An Enquiry Concerning Protection of Environment after Rabindranath Tagore: A Philosophical Study

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ABSTRACT: Environmental problems remain the emerging issues of the day. Environmental degradation invites danger to the planet earth and the life of its inhabitants. It is the time to realise problems and to find out its solution otherwise no longer our lives will remain protected. In such a challenging situation, preservation of environment is a must. To my knowledge till now no philosophical attempt has been taken to solve the problems of environment. To some extent ethical measures has taken into consideration for solving these problems. In this study attempts has been made to look and solve the problems philosophically and ethically through the help of the writings of Rabindranath Tagore. Rabindranath Tagore realised the intuitive bond between the living and non-living creature of earth. He pointed out the human greediness to be the real culprit of degrading environment and took many initiatives to protect and preserve the environment.

Keywords: environmental crisis, environmental degradation, philosophical attempt, greedy human nature, preservation, protection.

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I. INTRODUCTION:

In the proposed problem attempt has been made to enquire into the preservation of environment after Rabindranath Tagore. Before dealing with the problem it is considered to be essential to have a look into the significance of the preservation of environment. Here; the question may arise; why does the preservation of environment matter? If we are going to answer the question on the causal ground then it will imply that preservation of environment is an effect that necessarily follows from certain causes interlinked with it. Again another question raise what are those causes which lead to the preservation of environment. The causes of the preservation of environment are to be considered through the help of the experiential world observation. We are observing that lots of changes are occurring in our natural environment. Our environment is becoming polluted. Polluted environment leads to the degradation of quality and quantity of natural resources. It results scarcity of various items which are necessary to continue our life. So to continue our lives in this earth it is essential to preserve our natural environment. It is the fact which we cannot deny that in the present era numbers of legal powers are imposed to preserve and conserve the natural environment by formulating laws. Still we are unable to stop the degradation of our environment in a true sense of the term. The main reason behind this is the lack of awareness regarding the mutual relationship between man and the environment. They are either unable to realise the intuitive relationship between man and nature or completely ignoring the fact. However, we must make them aware about the fact. That is why in the present situation preservation of environment is the most challenging issue to be considered as serious one. We must re-think the problem and try to find out the ultimate solution of it. To my knowledge Rabindranath Tagore's writings are to be considered as a meeting point in this regard. Because many of his writings this aspect is clearly revealed.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore is multidimensional. His writings are analysed from different points of view. Thousands of works have been done in literature and cultural side. More work has been done in philosophy, humanism, naturalism, human religion etc. still there is enough scope to study and till now many concepts have not been touched. Following are some of the reviews of literature related to present study:

- Bolai The original story [balaai*] by Rabindranath Tagore, Translated by Prasenjit Gupta, is a part of galpaguchchha [Collection of Stories] published by Visvabharati Publications. This story was written and narrated by Rabindranath Tagore for Barsha-Utsab, a festival to celebrate the onset of rains in Santiniketan.
In printed form, it first appeared in Prabasi. In this story Tagore tries to show the intuitive relationship between man and nature through the help of the character of a small boy named after Bolai.

- **Atithi** a story written by Rabindranath Tagore is a part of galpaguchchha [Collection of Stories] published by Visvabharati Publications. In this story Tagore tries to show mutual relationship between man and nature symbolically by the help of a boy named Tarapad.

- **Majumder, Amiya Kumar, Rabindranathather Vijnanik Manas**, Gupta Press, Calcutta: Here the writer Amiya Kr Majumder has shown that Tagore has indicated the place of trees in the world. Tagore treats the trees and herbs as his dumb friends. According to him, they have their own language. He was so much attached to them that he could understand the language of the animal world. Tagore hears the tune of his beloved in the breathing of the wind, sound of the bees. He maintains that life first appeared in the trees. All the insignificant plants, creepers and herbs are important to him.

- **Sengupta, Kalyan** in his article Rabindranath Tagore of the book Fifty Key Thinkers on the Environment, Published by Routledge, 11 New Petter Lane, London, 2001, edited by Palmer, Joy A. discusses about Tagore’s philosophy of environment and his attitude towards the nature.

- **Rakta Karabi (Red Oleanders) (1923-24)**: Tagore has written this book during his visit to Shillong (now the capital of Meghalaya) Inspired by the image of a red oleander plant crushed by pieces of discarded iron that Tagore has come across while walking. In this play Tagore indicated the beautiful but toxic nature of flower and its association with beauty and death in the play.

### Objectives of the Study:
The aims and objectives of the work are to focus Tagore’s approach to the preservation of environment from philosophical point of view through his writings; especially stress is given to his short stories. Through this study an attempt is made to make aware the masses regarding the interrelationship between man and nature or in another word man and the entire environment. Finally through this study an attempt is made to find out the philosophical solution to solve the environmental problem.

### Research Methodologies:
In this research work, we collect data from primary and secondary sources. Collected data are analysed from philosophical perspective through the help of analytical method and to some cases critical method also. Try to synthesise to formulate a solution of the problem.

### III. BRIEF SKETCH ON RABINDRANATH TAGORE

Rabindranath Tagore, the First Asian Nobel Prize winner poet is famous for his philosophy based on the Upanishads, which are written in about 1000 B.C. to 300 B.C. It is true that very often he is regarded as a humanistic philosopher as his main stress is on man rather than on the Absolute. It is true that he loves and adores man but his man is the man who resides in nature. In his numerous writings viz. poems, essays, novels, dramas, stories, short stories, letters etc. he declares that nature makes man’s life worth living by supplying air, water, its heavenly beauty so on and so forth. He is often identified as an environmental pioneer. He is identified so not in the sense that he propounded any systematic environmental theories or environmentalism, but his feelings and respect for nature as expressed in his writings remind the world people that environmentalism is inseparable from Tagore’s life. Nature got a unique position in his writings. His innumerable writings testify his love for nature. Bana-Bani, Basundhara, Sonar Tari, Snehamayi, Naibedya, Rakta Karabi, Muktadhara, Bolai, Atithi, Chati etc. are his various writings which explain nature from diverse standpoints. In his book “My Life in my Words” Tagore confessed that he has often composed songs in such a day where cloud shadows danced on the ripples of the stream, cloud shadows lay dark upon the jungles of the further shore of Ganga. Tagore’s song ‘‘akashbhora, surjyatara, bishwabhorapran’’ speaks of his great affection for nature. The establishment of Brahmacharyashram at Santiniketan is also another sufficient aspect to signify him as an environmentalist.

### Rabindranath Tagore’s view on Man and Nature Relationship:
Tagore’s deep attachment to nature is clearly revealed in one of his story Balai. Through this story he also expressed the intuitive relationship between man and nature. The story begins with a small orphan boy named Balai who had much attachment to nature and natural things; especially he loves most the Simul tree. He was looked after by his uncle and aunt. Usually his age was to busy with his companions by playing outside. But he used to stay lonely and silently. It does not mean that he wants to run away from his surrounding rather he prefers to go to the bosom of nature and the natural things. He enjoyed the every changes of nature with an enthusiastic way. Sometimes he reacted with curiosity about the changes of nature. Tagore states in the story Balai as:
Purbadiker akshe kalo megh store store stamvita hoye daray, or samasta montate vije haoya jen shrabon – araney gondha niye ghoniye uthe; jhom jhom kore bristi pore, or samasta ga jen shunte pai sei bristir shabda............magher eshe amer bol dhore, tar ekta nibir ananda jege uthe or rokter modhaye.....

Balai, Galpa Samagra, page. 1176.

Rabindranath Tagore can hear the pulse of nature. Sometimes he feels nature as a place of his mental shelter. He feels peace amidst the nature to talk with nature, share feelings with nature. He also realised the intimate relationship between nature and himself. Tagore expressed it in the following way:

Ratre bristir pore pratham sokale samner paharer shikhor diye kancha sonarongger roddur debdaruboner upore ese pore – o kauke na bole aste aste giey sei debdaruboner nistobdha chayatole ekla obak hoye dariye thake, ga som som kore—ai sob prakanda gaser bhitor kar manusoake o jen dekhite pai, tara kotha koi na, kintu somostoi jen jane. Tara sob jen onek kaler dadamoshai........

Balai, Galpa Samagra, page. 1177.

It is reveals in the story Atithi also. In this story Tarapad who run away from home and come close to the nature. He had also deep attachment to nature. He became happy when he heard the voice of the kites, foxes and sound of the clouds etc. He felt pleasure after looking the raindrops on leaves. Tagore states in the story Atithi as follows:

Gaser ghon pollober opor jokhon shraboner bristidhara porita, akashe megh dakita, oronyer bhitor matrihini doitya shishur nyay batas krondon korite thakita, tokhon tahr citta jen uchringkhol hoyiya uhtita. Nistobdha dviprohore bohudur akash hoite ciler dak, borsar sondhyay bheker kolorob, gobhir ratre shrigaler citkar dhvonoi sokoloi tahake utola korita.

Atithi, Galpa Samagra, page. 516.

So, Tagore realised the bond between nature and himself. Nature is his source of pleasure and peace. Nature is his shelter. It is his end. He can never be isolated from nature. His existence is determined within the nature without. He could feel the pain of nature and could hear the pulse of nature. He got hearted when someone pluck the flower or throw the stone to bring Amlokis from the Amloki trees which he could not share with anybody. Tagore states in the story Balai as:

Keu gacer phul tole aite or baro baje.................or boyoser celegulo gace dhil mere mere amoiki pare, o kicu bolte pare na.

Balai, Galpa Samagra, page. 1177.

Again the most painful moment for him was when the grass cutter came to their house to cut down the grasses of the garden. He walked among the grasses every day. He was attracted by the unknown variety of flowers, creepers, kalmeagh vine etc. All these may not the fancied plants of the garden; still Tagore gave worth to them. That is why sometimes he requested her aunt to forbid the grass cutter to cut the grasses. Tagore in the story Balai states:

or sob eeye bipoder din, jedin ghachiya ghas katite ase. Kenna, ghaser bhitore bhitore o protoy dekhe dekhe beriese—etatuku- tuku lota, begonia holde namhara phul, oti choto choto; majhe majhe kontikari gac, tar nil nil phuler buker majhkhantite chotta aktukhani sonar photo; berar kache kache khothao ba kalmegher lota, khothao ba ananta mul; pakhite khaoya nimpholer bici pore choto choto cara beriyechi, ke sundar tar pata....

Balai, Galpa Samagra, page. 1178

Rabindranath Tagore on Preservation and Protection of Environment:

Another most significant aspect of Tagore’s environmental philosophy which we cannot ignore is that he gave more importance to preserve environment from aesthetic ground. Most of his creations are centre round the beauty of nature. Kalyan Sengupta remarks that Tagore entertains nature in terms of the aesthetic appreciation or delight that it prompts ((K. Sengupta, p. 144). Palmer, Joy A. (Ed): Fifty Key Thinkers on the Environment). Tagore argued that nature should be preserved because nature gives us aesthetic joy through which the bond between nature and ourselves can be realised.

So from the above discussion it is clear that Rabindranath Tagore had a deep attachment to nature and natural things. He is the nature lover in the true sense of the term. Men are not the sole creature of the world. Man and nature are mutually related to each other. His existence is determined in relation to the natural world. To him there is an ultimate bond between man and nature. That is why he wanted to preserve the nature and natural things. But he experienced that men use the environment only to fulfil their needs. They use nature as a means to the economic benefit only. They forget about how to treat the environment. He realised that due to greedy human being our environment is being exploited and degraded day by day. In the essay Aranyakadebata (The god of forest), he shows how man become unrestrained in his actions In “Aranya Devata”, (Forest Deity:
R.R. edition, Vol. 14, p.373), Tagore opines that modern man indulges too much in luxurious and profligate living. So long as he used to live in and around the forest, he had a deep love and respect for the forest and therefore he used to live in perfect symbiosis with it and its plants and animals. As soon as he became a city-dweller, he lost his love for the forest which had been the source of his sustenance.

All these actions annoyed him. But he did not want to restrain himself from all these happenings. Rather he tried to make an ecologically harmonious co-operative based society. He gave more importance to the plantation because he thought that most of the environmental problems arise due to deforestation. So, he started plantation programme and he began this by planting a tree for the first time at the heart hospital of Balatonfured (Hungery) in 1926 when he stayed there after suffering from exhaustion while visiting Budapest at the end of a European tour. After that he continued his journey in various locations around the world during his travels.

The establishment of Brahmanidyalaya is one of the remarkable steps to create awareness regarding the man nature relationship among the students. In the Brahmanidyalaya at Santiniketan the classes were held on the shadow of the trees. It is a deliberate idea to bring students closer to nature and to learn how to respect the nature. Tagore tried to impart his educational philosophy leading towards the understanding that there was an inseparable link between man and nature. At Santiniketan he started the festival of earth in 1927 by organising an annual tree-planting ceremony (brikkhoropon). In this ceremony the students used to sing and read his poems. This approach gave his environmental campaign a very positive image. It was not a negative campaign about what man should not do but rather it was a subtle reminder conveyed through creative expression. This encouraged more people to get involved in supporting his campaign. The ceremony is still held each year in Santiniketan. In the same year, Tagore also introduced Halakarshana (tilling the land). It is a clarion call to increase the green cover across the deserts through the plantation. It was the strong sentient move in the world to build up mass environmental awareness. Classes in Santiniketan were in the shade of trees, not simply as a romantic idea but as a deliberate way of bringing students closer to nature so that they would unconsciously learn to respect it. He also started an annual celebration of the arrival of the monsoons at the end of the dry season (Borsha mongol).

IV. CONCLUSION:

Rabindranath Tagore took significant initiations to preserve the environment as well as to make the people aware about the thing. He gave worth to nature. He valued the nature from the both standpoint- aesthetic value as well as intrinsic value. He argued that nature has both aesthetic and intrinsic value. According to him nature has value not in the sense that it has its inherent capacity to fulfil our needs. It has value in itself, just like the man has his/ her value. Therefore Tagore remarked that nature has objective value. There are inseparable bond between man and nature. They are intuitively related with each other. We must have awareness about the bond and the fact that it would be possible to continue our lives in a sustainable environment only.

So, Rabindranath Tagore’s philosophical approach of environment is a significant one and has relevance in the present day context. Through the help of this philosophical approach we could minimise the degradation of environment. We can take Tagore’s writings and activities as a guiding principle to create awareness among the masses. It should be mandatory to include Tagore’s environment related writings in the Environmental Courses.

REFERENCES

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