

**"The most important lesson that man can learn from his life is not that there's pain in this world, ... but it is possible for him to transmute it into joy."
--Tagore**

Tagore's philosophy :-

Humanism vs Nationalism :

While Tagore agreed extensively about India should be free from colonialism. But he was strongly against nationalism. He extensively wrote about the rise of nationalism in Japan & he predicted that it would lead to a disaster at home & abroad. He saw nationalism as kind of madness that always resulted in wars. The two world wars are both filled by nationalism in Europe during that time. & it ~~de~~ also happened in Asia also.

For Tagore, national states were formed as a war machine to expand their control & their territories. So he warned against the fascistic tendencies of nation-states that they only care about fascist tendency which is they only care about their own people.

Nation state doesn't care about if people of the other side of the border die in famine or starvation. It only care about their own selfish motives.

Today a good example it can be food waste in some country & starvation & war in other country.

"... we have our greatest delight when we realize ourselves in others and this is the definition of love."



Because the material world is the world of quantity where resources are limited and victory waits for those who have superior facility in the weapons, therefore success in the path of progress for one group most often runs parallel to defeat another.

he also believe in universal humanism

For him every human civilization like china, India, Persia, Greece, Egypt, US, UK are more like peaks that

attached the same hill. humanity. Tagore says liberated humans are those who think beyond their national borders.

Being selfish is one of the great risk in today's economic world.

• **men are so closely knit, that when you strike others the blow comes back to yourself.**



But once you go beyond greed, you find happiness. According to him we all are connected to humanity. the meaning of life is to love everyone no matter what nationality.

Rationality vs Art :

Tagore was somehow also critic of rationalism, somehow similar to Dostoevsky in that modern rationality distort as well as dehumanise people. Tagore thought modern man was like crazy distorted gaffe whose head touched the cloud of illusion of power & material success while the heart was stuck down below unhappy & unfulfilled.

Knowledge & efficiency are like hotels Tagore says it's clean & nice but the host is missing. To be spiritually liberated education was crucial for him. But a rigid coercive education system could also break person's spirit. He argued that education shall be a process of self discovery that allows people to be greater than they are themselves.

Tagore believe since intellect is the same for all human & science as a product of human intellect reduces everything to prototypes, species numbers & statistic. the only way to truly understand other people as unique human being we have to turn to art & stories. why Because art & stories turn all creatures into unique characters. each individual with unique emotions. it gives them humanity while science simply depicts people as numbers & statistics of citizen of a nation.

He also pointed out your intelligence belongs to others i.e. to provide food & security for your family, Boss, friends governments. Brilliant scientist like Einstein helped create the most

Powerful Bomb for United States government same as Alfred Nobel created dynamite. So your intellect can also destroy the whole world. So intelligence & science can be equally or more destructive than helpful. therefore to truly understand others we're to return to art & stories.

East vs West :

western humanism originated from a christian belief that all believers were equal. But in 18th century the enlightenment replaced god with human & reasoning that all human being as equal. Infact western science relies on a single truth, single theory & single best answer to every problem. To answer one problem problematic, one has to be better than others. two theory cant co-exist. One has to be wrong.

Tagore understood this single mindedness of western philosophy. But ~~instead~~ interested tagore was that westerners were seeking truth outside while indians were seeking inside through meditation. He found a problem in Both ways of thinking. He was critical of the west for going too far & exploiting the world. in the process destroying nature as well as cultures.

He on the other side also critical of Indians for being too inactive. meditating inside a temple & west seeking one answer to everything

& the east is chasing answer inside each individual. Tagore believed the west could learn from the east to be more self-reflective, contemplative & meditative, while the east could learn from the west that active work, creativity & material endeavours too can give life a meaning. In the 2nd half of 20th century many western hippies found themselves in India for spiritual guidance. Some like Steve Jobs use their Indian spiritual experience to become better capitalist.

So Tagore wanted a dialogue between culture. He lamented the west arrogance & selfishness & east's aloofness & passivity.

Human VS Nature :

Tagore says every civilization has solved a great problem. western civilization's challenge was to free us from nature & unite the whole world. he says -

'The West seems to take a pride in thinking that it is subduing nature, as if we were living in a hostile world where we have to wrest everything we want from an unwilling and alien arrangement of things.'



for US Indians however there is no need for an approach to control nature. But to be in harmony with nature west approach to control nature stems from christian notion that we come from nature (the garden of eden) into this ugly & wild place called earth. So human don't belong here. As a result nature is seen ugly dirty & need a cleanup.

to give an example of this separation between the christians & others the colonial english in India had the same feeling about their colonies. they were there to just extract wealth, precious commodities like tea, spices, textile etc then go home. as ~~obvious~~ obvious they didn't consider Indians as equal, so didn't mingle with them.

Same in Africa, America & Australia Europe only settled in places where they outnumbered the locals. Also most settlers in America & Australia were the ones who were pushed out of Europe for their religious beliefs or criminal conviction. But in India they never felt at home. This unfortunately put man against nature on the one hand & christians against non believers on the others. To the extent that it dehumanised others so that killing, exploiting, starving or enslaving them was considered totally fine by their own christian standards.

why? Because for colonist Europe still resembled a bit of the garden of eden while the rest of the world as ugly and wild & non believers, sinners, bestial.

In his article titled East & West Tagore relates an anecdote about a Swedish man choosing to live among the poor people of Bengal when Tagore was a child. Tagore says Hammergren the Swedish man remains immortal as a kind of soul who went past culture & colour to live among the Bengalis.

He represented true humanism that is not separated by race colour or nationality. To illustrate his humanism I would like to discuss one of his best known short stories which I read as a child in Bengal.

Kabuliwala (1892)

what it is about?

→ A writer in Calcutta (Kolkata) most probably/hypothetically Tagore himself tells a story about a dry fruit seller from Kabul (Afghanistan) who visits Indian city every year to sell his fruit. As story goes he befriends with the writer's little daughter 'Mini'

& they bond together, whenever the fruit-seller arrives at their street she runs to him shouting "Kabuliwala". wala is a term used for vendors like chaiwala means tea seller.

So the little girl & fruit-seller laugh & joke with each other as a father & daughter would. then there is an incident.

Someone in the neighbourhood refuses to pay Kabuliwala some unpaid debt & Kabuliwala or (Rahman) strikes him & as a consequence police arrest him,

He spends years in Indian jail everyone somehow forgets him. Mini the girl grows up & on her wedding day suddenly the fruit seller Rahman reappears.

the narrator the father meets him and tells him that mini is getting married so he can't meet her today.

Rahman gives him some gifts surprised Mini's father ask him about his life. Rahman tells him about his life & his own little daughter back in Kabul (the graveyard of empire) whom he hasn't seen ^{for} years since he has been in jail all the time, thus she too must be grown up now.

this has a devastating effect on narrator cause his own daughter is getting married today & this heightens his feeling of sympathy. he felt Rahman's pain & suffering of separation from his daughter & as a prominent reader he too know about the political situation in Afghanistan.

As a result he decides to cut on the cost of the wedding to pay Rahman so he can back to Kabul to see his daughter.

here two father connected through their love for their daughters.

we don't know someone until we know them fully & their past history ^{thats} why I believe so much in someone's history.

it's an incredible touching story of humanity & how we all same when it comes to pain & suffering, no matter how different we are. for example how the passage of time has a devastating effect on us all. we say that in the face of the characters as they realize how much time has passed & how much they have changed. & how we understand others by putting ourselves into their shoes.

Materialism vs Artistic Spirituality

Tajore grew up as Brahmin Hindu & stop believing in religion when he discovered art when he read this simple sentence.

"When it rains, the leaves tremble!"

This was for him a divine message to him to take up the spiritual journey of writing poetry, making & writing music & paint.

In his words - He becomes a kind of nature's ambassador to convey its beauty, sound, the fleeting human emotion that bubble & die down & the sight of a flower that bring an intense feeling he soon passes. He considered himself an artist whose canvas was the entire universe, & a musician whose orchestra consisted all the birds & animals. A poet whose words were all the plants & trees & weather.

Art he says liberated him,

"I am certain that I felt a larger meaning of my own self when the barrier vanished between me and what was beyond myself."



to be an artist is to know evil or Death, that's the meaning of freedom.

In a consumerist world, we define our life's meaning by how much we own & consume

"Our needs have multiplied so furiously fast that we have lost our leisure for the deeper realization of our ~~self~~ and our faith in it."



Tagore as Plato believe that the purpose of our life is not to consume or own rather to be creative & make things. Freedom from materialism can give us emotional freedom.

So Spiritual freedom is for greater joy than material success. He says —

Now, one of the poem by Tagore

"Where the mind is without fear"

"... an emperor is merely a decorated slave, remaining chain to his empire, a millionaire is kept pilloried by his fate in the golden cage of his wealth while this fisherman is free."



he has given the definition of democracy by a philosophical point of view.

In his poem he has talked about every philosophical aspect of life & being from meaning to love to reality etc.

Due to language barrier his writing is not as popular as it should be but still I believe he is eternal. The way I'm writing this now 200 years from now (if Bengali culture survive the evolution) someone will write the same thing about him with more evidence & with more precision & joy.