
RABINDRANATH TAGORE –AS A PIONEER OF GREEN MOVEMENT OF TODAY

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Rabindranath Tagore is appropriately called a '**World Poet**' because both on the merit of the universality of the themes embraced in his poetry ,songs and other writings as well as for his self identification as a poet of the Earth, the above title is quite justified. Many of his poems, songs, articles short stories, novels drama and paintings together with the institution named **Viswa Bharati** founded by him bear a universal spirit that is distinguished from any regional, parochial, communal or sectarian mentality expressed in the contemporary cultural sphere of India. Naturally, his thoughts, and ideas transmitted through his works were not only disliked but also severely criticized by some sections of people during his lifetime. However, such opposition is quite usual against any genius of history who was nonconformist with his age.

Description of charm and beauty of nature of terrestrial environment are abundant in Tagore's poems and songs. He meticulously narrated the sequence of flow and the cyclic motion of seasons of this planet as the movement of a living being. The scorching heat of summer to burn the entire environment, the relief of the thirsty organisms with the outbreak of rains, piercing sunrays through clouds falling on wetlands to stimulate growth of plants in autumn, end of harvesting in late autumn to leave empty land, falling of leaves of trees in foggy winter and blossom of flowers with newborn green foliage in spring are vivid in his poems and songs. He depicted varied types of physical features of this planet with his unparallel poetical touch, such as majesty of the snow-clad mountains standing against barren hills, solitude of forests, charm of rattling sound of waves of oceans, dance of ripple in a flowing river, terror of white hot desert and

grace of bumper crop in agricultural fields. In regard to the human being, the highest creation of the biological world of this planet, his writings give expression of the feelings of various mental states such as joy, pain, agony, sorrow, passion, fear, courage, jealousy, cruelty and anger of all age groups covering the children, youth and the old.

Rabindranath was far advanced than other writers of his ages in expressing various scientific facts and theories in Bengalee poems and literature. In the poem entitled '**Africa**' his profound knowledge in the contemporary geological hypothesis of **Continental Drift**, first put forward by the German meteorologist Alfred Wegener in 1912 and first translated in English in 1924 was revealed. Following this hypothesis the poet described in this poem how did the ancient continent of the earth called **Pangaea** breakup and one of the fragments called Africa drifted to the west across the primordial crust that took place according to Wegener at the end of the **Mesozoic era about 80 million years ago**. However, as the poet wrote the poem just before the beginning of the second World war in 1939 and at the time of aggression of Abyssinia (now Ethiopia) by Italy, he described also the history of Africa for reminding his readers how the torture and enslavement of the African people by the armed European nations since the Industrial revolution of Europe was the cause of age-long misery of Africa. It is very interesting to note that **Mohandas Karam Chand Gandhi**, another genius of world history and contemporary to Rabindranath, had explained the cause of misery of the African people in the same light about forty years earlier when he waged non-violent struggle against apartheid in South Africa that ultimately inspired the black people to overcome their slavery.

In 1935 the poet had written his famous poem '**The Earth**'. In that poem he narrated the origin of Earth according to the findings of the contemporary astrophysicists describing violent earthquakes and volcanic eruptions on this new born planet which obstructed evolution of life. Then he described how life appeared with the spread of green plants and liberation of oxygen from them changed the composition of the atmosphere to make sunrise and sunset so pleasant on this planet. In every phenomenon on the planet earth the poet observed unity of opposites and basic contradiction of **Hegelian philosophy** as put forward by **Karl Marx** while natural law of

the earth was observed as struggle for existence and survival of the fittest, discovered by **Charles Darwin** in 19th century. Being fully conversant with special theory of relativity of Albert Einstein that measured the velocity of light as the fastest one in this universe, the poet visualized that whatever be the advancement of man-made science and technology, the earth is the only place in the universe where mankind is allowed to live and all our achievements are limited in space and time.

Between January and July in the year 1941 i.e in the fag end of life Rabindranath wrote many poems among which three were distinctly about the nature of the earth. The first of them is entitled '**Oikatan**' (Unison or chorus or coincidence of sound), the second is '**Ora Kaj kare**' (they work) and the third is '**Madhumoy Prithibir Dhuli**' (sweet is the dust of the earth).

In the poem **Oikatan or Unison** he began with the descriptions of the vastness of the planet earth with numerous and varied features, many of which are beyond the limits of human knowledge. He then declared himself as a poet of the earth who plays all the notes and melodies sounded on this planet. He, however, admits that he has failed to reach all sections and types of people while his aspiration is to enter the hearts of millions of poor peasants who are closest to the soil, ever neglected, ever exploited and ever insulted by those who live on the hard labour of the poor.

In the months of February 1941 Rabindranath wrote two poems about the earth. In the poem, **Madhumoy Prithibir Dhuli**, written on the 14th February, he compared the sky and the dust of the planet earth with the sweetness of honey. They are also like the final truths known to him by living his whole life on the earth and he wishes to salute this dust because the ultimate truth for both living and non-living is manifested in the terrestrial dust.

In the poem '**Ora Kaj kare**' or '**They work**' the poet described the history of mankind full of aggression, violence and war, building and fall of empires and emperors. But, he mentioned that the labouring masses always survived even after massive destruction. He wished to be one of

these peasants and workers who have outlived all conquests, all victories and all threats and have worked for the benefit of the entire human society at all working places.

Thus, we find that Tagore's thoughts about the planet earth and terrestrial environment, though much older than the science, philosophy and culture of green movement of the present day, that was born only in the sixties of the 20th century and after destruction of the second world war and massive industrialization under post war reconstruction, are fully consistent, fully acceptable and very much inspiring to build environmental awareness of the masses. It is well known to any inquisitive person today that all the searches in space going on since 1920, first with the invention of Hubble telescope and later with reflection microwaves and spacecrafts making inter stellar voyages, failed to detect any trace of life beyond the domain of the planet earth. Thus, extraterrestrial life and intelligence is still now a mere speculation or hypothesis of fertile brains, whereas in reality, the earth is the only shelter of life and obviously for human being in the whole universe. In this universe, our solar system has nine planets and that is included in the galaxy called Milky way consisting of about 100 billion sun-like stars and there are more than 100 billion such galaxies in the universe. It is a fact that about one thousand exo-planets have been discovered by the scientists which shine in the space outside our solar system. Yet none of them has shown any evidence of life in our scientific study. That is why if the earth is ruined or polluted by chemicals, green house gases, radioactive substances or excess temperature from anthropological source, not only that the entire mankind but also the life as a whole will disappear from the universe. So, saving the earth from ruin is the greatest virtue and the highest religion for the mankind today, the only animal group with thinking power evolved on this planet from biological kingdom.

Therefore, green workers today all over the world cry to stop every unsustainable development that may cause pollution of water, soil and atmosphere, loss of bio diversity, loss of forests and water bodies and rise of average global temperature and also of population. A green worker also stands for peace and tranquility for the whole world because war results in destruction of environment of life. Since war is generated from over-population, poverty and hunger of a large

section of people exploited by a small section of rich and powerful, eradication of poverty is also an important task of green movement.

Tagore was a leading one among the first batch of environmentalists of India who initiated Indian masses to move forward to reach the goal of saving the Planet Earth.