

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

P C K PREM

Rabindranath Tagore as a visionary fascinates and each time one reads him, each word he writes illuminates and satisfies the inner man. A transitory existence on earth begins to appear as a passion, a prayer and strength, when words of supreme wisdom permeate. Gandhi's words on Tagore: "I regard the Poet as a sentinel warning us against approaching enemies called Bigotry, Lethargy, Intolerance, Ignorance, Inertia and other members of that brood" (*The Mahatma and the Poet* 88) are quite pertinent and if he called Tagore "the great Sentinel," the words speak eloquently of the multidimensional personality of a great saint. Tagore undoubtedly left an ineffaceable impression upon the contemporary society. Tagore was a true patriot and a spirit of nationalism determined his thoughts on India whereas a spirit of universal love and humanism governed the poet's mind and intellect. Tagore's vision on the principles of ideal education contains elements of cultural ethos and universality of man. If man relates education to life's social, economic, intellectual, aesthetic and spiritual aspects, it makes a complete man.

Long back, a verse (35 from *Gitanjali* 27) by Tagore attracted and impressed. Still, it carries the immortal imprint on the minds of the people and chastens many. It carried many meanings. In essence, the visionary poet makes intrinsic flights to unfamiliar horizons and even if as bubbling students, we hesitated to go further, the music of the lines thrilled us to continue the voyage. This delighted greatly and excitement continued to mount as we, as students wanted to understand more about the concealed meaning it contained. Each time, a teacher explained its meaning it opened new vistas of dreamy thoughts and feelings in an age when fairy tales and heroic stories of medieval age often proved stimulating. However, the verse of Tagore always calmed down impatience and tension within. An experience of the known and the unknown at the same time enthused many as it carried an eternal message of Tagore to humanity:

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* 27)

Total freedom from artificial borders does not restrict man's expansion so he achieves inner wisdom, strength and knowledge. The great saint-poet is perhaps recalling what *Vedas* say. If efforts to ensure freedom from fears bring tangible results, life can be a living heaven.

Leave behind the burden of your fears, guilt,
weaknesses and cumbersome attachments. Thus
freed from all negative forces, smoothly cross over
the stream.

(“*Atharva* 19.27.8,” *The Holy Vedas* 262)

In all eventualities if a man stays with fortitude, nothing can hurt when it further says,
“He who is brave, / Invincible, resolute and steadfast / Wins the battle.” (“*Atharva* 20.53.3,” *The Holy Vedas* 263)

Internal and external freedom of man carries the message of God to humanity, and unity and inner tranquility determine the destiny of not only man and society but also the country and the whole world. Many latent and spiritually edifying and enlightening meanings of the above lines will become transparent when one goes into the poet's heart and intellect in other writings. Tagore was a multifaceted personality. It is worthwhile to recall words of Dr Radhakrishnan when he observed –

Rabindranath Tagore raised the stature of our country in the eyes of the world. He was a versatile genius, a literary artist, an educator, a composer, a singer, an actor...Rabindranath does not give us a system of philosophy but gives us flashes of light which illumines our minds and warm our hearts...He sang of beauty and heroism, nobility and charm, resignation and despair, the favour of revolt and the shame of defeat...The ultimate truth in man is not his intellect but the illumined consciousness which he acquires when he extends his sympathy across all barriers of caste and colour. He then realizes that all things are spiritually alive. (*Living With a Purpose* 88, 89, 97)

He believed that only one world exists and no country can live alone. Unity of man is eternal. Political culture is scientific and not humanistic he thought. Grafting dead materialistic civilization of the west is meaningless and distorts grace and dignity of an ideal conduct. He was of the opinion that in life if merger of man with *Brahma* takes place, it fulfills life's mission. A man ought to look into the eternal and everlasting within. One does not confront thoughts that disturb but in him, one finds a unique illuminating prowess that infuses rare sparkles of light and harmony. From this stage, a man is involved in a process that encourages and inspires him to renew latent energies and facilitate inner growth and here, he finds the quintessence of life. A renowned historian, Tara Chand makes a very significant and relevant observation –

Tagore's recognition that man's personality was identical with the divine personality in substance elevates the individual to the highest pinnacle of dignity. The idea of personality involved the freedom of man to attain through feeling, thought and action his

highest destiny. Personality was man's charter of independence from whatever obstructed it, whether an inheritance from the past or a dogma of the present...he taught his countrymen to be courageous, self-reliant, free, and worthy of the personality which they bore as men... This spirit of person religion and individual striving determined his attitude towards nature, man and society. (*History of the Freedom Movement in India 176-77*)

Continuing to highlight Tagore's contribution, Tara Chand rightly says, "Tagore was not politician, he was a sage. He inspired a new spirit in the people. He was the prophet which still reposed in the womb of time" (*Ibid.* 179) and making his remarks quite clear, he observes again, "Love of the country, love of the Indian people, pride in its great past, pride in its human culture, faith in its future –such was Tagore's message to Indian. However, Tagore looked beyond the nation to humanity. He (Tagore) said, "And yet I will persist in believing that there is such a thing as the harmony of completeness in humanity, where poverty does not take away her riches, where defeat may lead to victory, death to immortality, and where in the compensation of eternal justice those who are the last may not have their insult transmuted into a golden triumph." (*Ibid.* 190)

While emphasizing the spirit of patriotism and nationalism of Tagore, these pertinent words answer the charge of Mahmud Sahebzada, the president of Oxford Indian Majlis, who had remarked, "I have also read the poems and writings of Rabindranath Tagore and searched in vain for one note of nationalism. His politics are concerned only with the partition of Bengal." (*Witness To An Era 25*) Probably, Sahebzada was not aware of the inherent sentiments of the poet. However, if one looks deeply into the creative writings of the sage and his role in the freedom movement, one will readily reject the above views said in an entirely different context. An intensity of feelings in amazing continuity appears to stir the man in Tagore, and from here, the inner man struggles to crystallize feelings that lead him to view life with a vision lighting up man's heart and intellect.

In other words, unity of man, nature and God is the essence. Giving a different perspective, Jawaharlal Nehru words appear quite relevant –

And the good things of life suffer, the very basis of a decent approach to life calls it religious, call it spiritual, call it scientific. They are submerged in this deluge of hatred and violence and fear. Fear and hatred and violence are the worst companions that an individual or a nation can have. And yet today these probably are the domination urges in many countries and many people. ...In the final analysis one has to rely on some kind of a basic faith in the future of man, to which again Gurudev made such frequent reference. Without that basic faith in something in man, it would be difficult enough to see or save a world which is drifting apparently towards an almost irretrievable disaster...It is good to have that faith and it is good to have some anchorage which will prevent us from drifting too much. (*Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches 436-37*)

A flowing current of faith all through makes life meaningful. Nehru put it in simple words, which in truth encompass the complete philosophic vision of Tagore. In the basic faith in man is hidden the unity of which the poet so often talked about. The poet's versatility is wonderful and he touches various aspects of man's life with a vision that gives inner strength to the man, and creates an area within which aspires to find unity in the universe.

It is a journey to the inner landscape of a man's mind and heart that the poet and a visionary in Tagore, undertakes through different creative arts whether it is poetry, drama, novel,

short story, music or painting. It is to quench the ever-insatiable spiritual thirst. It is envisioning of a new land where one can elevate 'the self'. It is a true understanding of feelings that provide visions of life, heretofore, unknown and simultaneously, the revelations spiritualize life.

Flow of sublimity in grandeur and excellence in feelings inspires man to live life of harmony, for ultimately a universal feeling of unity with the invisible force will ennoble, enrich, elevate and glorify man. Such feelings rouse and provoke when one reads creative writings of the great poet. In each particle of nature, the poet finds presence of a spirit that ennobles and lifts up a man. In nature, he discerns a divine scheme of the Invisible and through nature, mystery of creation is also revealed. Tagore deeply felt for the destiny of man, thought of unity of man, envisioned a society where men with a humanitarian outlook on social, economic, political, aesthetic, and spiritual life live and beautify life.

He concentrated energies on the gentle and affectionate urges of man, and all creative writings riveted on spiritual phases and tendencies. In poetry, *Gitanjali*, *Crossing*, *Stray Birds* and many others lyrics enthrall. Patience and harmony within will give infinite delight and real pleasure while one reads Tagore's verses. One ought to observe the same measure of equanimity when one reads prose works of Tagore. In *Selected Poems*, one finds the best of Tagore. His poetry is a treasure house of philosophic and metaphysical thought, deep and intense feelings, and makes an imprint on the mind and heart. His poetry generates compassionate outlook and humanitarian thoughts, leads a man to a breathtaking revelation and a realization of truth and thus, natural tenderness enriches and glorifies a man.

Little jewels of love-feelings and deep fervour for humanity in creative works transmit truths of life, which create a sublimity of distinction and grandeur heretofore, not comprehended. *Stray Birds* is epigrammatic, philosophically poetic with a unique flow of words and terrific assault of images and metaphors, mostly drawn from nature. Brevity in thoughts startles and one ought to devote time to recognize the true meaning within a meaning. It is an experience to observe birds, which reveal nature in its true and benign influence. Here, creation shows inherent grandeur and mystery making life supremely blissful. The birds chirp and hop around as if in tune with divinity. Singing birds infuse intensity and excitement in spirits, and unburden the heart and soul of man from daily anxieties and worries. A silent walk up to that level of divine chirping of birds soothes disturbed hearts.

Stray birds of summer come to my window to sing and fly away.
And yellow leaves of autumn, which have no songs, flutter and fall
There with a sigh. (*Stray Birds 1*)

A journey reaches its destination. From the joys of divine songs of birds in summer to the melancholic environ of autumn, a man gets a perennial feeling that life's joys are transitory and ephemeral. The meaning is manifest only when one understands the truth that joys fill life if sorrows of 'autumn' also surface, and at that moment, the eternal truth of life is apparent. However, the impression on life of joys and pleasure that 'little vagrants' leave behind is memorable: "O troupe of little vagrants of the world, leave your footprints in my / words." (*Ibid 2*) If a man, the poet again emphasizes, makes efforts to learn the mystifying language and infinite vastness of the sea and the sky, he can definitely find answers to the mystery of eternity enshrined therein.

"What language is thine, O sea?"

“The language of eternal question.”
 “What language is thy answer, O sky?”
 “The language of eternal silence.” (*Ibid.* 12)

If a man simply visualizes in solitude the panoramic spectrum of feelings and thoughts nature reveals through the sea and the sky, it is an experience of eternity, a gradual journey to an eternal feeling. In *Stray Birds*, the poet is restrained and subtle. He realizes that creation is a mystery. To know the anonymity of creation, a man must tread the difficult and uncertain path of darkness to reach the light of morning keeping in mind the sacred and solemn task of driving out delusions of knowledge. He says, “The mystery of creation is like the darkness of night – it is great / Delusions of knowledge are like the fog of the morning” (*Ibid.*). The poet reposes faith in nature and makes absolute surrender without distrust or inquiring mind.

Elsewhere, feelings of surrender predominate when he, like a renegade or an escapee, wishes to submit to the invisible, the eternal identity that grants tranquility and succor. The metaphor of sea again emerges. It is obvious that a man is merely a boat where He is the sea as well as a boatman.

If you are only the haven, as they say, then what is the sea?
 Let it surge and toss me o its waves, I shall be content.
 I live in you whatever and however you appear. Save me or kill me as you
 wish, only never leave me in other hands.
 (“Fugitive,” *Selected Works of Rabindranath Tagore* 840)

He speaks of the unqualified ‘silence’ of ‘the sea’ and ‘the earth’ in ‘shadow,’ and understanding the mystery of words appears bewitching while revealing eternal and divine truths. He observes, “I have seen the sea in calm bearing its immeasurable silence, and in / storm struggling to break open its own mystery of depth / I have watched the earth in its prodigal feast of youth, and in its slow / hours of brooding shadows.” (“73 Crossing” *Selected Works of Rabindranath Tagore* 222). In incontestable acquiescence, life turns out a blessing. Question regarding mystery of creation, nature and existence arise frequently, and a man moves from one bewildering question to another baffling answer. God in Nature protects and punishes. True devotion and perceptive eyes are required for understanding, experiencing and recognizing reality. Only in an inspirational situation, a man is able to differentiate between the reality and the shadow.

What you are you do not see, what you see is your shadow.
 They throw their shadows before them who carry their lantern on their
 back. (*Stray Birds* 21)

Inner light is required so that the long path of mystic inquiry illuminates. If a man understands the inner ‘lantern’ correctly, most of the obstacles and sufferings on the way will disappear. When the poet seeks relief and comfort in the lap of nature, he gets supreme bliss and attains divine peace. Gandhi, in truly understanding the heart and mind of the poet in Tagore, had observed in a slightly different context:

True to his poetical instinct, the Poet lives for the morrow and would have us do likewise. He presents to our admiring gaze the beautiful picture of the birds early in the morning singing hymns of praise as they soar into the sky. These

birds had their day's food and soared with rested wings in whose veins new blood had flown during the previous night. (*The Mahatma and the Poet* 89)

Dormant and hidden energy (the inherent divinity?) in man inspires him to do hard work. Oblique similarities become clear and transparent when one visualizes and invokes efforts of birds to find food, and then relax high and high in the sky or on the trees. It is a search of eternity and its horizon. For, in 'recognizing the dignity of labour,' latent salvation becomes a possibility. Tree appears as an embodiment of power that has the capacity to envision a Heaven otherwise escaping grasp of man's knowledge and wisdom because of foggy minds and deluded intellects.

The trees, like the longings of the earth, stand a tiptoe to peep at the Heaven (*SB* 41)

If a man understands the beauty of nature and learns to enjoy its brilliance, he will experience an eternal beauty around:

Do not linger to gather flowers to keep them, but walk on, for flowers will keep themselves blooming all your way. (*SB*102)

A man feels bewitched and mesmerized and a sense of pure music and rhythm enhances the ecstasy, when the poet says -

When I bring you coloured toys, my child, I understand why there is such a play of colours on clouds, on water, and why flowers are painted in tints –when I give coloured toys to you, my child
When I sing to make you dance, I truly know why there is music in Leaves, and why waves send their chorus of voices to the heart of the Listening earth –when I sing to make you dance.

(“Crescent Moon,” *Selected Works of Rabindranath Tagore* 808)

In silent throbbing of the heart, a man feels gratifying and exhilarating sensations objects of nature transmit. In nature, a man has immense wealth. He can play with nature and enjoy moments of celestial delight. A man must touch and feel warmth and mystery of clouds, water, waves and flowers and he will understand the inherent rhythm and music flowing in each particle of creation.

Sorrow in life gets a fresh ennobling and energizing meaning. It not only inspires but also infuses vigour. Life ought to learn from the eternally silent trees serving humanity without hope for reward, for the objects of nature like the tree, plants and flowers believe in charity. A silent feeling of sadness gives internal joy if a man understands the joys of grief. If a man learns to endure sorrows and sufferings like trees, life is meaningful.

Sorrow is hushed into peace in my heart like the evening among the Silent trees. (*SB* 10)

He is conscious of the fear a day conceals in its dimness. Mental attitude of despair and failure depresses, as even the forest appears to tremble in the cage. An inner struggle to find peace compels the poet to observe, “On such a day amidst the winds beating their wings, let me find my / peace in thy presence, / For the sorrowing sky has shadowed my solitude, to deepen the meaning / of thy touch about my heart.” (“20 Crossing” *Selected Works of Rabindranath Tagore* 209).

Perhaps, sorrow and loneliness give meaning the poet appears to affirm. Innovative dimensions to sufferings appear startling when he compares man to a lonely road in a crowd. It stuns and shocks. Intensity of unabated anguish defeats a man. A feeling of purposeful loneliness even in a crowd imparts meaning to life and therefore, a man ought to become detached like a saint. The poet says, “The road is lonely in its crowd, for it is not loved.” (SB 114) One notices a number of stray thoughts on the life of road steeped in sorrow, which personify a great philosophy a man ought to inculcate, and an inherent true liberation from worldly snares becomes understandable. Again, exclusivity in the portrayal of distress and internal miseries and wretched feelings confounds.

Sorrow that has lost its memory
is like the dumb dark hours
that have not bird songs
but only the cricket’s chirp.

(“Fireflies,” *Selected Works of Rabindranath Tagore* 819)

In “*Crossing*,” he speaks of sufferings and anguish in a hugely poetic and philosophic mood, when he observes –

Free me as free as the birds of the wilds, the wanderers of unseen paths.
Free me as free are the deluge of rain, and as the storm that shakes its
locks and rushes on to its unknown end.
Free me as free is the forest fire, as is the thunder that laughs aloud and
hurls defiance to darkness.

(“*Crossing*,” *Selected Works of Rabindranath Tagore* 214)

In absolute freedom, a man can live a life of happiness. An area of freedom from conflicts and contradictions leads a man to joy abandon, and spontaneity emerges within to register life of love and harmony.

Tagore’s vision speaks of wholeness and unity. He does not recognize dissonance, separateness, partition, or disintegration in life. Earthly experiences often lead man to believe that he lives in a world of strangers, people quite unknown to one another, but in reality, it is a stage of dreams. If one goes beneath, the truth of indivisibility will surface. In a state of unity and integration, life transmits eternal meanings of love, peace and harmony.

Once we dreamt that we were strangers.
We wake up to find that we were dear to each other (SB 9)

A realization that the world is a unit encompassing everything, will give essence to life. Even if it appears a part of it, it depicts the whole. It is an infallible conviction the poet confirms quite often. Poet’s concept of a complete man is the belief in the unity of man and everything outside.

This principle of unity which man has in his soul is ever active, establishing relations far and wide through literature, art, and science, society, statecraft, and religion. Our great Revealers are they who make manifest the true meaning of the soul by giving up self for the love of mankind. They face calumny and persecution, deprivation and death in their serve of love. They live the life of the

soul, not of the self, and thus they prove to us the ultimate truth of humanity. We call them Mahatmas, 'the men of the great soul. (*Selected Works of Rabindranath Tagore* 682)

He may talk or philosophize on any subject in any genre of writing on earth but a focused emphasis of the poet on the unity of man in totality, ultimately becomes obvious. It does not admit of any separateness or divisibility in anything on earth and that precisely determines the poet's philosophy of life. Tagore in various contexts comes back to the fundamental principle of life and society. In a few plain words, he makes his thesis very clear.

Man's abiding happiness is not in getting anything but in giving himself up to what is greater than himself, to ideas which are larger than his individual life, the idea of his country, of humanity, of God. They make it easier for him to part with all that he has, not excepting his life. His existence is miserable and sordid till he finds some great idea which can truly claim his all, which can release him from all attachment to his belongings. (*Selected Works of Rabindranath Tagore* 733)

Collective conscience of Indian culture and heritage speaks out so eloquently and emphatically and therefore, it becomes the basis and fountainhead of poet's philosophy. Needless to impress that lofty ideals and ideas find superb expression in whatever the poet says and advocates. The solemn and sacred message to the world through writings encompassing Indian ethos and universality make him immortal one understands.

He gets inkling of immense motivation from the world of varied colours and spectrums. The world does not stop. It constantly moves and grows, and brings transformation, when he tells: "I sit at my window this morning where the world like a passer-by stops / For a moment, nods to me and goes" (*Stray Birds* 16). In the spirit of intense feelings of love and devotion, the poet unveils his heart.

My love, I will keep you hidden in my eyes; I will thread your image like a gem on my joy and hang it on my bosom. You have been in my heart ever since I was a child, throughout my youth, throughout my life, even through all my dreams.
(*"The Fugitive," Selected Works of Rabindranath Tagore* 836)

He speaks of love and love divine, a forte of vision and creative strength. Another quality of the poet is quite transparent. He interprets nature in totality and therefore, through nature he defines life. He speaks of its vastness and splendour. A pure thought for the peace and harmony of humanity occupies poet's mind and heart, and in humankind, he finds a reservoir of fondness and empathy, love, hatred and unity, agonies and joys in abundance. A pure heart understands in entirety the tremendous sweep of feelings while the intellect tries to find appropriate words for illumination of feelings. At times, intellect does it quite rightly but most of the time it lacks requisite aptness.

I am only waiting for love to give myself up at last into his hands. That is why it is so late and why I have been guilty of such omissions...
for I am only waiting for love to give myself up at last into his hands.
People blame me and call me heedless; I doubt not they are right in their blame.

(*Gitanjali* 14)

Unity of vision and thought of wholeness even in parts not only infuses love, and inspires man to make life worthwhile but it also eternalizes magnificent feelings of love and togetherness, which are fundamental doctrines of man, and further even in parts it is wholeness.

False glamour, enigmatic love and beauty seem to ensnare a man and not for a second, he is conscious of the ephemeral nature of life. Momentary fulfillment of desires and cravings sends a message of extreme sagaciousness among human beings but in reality, it is a mirage. Desires of man do not tell of wisdom but are illusory encampments where a man stays as disenchantment overcomes, when he observes, “My wishes are fools, they shout across thy songs, my Master’ (*Stray Birds* 19). Indirectly, the poet emphasizes observing wise restrains on wayward yearnings, which ultimately drive a man to sorrow and grief. Soon, a truth and an eternal revelation assure the poet.

The trees come up to my window like the yearning voice of the dumb earth. (*Stray Birds* 31)

Poet is unambiguous and unequivocally obvious and distinct when he links man to nature. Remarkable beauty and force of words in the verse below persuade a man to gauge the immeasurable immensity of intellect, depth of heart and terrific grasp affirming poet’s capacity to understand nature and so become a part of it.

The fish in the water is silent, the animal on the earth is noisy, the bird in the air is singing.
But Man has in him the silence of the sea, the noise of the earth and the music of the air. (*Ibid* 43)

Once more, the poet speaks of a wish, and prays for an indissoluble identity with natural phenomenon.

I dream of a star, an island of light, where I shall be born and in the depth of its quickening leisure my life will ripen its works like the rice field in the autumn sun. (*Ibid*. 309)

A hidden desire to soar high and become an island of light is apparent. Striking metaphors speak of desires an ordinary man often nurses and when a sensitive man with a humanitarian outlook thinks, he is worried about the destiny of man. Even in days of utter sadness and perceptible indolence, he wants to be of some use to fellow beings. Dreams of stars and islands of light are symbolic of a life of perennial hope. Whatever may be the cause of doubts and darkness, light dispels shadows of suspicions and makes life meaningful. Then abruptly, he dreams of a man of faith, faith that pervades every particle of earth.

‘The time has come,’ proclaims the Man of Faith.
‘The time for what?’
‘For the pilgrimage.’
they sit and think, they know not the meaning, and yet they seem to understand according to their desires.
The touch of the dawn goes deep into the soil and life shivers along through the roots of all things.

(“The Child,” *Selected Works of Rabindranath Tagore* 848)

Faith is one of the most powerful instincts, which makes life full of hope and love, meaning and purpose. Elsewhere, he says, “Life of faith moves on along pitiless paths / strewn with flints over scorching sands and steep mountainous / tracks.” (*Ibid.* 848) Life is a mission to elevate ‘self’ and serve humanity with love, passion and warmth. It is merger and a kind of blending in pores of earth, which make life purposeful and worth living. If a man can imitate or perhaps learn from nature and gets involved in a relentless sacred work of creation of hopes and cheers, life will be an ideal mission.

The spirit of all pervasive love and warmth is the greatest power the world wields and spreads if one understands. If a few distortions appear, life becomes a burden. The inner energies of earth contain a divine light saturated with love and passion, which a man must protect and nurse so that world becomes a place like a dreamland or a paradise of eternal joys.

Power said to the world, “You are mine.”
The world kept it prisoner on her throne.
Love said to the world, “I am thine.”
The world gave it the freedom of her house. (*Stray Birds* 93)
The poet is convinced that “Love is an endless mystery, / for it had nothing else to explain it.”
(820)

Depiction of love for nature in the poetry of Tagore carries man to new experience of life and a man almost touches zenith of divine and spiritual fulfillment. Purity and sanctity makes life fantastic. An abundance of feelings of love for nature fortifies faith in the invisible bond of unity. Like nature, a woman for the poet is a quintessence of lyrical poetry breathing and pulsating that makes world a glorious habitat. Mere presence of a woman sanctifies the entire environment the poet believes.

A discerning mind and a sensitive heart are required to find the internal and external beauty of a woman when she moves about in the house doing multifarious household chores. If a man properly understands the body language of woman, she seems to sing as a stream flowing over little pebbles. She hums like a bird and it simply gratifies and delights.

Woman, when you move about in your household service your limbs
Sing like a hill stream among its pebbles. (*Stray Birds* 38)

If slow, subtle and musical movements of a woman inside the house create a magical rhythm, she also appears to encompass the whole world while she alleviates and assimilates within its miseries and sufferings so that humankind is happy.

Woman, thou hast encircled the world’s heart with the depth of thy
tears as the sea has the earth. (*SB* 179)

She is a messenger of peace and harmony the god has sent on earth to ennoble and purify man if he comprehends the beauty of nature and woman. In the next beautiful lines, he compares a wife with a dream.

Dream is a wife, who must talk,
Sleep is a husband who silently suffers. (118)

Dreams are never silent and speak a lot about the unfulfilled desires, a man fails to realize but goes on trying, for in dreams, at times, are hidden the secrets of life. If dreams end, life becomes a burden. It is often said when the legends die, the dreams end and when the dreams end, there is no more greatness. In dreams lie true inspirations one concludes, and the poet says elsewhere that, “Woman, in your laughter you have the music of the fountain of life” (SB192). It is only a great man, who can pay rich tributes to the beauty, inspirational and invigorating power and charisma of woman in a few words.

Enlightenment and brilliance of soul brings everlasting inner harmony. One must understand that a man grows from the earthly existence to the ethereal or divine heights where he finds enlightenment and brilliance of soul with an unusual blend of serenity and synchronization of varied feelings as intensity of celestial ecstasy fills a man. It is a journey from the intellectual to the spiritual, from the physical to the metaphysical, from the purely material existence to the kingdom of divine light. Here, questions of life and death perturb all poets. In effortless words, the poet in Tagore creates an aura and sensation of divinity and in a spirit of dedication, sacrifice, sympathy, love and charity a man gets true meaning of life. He is an optimist despite sufferings he observes around but still in disillusionment, frustration and collapse, he is definite of hopes in life.

I know that this life, mission its ripeness in love, is not altogether lost.
I know that the flowers that fade in the dawn, the streams that strayed in
the desert, are not altogether lost.
I know that whatever lags behind in this life laden with slowness I not
altogether lost.
I know that my dreams that are still unfulfilled, and my melodies still
unstruck, are clinging to some lustrings of thine, and they and
They are not altogether lost.

(Selected Works of Rabindranath Tagore 802)

If the poet observes that “Life is given to us; we earn it by giving it”, (*Stray Birds* 56), very clearly, he lays down the principle of detachment and equanimity born out of spiritual prowess, only then man will stay happy. He reminds us of a great *Upanishic* truth. In giving, a man lives in divine joy. A spirit of sacrifice and renunciation infuses love for the entire creation. In a spirit of giving is enshrined a life of enrichment and thus, the objective of life becomes meaningful. In death, one observes silence and even leveling of various twisting ingredients and divergences. In death, one merges with the whole since one loses the capacity to discern distinction.

In death the many becomes one; in life the one becomes many.
Religions will be one when God is dead. (*Stray Birds* 84)
In a similar mood, the poet affirms -
When death comes and whispers to me
'Thy days are ended,'
let me say to him, 'I have lived in love
and not in mere time.'
He will ask "Will thy songs remain?"
I shall say, 'I know not, but this I know
that often when I sang if found my eternity.'

(Selected Works of Rabindranath Tagore 821)

Understood in correct perspective, death teaches an eternal art of living life. It is a symbol of unity while life signifies diversity. ‘Religions will be one when God is dead’ speaks of a understated thought, a patronizing thought that leads to universality and oneness of man and spirit, because from here, one is transported to a region where one forgets about everything that separates man from man. One enjoys glimpses of a land of eternity within that gives peace and peace in love without worldly irritations and pains.

Many a time, a man goes back to ancient times. He meditates deeply while bygone times flash upon and the inner man feels the itch to feel what the ancestors thought. Life continues incessantly and it still carries on, and the man with optimism and caution lives. Eternal questions of life, love, death, and existence continue to agitate man for ages, a bantering inquiry into the mystery still exists, and the major philosophical and metaphysical thoughts, according to the poet, still chase. Poet possibly speaks of life in totality. Not only love, but also it is wholesome constituents of life and the world where man lives and ultimately meets death. A man accomplished great feats and attained grandeur, achieved glorious heights, and he may make efforts to attain immortality as teachings and words of sages tell, still death is a certainty and a mystery unsolved, and when death devours, a man forgets everything. Life appears a journey from darkness and uncertainty to another dark area of uncertainty and death.

I think of other ages that floated upon the stream of life and love and death and are forgotten, and I feel the freedom of passing away.
(*Stray Birds* 97)

Tagore is an inveterate optimist. Many mighty thoughts and tender feelings obviously disquiet his mind. Many great philosophic poetic outpourings portray death as a foregone conclusion, and a man finds many fresh and stimulating thoughts and feelings. He reveals a deep philosophy of life, for he appears a visionary. He speaks of quite ordinary matters worrying life and existence but the way he tells, make feelings and thoughts extraordinary. Most of the lyrics Tagore wrote peep within and analyze deeply the silence, its potential power and dimensions unknown. It raises questions as to why the poet says at another moment that life ends as it gets weary, and immediately afterwards, he speaks of the end, which is endless. He looks a bit mystic and confusing. It also appears that he considers end of life a certainty so it is an infinite evolution. It is also not necessary for a visionary to be clear always, for in mystic words and vague explanations rest the secret of life and its philosophy. Spiritualism is an experience and to express spiritual experiences in words contaminates the divine joy it gives.

That which ends in exhaustion is death, but the perfect endings is in the endless. (*Stray Birds* 111)

It appears the poet indirectly affirms a faith in the scheme of life, existence and death. Life has to be lived without lethargy and ambiguity. If a man comprehends the inevitability of death, he confronts no agony or anxiety. Ancient *Hindu* scriptures like *Vedas* and *Upanishads* highlight the truth. The uplifting thought and vision of life is quite translucent in the lines below:

The learned say that your lights will one day be no more.” Said the firefly to the stars.

The stars made no answer. (*Ibid.* 163)

A spirit of complete surrender to the invisible power is within man. If one meditates in humility and faith, the “The fountain of death makes the still water of life play.” (*Ibid.* 225) The poet’s imagination and mystic flights delight and frequently, he reminds a man that life is just a tiny particle but ill-conceived notions about life instill egoistic thoughts giving feelings of the vastness and immeasurability of life but it is not the truth. In death, a man gets enlightenment and an exposure to brilliance of other worlds more satisfying and elevating, and free from worries and miseries.

This life is the crossing of a sea, where we meet in the same narrow ship.
In death we reach the shore and go to our different worlds.
(*Stray Birds* 242)

If birth, life and death are inseparable and form a single entity, living would be different. Inner man ‘the self,’ attains freedom from worldly shackles and renders imminent death incapable of doing anything, for a man takes a step towards divine land. If a man understands the perennial truth of life and death, perhaps death will not create lingering sufferings. The thought will surely take the man away from “unfulfilled past clinging to me from behind making death difficult.” Again, a *Vedic* truth is quite apparent. The poet avers a vision of life in many poetic jewels of *Stray Birds*.

In a temper of philosophic and spiritual truth, mind relaxes in the ultimate truth and a man lives in peace and harmony. Inner man will transcend the psychological fetters, and a mental state of humility and surrender will open new horizons.

Day after day, O lord of my life, shall I stand before thee face to face.
With folded hands, O lord of all worlds, shall I stand before thee face to face.
Under thy great sky in solitude and silence, with humble heart shall I stand before thee face to face.

(*Gitanjali* 76)

Away from life’s exhaustion and inactivity, a sensitive poet genuinely wishes to stand in complete humility before the “lord of my life” in “solitude and silence” so that he finds a true friend within and attains salvation and freedom from materialistic bonds driving man to miseries.

Tagore is a prophet of humanity. He speaks emotively about the inseparable components of ‘Truth and God’ of a virtuous and dedicated life. A man requires tremendous courage to submit to the will of God, for a man often thinks that he is the doer, and nothing escapes his strong grasp and power of comprehension about life, birth and death, and mysteries surrounding the meaning and substance of inscrutable aspects. He speaks of harsh truths even when cybernetic explorations do not stir, provoke and cajole, for no such probable existence ever perturb a man. Nevertheless, what is the finale? How a man can arrive at a cogent culmination and its purpose? With a rare vision and foresight, the great saint wanted man to think of God. He is supreme. Out of deep love and compassion, the great Lord loves and punishes man, when he says, “God says to man, “I heal you, therefore I hurt, love you, therefore, punish” (*Stray Birds* 63). He heals a suffering and devoted heart, and punishes the man for the wrong deeds -an expression of fatherly love and sympathy of God, the poet rightly feels.

In a state of unity, inconsistencies, dissolution and itemization vanish a man must understand. If one closes one's eyes, a total darkness crushes multifaceted colours and divisions and a single entity survives. Light of darkness illuminates a foggy mind when he tells, "In darkness the One appears as uniform; in the light the One appears as / manifold. (*Ibid.* 90) and the puzzling thought is adequately expounded when he further says lyrically, "To be outspoken is easy when you do not wait to speak the complete/truth. (*Ibid.*128)

A man cannot recognize the reality of Truth and God. Man's emotions must dig deep, follow the sparkles of water in a little vessel, and see the peculiarity of colour when looking at the vast sea.

The water in a vessel is sparkling; the water in the sea is dark.
The small truth has words that are clear; the great truth has great
Silence. (*Stray Birds* 176)

One requires a silent, composed, and tranquil mind and heart to know the eternal truth. In a universe of feelings, emotions and thoughts and beyond, one should appreciate the infinite and the everlasting truth. The most detrimental and hard-hitting truth of life contains not only individual and societal meaning but also a blatant political thought, when the poet observes, "The false can never grow into truth by growing in power." (*Stray Birds* 258) A modern man in absolute failure and collapse of understanding feels and thinks that truth is power and power is truth, and he writes the end-story ignominiously. A warning long ago is still alive and relevant one infers but remains apathetic.

Probably, the poet realized the iniquity of self-worth, pretense and inanity of man. In the following lines, he illustrates worries and pains, which make life of a contemporary man miserable –

The world today is wild the delirium of hatred,
the conflicts are cruel and unceasing in anguish,
crooked are its paths, tangled its bonds of greed.
All creatures are crying for a new birth of thine,
O thou of boundless life,
Save them, rouse thine eternal voice of hope,
Let love's lotus with its inexhaustible of honey
Open its petals in thy light.
(*Selected Works of Rabindranath Tagore* 856)

Not only social consciousness but also Indian consciousness and sensibility of the poet stand revealed in the above poetic lines. In a different context, Tagore talks of a man's hypocrisy that does not permit man to live a straight and egoless life.

...the character of man has always more or less of duality in it. But our logical faculty, the trap-door of our mind, is unable to admit opposites together. So when we find the good with the bad, the former is promptly rejected as spurious. In the universal movement, as it becomes manifest in different parts of the world, this duality of man's character cannot but show itself. And whenever it does, if we pass judgment from past experience, we are sure to pronounce the selfish part of it to be the real thing; for the spirit of division and exclusion did in fact belong to the past age. But if we come to our judgment in the light of future promise, then shall we understand the enlightened large-heartedness to be

the reality and the counsel which will unite each to each to be the true wisdom.
(*The Mahatma and the Poet* 85)

Such an approach to life has not changed yet and only a visionary could anticipate what goes on eternally in the mind of a man and to what extent selfish thoughts govern to tarnish the image of a man. Still the religious in the poet is confident about the ultimate destiny. If a man lives with love and expectation, perhaps, a new man will take birth. In prayerful and reverential attitude, a man can visualize deliverance. In absolute silence, he foresees supreme images of God

I know not how thou singest, my master! I ever listen in silent amazement.
The light of thy music illumines the world. The life of thy music runs
from sky to sky. The holy stream of thy music breaks through all stony
obstacles and rushes on.
My heart longs to join in thy song, but vainly struggles for a voice.
I would speak, but speech breaks not into song, and I cry out baffled.
Ah, though hast made my heart captive in the endless meshes of thy music, my master.
(*Gitanjali* 3)

Man's faith in the Invisible and the categorical surrender in the silent music of 'my master', attains supreme bliss. Looking within in silence with faith in God ennobles and purifies a man. The victory over passions, conceit and greed is latent in truth. An egoless man attains fulfillment, and 'true love and faith' originates making life supremely meaningful.

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BIO

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