



Rabindranath Tagore on religion; A philosophical analysis.

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<i>Abstract</i>	
	<p>Rabindranath Tagore was a prominent 20th-century philosopher known as a poet, social reformer, educator, and practitioner. His educational model has a unique sensitivity and suitability for education within multi-racial, multi-lingual, and multi-cultural situations. Most of Tagore's ideas are expressed in his books and usual writings that draw the attention of Tagore's scholars, a layman/woman cannot connect easily. This article tries to analyze different standpoints of Tagore on religion and how he implemented it in his real life. Tagore's concern is to find out the basis of the religion that unites human beings, and he is searching for it in the truth of man's nature. Tagore realizes that teaching of religion can never be imparted in the form of lessons, but he finds it in the living personality of man. In his work <i>The Religion of Man ~ the Hibbert Lectures for 1930</i>, published in 1931 ~ Tagore compiled his views on religion and the philosophy of life. The compilation was by and large based on the Hibbert lectures Tagore delivered at the University of Oxford in 1930.</p>
CC License CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0	<p>Keywords: <i>multi-racial, multi-lingual, The religion of man, the Hibbert lectures, university of Oxford.</i></p>

Introduction:

Tagore the literary genius was born into an artistic family that was famous for its progressive and enlightened views. He learned Vedas and Upanishads from childhood and He was brought up in an atmosphere charged with religious fervor. "To me, the verses of the Upanishads and the teachings of Buddha have ever been things of the spirit and therefore endowed with boundless vital growth, and I have used them, both in my own life and in my preaching as being instinct with special meaning for me".(Tagore, R.N. Sadhana.) was deeply influenced Brahmasamjo religious movement introduced by Raja Ram Mohan Roy was revolutionary in its way. Tagore was greatly influenced by the liberalism of Brahma Samaj founded by Raja Ram Mohan Roy based on the synthesis of all religions of the world.his father Maharshi Devendranath was also a strong holder of Brahma Samaj also paved the way for him.

Tagore was impressed by the soul singers of Bengal they were usually wandering saints they had different views about religion. They did not believe in any religious institutions and they had no place for worship. they believe that the realization of god is not possible through worshipping the god or building temples but it should happen by love and service of mankind. these ideologies greatly attracted Tagore and personally came in

contact with Baul singers and interpreted their humanistic philosophy in the article 'An Indian Folk Religion' in his book *Creative Unity. Vaisnavism., Sufism the hymns of Mirabai, Tulasidas, the lyrics of Chandidas, and the mystic songs of Kabir have influenced Tagore.*

This may not appear to be self-consistent to a student of Philosophy, but in Tagore's philosophy the apparent inconsistency of the reality, conceived as both personal and impersonal, somehow evaporates. In light of this, it can be said that his philosophy is a peculiar and yet a religious synthesis of Abstract Monism and a particular type of Theism. Reality, according to him, is one. He identifies this reality with his personal God. This identification of impersonal reality with personal God gives interesting results.

Tagore on religion:

"For it is evident that my religion is a poet's religion, and neither that of an orthodox man of piety nor that of a theologian. Its touch comes to me through the unseen and trackless channel as does the inspiration of my songs. My religious life has followed the same mysterious line of growth as has my poetical life" (Tagore, *The Religion of man.*)

Religion for Tagore is not renunciation, not an escape from worldly duties and responsibilities. It is not asceticism taking refuge in the ordered serenity of heaven. According to Tagore true religion is a rhythm of life, joy, action, and existence. "My religion is my life ~ it is growing with my growth ~it has never been grafted on me from outside". Tagore to Robert Bridges, 8 July 1914. For Tagore, religion is the realization of man's true nature. According to Tagore, the essence of religion is humanity. It is this human aspect which forms the basis of religion. Tagore believed that humanity and divinity do not belong to two different orders. They are just like two sides of the same coin. Religion aims to awaken the element of divinity that lies latent in man.

To Tagore, religion should be always a uniting force but not a dividing force. True religion is that which accepts the unity of all people instead of their differences in religious faiths. True religion is the inner development of the individual that makes a man rise above his society, country, and sect. True religion is the realization of one's nature. Tagore never believed in any religious institution or religious practice whether it was Hinduism Islam or Christianity. Tagore believed that organized religions act as a barrier to communal harmony. His rejection of conventional ritualistic worship is reflected in his numerous proclamations in various works, the most notable being: 'While God waits for his temple to be built of love, men bring stones.

Tagore's concern is to find out the basis of the religion that unites human beings, and he is searching for it in the truth of man's nature. Tagore realizes that teaching of religion can never be imparted in the form of lessons, but he finds it in the living personality of man. For him, Self-realization consists of maintaining a fine balance between the two things desire and renunciation. Tagore's faith was acceptance of life with joy and peace for the inner self. According to Tagore, man's highest glory lies in rising above defeat and disillusionment but not in the abandonment of the world. We can easily trace his ideologies through his numerous writings that glorify the beauty of man's life on earth. In *Gardener*, he says "I shall never be an ascetic.....I shall never leave my hearth and home and retire into the forest solitude." (Tagore, R.N. *The Gardener*. P.43.)

Ordinary religions, according to Tagore, are just aimless wanderings. The aim of true religion is the realization of one's kinship with everything. Religion, according to him, is a sort of homesickness. Like a flock of homesick cranes flying night and day back to their mountain nests, the religious man is also on his sacred voyage to his eternal home. In the *Gitanjali*, the poet bursts out in religious fervor, "No more sailing from harbor to harbor with this my weather-beaten boat...now I am eager to die into the deathless." (Tagore *Gitanjali*).

That is why Tagore does not favor asceticism. Man has to realize his kinship with everything, he has to cultivate a universal feeling of love. That is the true reality of religion. How can this be possible if he runs away from the world? He says, '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.' In *The Gardener*, he is still more explicit when he says, "No my friends, I shall never be an ascetic, whatever you may say no friends, I shall never leave my hearth and home and retire into the forest solitude if its silence is not deepened by whispers. I shall never be an ascetic." (Tagore, *Gardener*.)

Tagore was very much aware of the fact that religious institutions misinterpret the actual spirit and give much emphasis on the superficialities of religion. True religion paved the way to freedom but religious organizations made people slaves true religion must have the qualities of Spontaneity and naturality in it. There cannot be any compulsion about it, there are no fixed limits set around it.

Tagore on God:

Tagore rarely uses the word 'Absolute' for the Absolute. The expressions that have been most frequently used are The Universal Man, The Supreme Person, The Supreme Spirit, The Infinite Personality, etc. Such expressions naturally refer to a theistic God. And yet, God has also been described as formless and featureless.

God is revealed in the best way in man, sometimes man himself becomes God the object of worship for Tagore. he does not believe that god resides in temples and he is not ready to accept any kind of rituals and traditions to evoke the presence of god. for him, god resides in the mind of men or sometimes he regards man as god. Tagore says, "My religion is the religion of man in which the infinite is defined in humanity."(Tagore, R.N. Sadhana. P.7.) The aim of religion in the words of Tagore is the realization of divinity which is immanent in man. The purpose of religion is not only awakening the element of divinity but also making it as universal as possible.

Tagore's Absolute has been conceived almost in Sankara's manner. He asserts that everything is a manifestation of the Absolute. In Gitanjali, he says, "Thou art the sky, and thou art the nest as well." Again, there are passages in Tagore's writings that indicate that his position is fundamentally different from that of Sankara. In fact, in his lecture on 'Universal Man', Tagore examines Sankara's standpoint and distinguishes it from his own. (Tagore,Gitanjali).

God is the ultimate reality, and as such, He is the basis of the universe. Creation is, in a sense, the manifestation or the expression of the Absolute. This expression is almost necessary in the sense that there is no sense in conceiving a creation-less God — a God who just is but does not create. God, according to Tagore, finds himself by creating.

Tagore conceives man in such a manner that without affecting the Godness of God, he gives man also a special dignity and uniqueness. Tagore is often described as primarily a philosopher of humanity perhaps because in his philosophy man has been given a very key status. Metaphysically speaking, he is in many respects God-like, and yet he is very much a creature of this world.

For him, God is within man. He dwells in Nature. The worldly pomp and the growing ego become a great wall that makes one lose sight of one's true being within. According to Vedanta the root cause of everything that binds a man is ego. The pure, honest, and humble heart can achieve his spiritual bliss. He grants perfect freedom to the persons. He loves and continues to love them even if they do not pray to Him or keep Him in their hearts. God is won over easily by love and not by scholarship or austere practices. The king of all kings is the nest in which man's soul develops. He is the one, the ruler, the internal Atman of all beings.

Conclusion:

Tagore has deep intense views about religion and it was quite different and interesting compared to other philosophers. Tagore's conception of religion is something different from the ordinary conception of religion. Tagore's religion is all for mankind. Religion is the essence of mankind and the expression of man's inner nature. Tagore was deeply against traditional religious fantasy and always pleaded to avoid religious mysticism. he conveys the idea that god attracts even the mind of an atheist. The "revelment of the infinite is..... not seen in its perfection in the starry heavens but in the soul of man"(Tagore, R.N. Gitanjali P.22)

Tagore is conscious of that, therefore he recommends the rule of love in religion-. The realization of the Infinite cannot be brought about at once. One should begin with love and in love itself would lie the consummation of his efforts. Tagore feels that one should try to give up the narrow outlook of life that merely feeds his ego. The individual should extend his consciousness in love to nature and men, and in this act of love itself, he would realize unity. for Tagore, the Divine is also in certain respects humans and humanity are necessary factors in perfecting the divine truth. Undoubtfully we can say that Tagore's religious philosophy is highly relevant in the contemporary scenario, where, religion is selling for other achievements.

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