

Tagore's realization of life and Self

by
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Dear friends,

Rabindranath Tagore was a great poet and a great artist, but he was not merely an artist in the ordinary sense – he was also an “artist of life”, i.e. he knew the art of life and living.

What is the “art of life and living”? The great art of life is to know how to unite and harmonise your limited individual sphere of life with the unlimited universal sphere of life, and thereby to be truly united in knowledge, love and service with all beings.

An artist of life is a true lover of life as he both communicates with God and at the same time performs his duties to society and the world. For him the practice of realising and affirming the presence of the infinite in all things is of main importance. He knows that every day is a process of surrendering himself, removing all obstacles to union with the Supreme Being and extending his consciousness of Him in devotion and service, in goodness and love. Such a man was Rabindranath Tagore.

He knew the inner secrets of life and how the actual relation between man and God and the universe is. And most importantly he was not a world refusing mystic living in seclusion and avoiding the company of fellow humans and society. On the contrary he was very much a fellow human in the midst of society and a true lover of life who would face and accept whatever life would present him with. Also he knew the importance of being practical and rendering service to humanity – of how to translate the inner to the outer – and his medium was his art through the inspiration of beauty.

He says: *“It is very characteristic of life that it is not complete within itself; it must come out. Its truth is in the commerce of the inside and the outside.”* And further he says: *“When a man feels the rhythmic throb of the soul-life of the whole world in his own soul, then is he free.”*

One of the main characteristics of an artist of life is his ever positive attitude towards the living world on the basis of his profound understanding of the dual reality of life. This duality exists for our own good and without it there would really be no creation at all. When the poet creates a poem he gradually materializes and manifests the nameless and formless idea or feeling or wish deep within his consciousness which is pressing on for coming out and realizing itself fully in words, rhythm, melody and beauty. So also with the Creation of God. The whole Cosmos and all life have come out from Him so that He can know Himself in joy and love. Therefore love is the alpha and omega of all life and existence which can transform and harmonize everything.

Tagore says: *“Yes, our individual soul has been separated from the supreme soul, but this has not been from alienation but from the fullness of love. It is for that reason that untruths, sufferings, and evils are not at a standstill; the human soul can defy them, can overcome them, nay, can altogether transform them into new power and beauty.”*

“... for love is the perfection of consciousness. We do not love because we do not comprehend, or rather we do not comprehend because we do not love. For love is the ultimate meaning of everything around us. It is not a mere sentiment; it is truth; it is the joy that is at the root of all creation.”

“For love is an end unto itself. Everything else raises the question “Why?” in our mind, and we require a reason for it. But when we say, “I love,” then there is no room for the “why”; it is the final answer in itself.”

“In love all the contradictions of existence merge themselves and are lost. Only in love are unity and duality not at variance. Love must be one and two at the same time.”

“Bondage and liberation are not antagonistic in love. For love is most free and at the same time most bound. If God were absolutely free there would be no creation. The infinite being has assumed unto himself the mystery of finitude. And in him who is love the finite and the infinite are made one.”

“In love the sense of difference is obliterated and the human soul fulfils its purpose in perfection, transcending the limits of itself and reaching across the threshold of the infinite. Therefore love is the highest bliss that man can attain to, for through it alone he truly knows he is more than himself, and that he is at one with the All.”

“Only he has attained the final truth who knows that the whole world is a creation of joy.”

It is impossible to convey such thoughts and feelings which Tagore does in his writings and art without himself being what we call ‘realized’. What does it mean to be “realized”? When you have perceived, comprehended and realized your inseparableness with God, you are what we call Self-Realized or God-Realized.

Tagore says: *“Our existence is meaningless if we never can expect to realize the highest perfection that there is.”* And further he says: *“(God) can be known by joy, by love. For joy is knowledge in its completeness, it is knowing by our whole being. Intellect sets us apart from the things to be known, but love knows its object by fusion. Such knowledge is immediate and admits no doubt.”*

The realized one is completely free because he speaks from the very core of existence and addresses the universal heart of the naked and natural human being, excellently devoid of dogmas and isms, casts and creeds, and any kind of national or other borders. Lastly I shall quote the Self-Realized artist of life, Rabindranath Tagore, as a great lover of humanity:

“... I repeat we never can have a true view of man unless we have a love for him. Civilization must be judged and prized, not by the amount of power it has developed, but by how much it has evolved and given expression to, by its laws and institutions, the love of humanity. The first question and the last which it has to answer is, Whether and how far it recognizes man more as a spirit than a machine?”

Thank you very much!