may mean also ‘intellect’. Śāyana has given two meanings of the word, as ‘karmāṇि’ and as ‘buddhi’.
with Sachchidananda, I obtain emancipation from all narrowness, selfishness, fear and grief.”

From this beautiful interpretation of the meaning of the Gayatri mantra which, according to the poet, contains the essence of the ideal of religion, we notice two things: Firstly, that the ideal of religion can only be realized if we open out all the windows of our being to the infinite light from above. Secondly, that the medium through which we can communicate with the Infinite Source is our intellect. Of course, we should not interpret the word intellect in a narrow sense. It is not merely logical reason but the higher powers of cognition by which alone we can get access to the ultimate mysteries of the universe.

As with knowledge, so also with the practical handling of life’s problems, the teaching of our ancient sages was simplicity itself. सत्यां दुःखाये सत्यां स्वाभाविक संयतो मदेन्, “The man who wants happiness must place contentment within his heart and practise self-control.” The meaning of this is that happiness is not something to be found outside, but is wholly internal. If a man possesses this simplicity which comes from perfect self-control, he can be happy even under the most gloomy outward surroundings.

The way of India, the poet says, has never been to chase after phantoms. She never believed there was any virtue in mere knocking about, in aimless wandering from place to place. What she taught was that we should hold fast to that which is inexhaustible, which is steadfast, which is simple, for it is this which is true, it is this which is eternal. Temporary advantage one may obtain by deviating from the path of simplicity, from the path of truth, but India has always scorned such a temporary advantage:

अथर्याटे ताड़तू ततो भद्राणि पश्यति ।
तत: सप्तवाच जयति समुखस्तु विनिस्थतिः ॥

“The path of unrighteousness may lead to temporary gains, one
may for the time being prosper, one may even defeat enemies, but it inevitably leads to total destruction.”

सत्यो भव सत्यमयं तत्सत्य सत्य ज्योतिष्ठय सन्तु गमयः

“Lead us from untruth to truth, from darkness to light, from death to the deathless.” This is the message of India. The need which she has stressed as our real need is the need of truth, of light, of immortality, not the need of material comforts.

This thought that salvation lies only in steadfastly holding to the One and firmly resisting the temptation of running after impermanent ends, runs through the Essay “The One of ancient India”. The poet takes as his text the verse of the Svetāsvatara Upaniṣad (3.9):

वेञ्चित द्वेषं द्वासत्रो द्वितिष्ठयेक
स्तने वेच्छु पुरुषेऽऽवृत्तेऽर्मिन्ते ||

The One is silent, like the tree, while everything else is moving. It is permanent, while everything else is temporary; it is eternal, while everything else is fleeting. This One, which is the Real behind all phenomena, is dearer than the son, dearer than money, dearer than everything:

तद्वेषतद्वेषं पुरुषादत् प्रेयो विचातु
प्रेयोन्यास्मात् सर्वस्माहृत्तेऽवधमालम ||

It is the presence of this One which stabilizes the universe, in spite of its unceasing movement and change. It is this which ensures the beauty, the harmony, the grace and sublimity of the world. It is for this reason that the poet said, “When we look at the world surrounded by a network of activity, as a whole, we see that it is fatigued, untroubled, tranquil, beautiful—that it is not tormented by anxiety or disfigured by marks or oppressed by burdens. How beautiful and charming its morning always is, how sombre and still its midday, how kind and soft its evening, and how generous and unruffled its night! How is such peace and beauty possible in the midst of so much variety
and effort, how is such perfect music possible in the midst of so much noise? The only answer is: वृक्ष तथा स्तवयो दिवि तिस्तथवेकः”

The great lesson, therefore, which we learn from our contemplation of the One is this: In the fragmentary is idleness, in the One is beauty, in fragmentariness is discord, in the One is peace. In fragmentariness is death, in the One is immortality. It is for this reason that the Kaṭhopaniṣad said: स्तुत्योः स ज्ञात्यांग्निमोचितं द्वारा ततोजं पद्यति.

When Yājñavalkya wanted to go to the forest, he proposed to give the whole of his property to his wife Maitreyi. Maitreyi asked him whether the possession of property would give her immortality. On Yājñavalkya’s answering that that was not possible, she exclaimed, धैर्यं नाभुतं स्वरं किमः तेन कुर्याद् (“What shall I do with that which will not give me immortality?”).

In the Essay on Prayer, the poet shows the contrast between the outlook of India and that of Europe. “Europe,” he says, “is constantly demanding land, gold, power, is demanding these so greedily, so terribly that truth, light and immortality, for which mankind has been praying for ever, are gradually hiding themselves from the gaze of Europe, making her crazy. This is the path to destruction, not a path merely, but destruction itself.”

He reaffirms in the Essay on The Preaching of Religion what he has already stated in The Ideal of Religion. “Our Dharma,” he declares emphatically, “is not religion, it is not a portion of human nature; it is not divorced from politics, separated from war, cut off from business, dissociated from daily conduct. It does not confine itself within the walls of a particular portion of society and keep a sentry over its boundaries to prevent the encroachments of recreations and amusements, poetry and literature, science and art. The stages of Brahmacharya, Gārhaṣṭhya, Vānaprastha, etc, are so many means of fulfilling religion completely in life, in this world. Religion is not for the satisfaction of our partial needs; the whole world exists for its fulfilment.”

The main point which he stresses here is that Dharma is something which pervades the whole of life. It must dominate
therefore the whole scheme of life, educational, social, political, etc. That is why our ancient sages called the period of education of a man brahmacharya. The idea underlying this word is that a man can only truly receive education if he seeks to realize Brahman. Any other kind of education, any education which has for its aim merely mastery over the forces of nature or domination over other countries or other nations, is against the spirit of our Dharma. In Europe it is totally different. There the ideal of education is not the realization of God but the conquest of nature and the subjugation of other countries and races. Their whole scheme of education, including even the games of their children, has been organized with a sole eye to this ideal. That is why it is said that the battles of England are fought in her cricket fields.

In the Essay, The End of the Year, the poet says that what we regret as having been lost or as having departed is really not lost, has not really departed, but exists in the eternal and all-pervasive nature of Brahman. "Has everything," says the poet, "only come and gone? I say this to-day, after silent meditation, 'It is not so, what has come and gone has really not disappeared, but has remaind, O Silent One, fixed within thee; the flower that has withered has blossomed within thee—nothing which I notice as passing away can ever fall away from thee. To-day in the silence of the darkness of the evening, I feel this stability of the universe in thee.'"

In the Essay on The New Year, the poet, taking as his text the verse of the Upanishad: को हो योगव्यापारः के प्राण्यालोचन वदेय अकाश आन्दोर न स्वातः "Who would have cared for the body, who would have cared to live if the sky had not been bliss?", says that bliss is the central fact of the universe. It is the cementing force that holds the universe together.

The realization of God as Bliss can act as a universal solvent of our troubles and anxieties, our pains and sorrows. It will make us understand how "misery is only a mystery of this bliss, and death also the same."
In the Essay on *Misery* the poet shows that the existence of pain and misery is no indication of the absence of bliss and does not in any way contradict the view that the world is bliss. "Just as," says the poet, "incompleteness is not the opposite of completeness but is only a manifestation of completeness, so also misery, the invariable accompaniment of incompleteness, is not the opposite of bliss but is a part of it. In other words, the completion and fulfilment of misery is not misery but bliss. Misery itself is अपने आप मृतम्."[1]

In fact, if anything, misery is a greater affirmation of bliss than what we call happiness. It is because mankind has realized this truth very deeply, that it has always adored misery, not happiness. All the great saints "have been Avataras of misery, not slaves of the goddess Lakṣmi brought up in ease and luxury."

Therefore, the poet says, we have always to bear in mind that "the glory of imperfection is misery; misery is its wealth, misery is its capital. Man is man because he achieves truth through misery. His powers are limited, no doubt, but God has not made him a beggar. He does not get things by begging, but he has to get them through pain." He continues, "If we have to give anything to God, what shall we give? There is no satisfaction in giving Him that which is His; we have to give Him that which is peculiarly our own, namely, misery. This misery He will return, filled to the brim with His ananda, that is, with Himself. Otherwise, how can He pour His bliss? If we had not this vessel of our own, how could He have poured His nectar?"

The Essay *What then?* is the longest and perhaps the most important essay of the book *Dharma*. In it the poet gives us a general idea of the spiritual outlook of ancient India. He starts by pointing out a fundamental difference between the modern European and our ancient Indian outlook. The European takes this life and this world very seriously; he is not for yielding an inch of ground but to fight to the last for his rights. His ideal is to "die in harness". To renounce the world is for him the
height of cowardice. His whole scheme of life is based upon the idea that this life and this world are the most real things and that true manhood consists in making as full use of these as possible.

The ancient Indian outlook was just the opposite of this. It did not believe this life to be the most real thing. On the contrary, it always wanted to remind us of the extreme transitoriness of this life. Its motto was: यूहीतव हृत केदारु स्त्रियु तममा ब्रह्मद्रीवत् “Perform Dharma, constantly thinking that you are pulled by the hair by death”.

But it is one thing to say that this life with its innumerable relations should not be regarded as the ultimate goal of human endeavour and quite another to express a contempt for it and to treat it as unreal. Our ancient forefathers, although they emphasized the transitoriness of life and the folly of clinging to it to the last, did not show any contempt for it or advocate the renouncing of it. They knew that it was not possible to ignore the innumerable relations woven by life, and that the only way to rise above them was to go through them. Any hasty attempt to escape them would only end in disaster.

For this reason the poet says, “In fact, the spirit of accepting the world and the spirit of rejecting it, bondage and renunciation, are equally true. In the union of the two lies perfection. Siva is the image of renunciation and Annapurnâ that of enjoyment. When the two unite, we have the joy of fullness. Whenever there occurs in our life any difference between Siva and Sivani, whenever bondage and emancipation are not set up together, whenever there is a conflict between attachment and renunciation, we have the root of all want of peace, all misery.”

In fact, this only proves that man is not to be judged merely from one point of view or from the standpoint of one particular end. He transcends all particular ends that we may have in view. If we treat him merely from the military point of view, we may make an excellent soldier of him, but we shall be starving a great part of him. So is it if we treat him as a
machine for the production of goods. We may create excellent workmen but the soul of man will be crushed. This message of our ancient sages the poet has made his own, and it runs through the whole of his writings, as I have shown in my paper Rabinindranath and the Philosophy of Personality, contributed to the Golden Book of Tagore.

In fact, as Bhartṛhari has expressed in his famous lines:

माता: प्रियः सकलकामदुयास्ततः किम् ।
न्यस्तं परं शरणसि विज्ञाप्तां ततः किम् ॥
समाविता: प्रणविनो विभवस्ततः किम् ।
कल्पस्वतास्ततुभूतां तत्वस्ततः: किम् ॥

all the ends for which human beings have worked so hard and for which they often quarrel and fight among themselves, are really nothing, compared with the supreme end of realizing their selves. To each of these paltry ends, we may put the question, 'What then?' as not one of them can afford abiding satisfaction to the human soul.

But the poet wants to impress upon us one great truth. It is that if it is of supreme importance to us to realize ourselves completely, to obtain perfect emancipation, it is equally important that we should pass through a strict discipline of our lives. Indeed, no salvation is possible without strict discipline. This is why our ancient forefathers prescribed minute rules for the discipline of our lives. Now, of course, only those rules remain, only the cage is there, the bird has flown, the end for which those rules were framed is completely forgotten. This is no doubt a tragedy, but it is equally tragic if we only care for the end and neglect the strict discipline without which the end can never be realized. Even in Europe, where freedom is valued so highly, people slave away their lives in workshops and factories, in the army, the navy and the air force. The poet therefore says, "As in Europe it is only through subjection that freedom manifests itself, so in our country also, the path