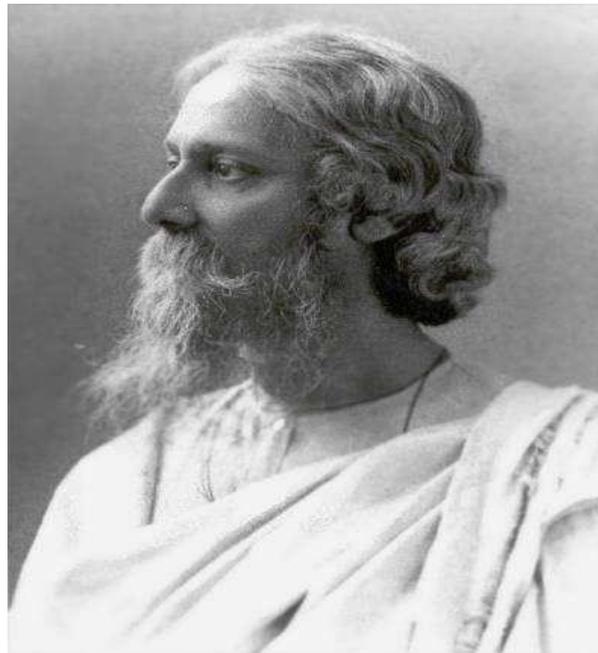


## **Module-7**

# **RABINDRANATH TAGORE**



**(1861-1941)**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Rabindranath Tagore was the youngest son of Debendranath Tagore, a leader of the Brahmo Samaj, which was a new religious sect in nineteenth-century Bengal and which attempted a revival of the ultimate monistic basis of Hinduism as laid down in the *Upanishads*. He was educated at home; and although at seventeen he was sent to England for formal schooling, he did not finish his studies there. In his mature years, in addition to his many-sided literary activities, he managed the family estates, a project which brought him into close touch with common humanity and increased his interest in social reforms. He also started an experimental school at Shantiniketan where he tried his Upanishadic ideals of education. From time to time he participated in the Indian nationalist movement, though in his own non-sentimental and visionary way; and Gandhi, the political father of modern India, was his devoted friend. Tagore was knighted by the ruling British Government in 1915, but within a few years he resigned the honour as a protest against British policies in India.

Tagore had early success as a writer in his native Bengal. With his translations of some of his poems he became rapidly known in the West. In fact his fame attained a luminous height, taking him across continents on lecture tours and tours of friendship. For the world he became the voice of India's spiritual heritage; and for India, especially for Bengal, he became a great living institution. Although Tagore wrote successfully in all literary genres, he was first of all a poet. He is the author of several volumes of short stories and a number of novels. Besides these, he wrote musical dramas, dance dramas, essays of all types, travel diaries, and two autobiographies, one in his middle years and the other shortly before his death in 1941. Tagore also left numerous drawings and paintings, and songs for which he wrote the music himself.

## **MAN, SOCIETY AND PERSONALITY**

Freedom of human being is expressed in his/her personality. In human, the conscious which he/she shares with animal has developed itself into personality. What Tagore meant by personality is a self-conscious principle of transcendental unity, within man/woman which comprehends all the details of the facts that the individuality in his knowledge and feeling wish and will and work. He believed that the ultimate reality could not be divorced from the

personality; the absolute is the supreme personality in intimate, personal and independent relation with human being. He saw personality as the cultural facts of the divine human world relationship.

Tagore believed that the world offers an opportunity to the human being to develop his/her personality. All problems of life are human problem and are open the solution. Personality of man/woman is infinite in nature, because human personality is the realization of the creative ideas of the infinite in the infinite form. Hence, though human personality is finite and oppose to infinite personality it is representative of super person who has expressed himself/herself through any particular centre. Tagore stress that the humans must come out of their shell of his or her individuality to a larger self of humanity. Human being is an individual. This individual gives him specialty among all creatures and no force can destroy this individuality of him and no other being except God can enter onto this world which he calls mine. What gives man this specialty in the field of individuality is the field of freedom. Tagore say's man as a person has his individuality which is the field where his spirit has its freedom to express itself and to grow.

Human beings are not only individual. Man feels that he is not complete in him but when only he is in relationship with the perfect man or universal man in him, he is complete. The universality of man has taken two arms. At one place man realize his unity with all human beings by his feelings of unity with the feeling of humanity and at other place he feels himself to be a part of the whole universe by the feeling of unity. But when broadens himself as a wave of big ocean, there is no sorrow, no death for him. Thus the flow of individuality which is united with the flow of humanity becomes the part of the flow of universe.

Man and woman live in the society and the society exist for them, man's ideal is to serve the society and work for the best development of human social circumstances, influence the character and personality of man and woman. Man and woman can best be developing in the atmosphere of freedom, and society is the responsible for his/her freedom and that that it should not lead into disorder.

Tagore visualizes the society through the process of history. When he advanced his historical analysis of society, he said that the history of knowledge of history is necessary for understanding the currents of the society. He further strewed that the teaching of history should foster the spirit of international sympathies, respect and good will. Tagore say's 'man's history to the unknown in the quart of the realization of his immortal is soul.' Man's needs are endless. Human being has a vast field of action in the society where he has to seek and suffer to reach his goal. He makes daily laws and rules in social and political fields and inventing new things in the scientific fields. In this field he has fought his mightiest battle, gained continually new life, made death glorious and far from evading troubles, as willingly and continually taken up the burden of flesh troubles.

## NATIONALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

Nationalism in India, like its counterparts in Europe in the 19th century, was an urban phenomenon. It came as a direct penetration of British political authority and political economy into the traditional economy of India giving birth to the cities like Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. The colonial experiments transformed this rudiment of a trading mart into the seat of political and economic power and the magnet of rural population. The best index of social mobilization is provided by the rate of urbanization. Rabindranath's Calcutta at that time, brought about a new city-bred English-educated and professional elite which helped and expedited the process of social change, gave birth to what came to be known as the ideology of 'nationalism' in India. So Calcutta was the 'Centre of Bengal Renaissance', and Rabindranath was an eminent Calcutta.

Tagore, himself a-product of Bengal Renaissance, was aware of the plight of the Indians. He had clear knowledge of the fact that India had ceased to be creative culturally and politically and was not concerned about the loss of her freedom. Religious movements such as 'Brahmo Samaj', as defense mechanism to revive and reassert old cultures, was on the scene doing considerable cultural, humanitarian and social work in Bengal whose impact was also felt in other parts of India. It went to Tagore's credit that he supported this movement and was assigned an important role by his father to play in that movement. According to him, love of the country was not the characteristic of that time and the educated men then kept at arm's length both the language and thought of their native land. They, on the other hand undermined the Indian heritage by remaining quite ignorant of their glorious past and also irresponsible to the people's cause.

Tagore was a humanist, a prophet of love, sympathy, fellow feeling and cooperation. His humanism was based on spiritual foundations, the Transcendental; he believed that God lives in man. Tagore (1931) said, "The supreme truth of life is not merely to live, but also to know our existence and realize the self through love and sympathy with others. Hence it is essential that the growth of a balanced and well-integrated personality of the child is to be promoted and move should be made towards the achievement of the ultimate goal of life. Tagore's humanism led him to universalism. Tagore wanted to break all the geographical, social, political and cultural barriers. In the International field the first momentous event was the outbreak of the first world war in 1914, when Tagore had already started his Shantiniketan, the ashram school for more than thirteen years & he warned that war was caused by the demons of nationalism, characterized by the imperialistic greed of wealth, the lust of the power, selfish materialism, mad competition and ruthless cruelty perpetuated on the weak, exploited & vanquished nations of the world. Tagore founded Visva Bharati, the World University (1921) in Shantiniketan, West Bengal, India, with the aim to spread the rich heritage of Indian Philosophy and Spiritualism to the whole world. The unique feature of this university is that it believes in imparting education and knowledge not within closed classrooms but in the open air. Rabindranath Tagore wanted that the university must have objective –to enhance mutual relationship among people through study, -to explore

truth by studying the minds of people, -to seek and realize in a common fellowship of study, the meeting of the East and West, and thus ultimately to strengthen the fundamental conditions of World Peace through the establishment of free learning which would have the best of both the East and the West.

## **EDUCATION**

Rabindranath Tagore was primarily an educationist rather than a political thinker. He put emphasis on 'naturalism' for framing educational model. In education, freedom is the basic guiding force for inculcating interest within a student who will derive inspiration from nature to pursue any branch of knowledge he likes. The establishment of Shantiniketan fulfilled the desired goal of Tagore in the educational front.

Tagore's education marked a novel blending of the ideas of the East and West. The spiritualism of Indian philosophy and progressive outlook of the western people were blended together to give rise to an educational philosophy which marked its distinction in comparison to other educationists of India. Tagore envisaged that nature is the best teacher to the pupil. Nature will provide the student with necessary situation to earn knowledge. No pressure should be exerted upon the student to learn anything. It is nature which will be the guiding force to inculcate the spirit of learning in the mind of a student to pursue the education he likes. It will shape his behaviour and character.

For the first time in the arena of education, Tagore established a new mile-stone. With boldness and firmness, he rejected a book-centered education for students. To him it is not just to confine the mind of boys and girls to text-books only. It will kill the natural instincts of a student and make him bookish. It will kill his creative skill. So, students should be freed from the-book-centered education and should be given a broader avenue for learning. Tagore had championed the cause of freedom. The same he wanted to implement in the field of education. With that object he had opened Shantiniketan, Sri Niketan and Brahmachari Ashram. Accordingly, he gave free choice to students to develop their interest in any field they like. To him, education should be after the heart of a man. He explained freedom in three-categorized ways i.e. freedom of heart, freedom of intellect and freedom of will. Education imparted in a natural way will lead to the fulfillment of these three freedoms. One may pursue the vocational education or education of an intellect, or education in any branch of the arts or one may become a sansei by observing celibacy.

According to Tagore, teaching should be practical and real but not artificial and theoretical. As a naturalist out and out, Tagore laid emphasis on the practicality of education. That will definitely increase the creative skill within a learner. That creativity will bring perfection in the learning process and the student will be a master in his own field but not a slave to mere

theoretical knowledge which one delves deep. Tagore attached great importance to the fine arts in his educational curriculum. To him, game, dance, music, drama, painting etc. should form a part of educational process. Students should take active part in these finer aspects of human life for these are very essential to enrich soul. Tagore was aware about the rural poverty of our country. So, he wanted to eradicate it through education. The practical training imparted in different crafts to the students will make them skilled artisans in their field. They can remove the poverty of the rural bulk by applying their education helping thereby in the process of rural reconstruction.

## **CO-OPERATIVE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

Rabindranath Tagore was not only a great poet rather he had got deep feeling for rural reconstruction in India. He always tried to make people happy not only economically rather by his songs Dave's and dharma also. After successfully starting of Shatiniketan at Bolepur in West Bengal he thought about another separate Centre for rural all round development. It was Sriniketan. It visualized for self-supporting steps of rural people.

Starting with neighboring villages, the institute has conducted it's activities in many villages. These villages are graped under sub-centers for the convenience of administration the area has been divided into two zones

1. Intensive area,
2. Extensive area.

The first comprises 26 villages which are under the direct guidance and supervision of Sriniketan.

The activities of the institution may be broadly divided into nine spheres

1. Agriculture
2. Industry,
3. Village-welfare,
4. Co-paration,
5. Health and sanitation,
6. Education,
7. Social organisation,
8. Economic research,
9. Soil erosion

Sriniketan is separately administered. The activities of the institution are organized by in full-fledged departments. The agriculture section consists of an experimental farm branches for a dairy, fishery and poultry. An attempt in made to produce improved varieties of crop and raise quality of livestock at the centre and to distribute them among the neighboring villages. There is a slip a Bhran for the industries department. It impacts training in tannery, carpentry, poultry, book - binding, tailoring etc. Sriniketan provides subsidiary occupation to the cultivators of the

area by offering them indoor employment in the institution. In this way, it is very interesting to know that Rabindranath Tagore has given a very for sighted guidelines for rural reconstruction. If contemporary India follows his views it can be said that a new vision can be got. Tagore's emphasis an all-round development physical, mental, spiritual can give a form of total personality. By his songs and music, a simple villager can be free from tension.

Rabindranath Tagore's work in "village reconstruction" at Sriniketan is not as widely known as his work at Shantiniketan. Founded at Sriniketan in 1922, the Institute of Rural Reconstruction (IRR) was Tagore's attempt to put to work his ideas about village reform. Tagore has recalled how he, a "town-bred" individual, came to recognize the "sorrow and poverty of villagers" while being a manager of his family's agricultural estates in East Bengal in the 1890s. In 1906, Tagore released his 15 point Village Reconstruction Charter in Pabna (now in Bangladesh). This document makes clear that making villages autonomous was chief among his concerns. It was necessary to use "indigenously made goods." Further, all the village disputes had to be settled within through a process of village arbitration. A community grain bank was necessary to guard against famines. In a gesture towards the necessity of women's autonomy, the Charter asks that "housewives" be trained in a trade that could enhance the family's income. While Tagore sought autonomy for villages, he did not wish that they remain isolated. In his view, it was necessary that "brotherhood" was cultivated between "hamlets, villages and districts." A few of Tagore's concerns were generally shared by reform minded intellectuals and government officials: science and history had to be taught in village schools; and, demographic data had to be compiled meticulously for every village. Many of his concerns were however unique. His Charter, for instance, stressed the need for building communal harmony and asked that the essence of all religions be taught in schools.