

grammar, supplicated the boatman to help him. « Do you know how to swim »? asked he. « No » said the grammrian. « O then you are lost , here your grammar is of no use but you must know how to die. The sea never sinks the dead, it is the living which is in peril. If you die as a being bearing human characteristics ( limitations ) the sea of mysteries will support you on its bosom ». So in order to live as a man, we must die as an animal. In order to be able to read the book of life we must know also the grammar of death, that is the grammar of self- sacrifice. Relating to this teaching Tagore also quotes Upanishad» « Tam vedyam purusham veda, yatha ma wo mrityuh parivyatha » « Realize the person so that you mayst not suffer from death. » He also quotes- Lao-tze saying; « Let us die, and yet not persish. » I could go on comparing the many other similar conceptions between the Indian and the persian mind. But I should not end, before bringing a rather important fact to the notice of this distinguished gathering. Rabindrananath Tagore in his poetic-philosophic speculation, and inner conviction as a man, does not stope at the stage of contemplation only. Reading his book carefully one feels convinced of the fact that his religion, or the religion of man, according to him, is based upon two priciples which are unalianable from a real religious life. In the first place the basic doctrine of all great religions is the same. Ther spirit of religion, the realization of God in man, is a fact above the rituals and formalities. In all religions men seek their own supreme value, which they call divine, and cultivate the vision of a Being who exceeds men in truth nad with whom they feel kinship. This fact of universality in religion has been emphasized by him more than once. The second priciples without which religion may have no expression for life is the fact of moral practice and love. According to all religious scriptures, like Bhagavad Grita it for instance, the deeds that are done for the sake of self, or even the ceremonies and rituals, without moral action, are but fetters of our souls. The spirit of union, the universality of religion, are there to uplift us to cosmopolitanism and love toward all living beings, speciaually devotion to humanity. The poet treats this view of his, particularly in connection with the religion of Zarathushtra in which he discovers both universality and morality. Let me conclude of qoting a significant verse from a persian poet, the indication of which is that, no action should be taken in life unless it means some good for somebody .

« I do not want to have my nail get entangled with anything , unless I do pull out a thorn from a foot. »

in the depth of the moving and changing facts. The key to that exalted state of mind is not rational thinking but rather vision, of which Tagore claims to have had direct experience. His religion, is the religion of man, which originates from such a vision. But we cannot have such an experience unless going through peculiar spiritual trials till we attain the state of « samadhi» or as the Iranian mystic would call the stage of extasis. خلسه This doctrine of irrationalism, or rather superrationalism is, as we know, common in all esoteric teachings. Rumi likens those who only reason, to people who lean against wooden legs which are not secure from breaking. Once we arrive to that stage of the union, the duality of the physical and the metaphysical, individual and the universal, Atman and Brahman will vanish and the One manifests Himself from behind the veil of the phenomenal world. How beautifully expresses this heavenly identification the famous theologian-philosopher of the 11th century Alghazali, while discussing the basic unity of the visible world ( عالم الملكوت ) with the spiritual world ( عالم الملکوت ). He quotes the superb poem by the well known Iranian minister of the Seljuk empire Sahib-bin- Abbad. The two worlds are likened to glass and wine. The glass is so clear and transparent, and the wine in it so crystal pure that it is impossible to tell one from the other. As if it is a glass without wine or wine without a glass. In this sense Tagore quotes the old saint poet Kabir who wrote this: « By saying that the supreme reality dwells in the realm of spirit, we shame the outer world of the matter; and also when we say that he is only in the outside we do not speak the truth, It is through the complete merging in the infinite, and through direct experience that our mind surpasses reason and may realize that cosmic identity». But to attain that mystic union we have as Tagore repeats, to reach the stage of mukti, to liberate our earthly self from the fetters of our animal desires, and kill those desires in us. « Ma gridah » « covet not», enjoin the Upanishads. This point is significantly raised by the Iranian mystics. They favourably quote the Islamic saying: « موتوا قبل ان تموتوا » « Die before you die ». If we want to live we have to die, which, in the least, it means to kill the selfishness in us. Rumi condemns selfishness even as a pride of being learned and looking down on those ignorant, by telling the beautiful story of the grammarian, the story which very likely originates from India. A self-conceited grammarian sailing on a boat asked the poor boatman whether he knew grammar, getting a negative answer, he blamed him vehemently; all of a sudden there was a storm and the grammarian forgetting all about his

him to take them to the King. Explaining to them the hardships and trials of the road to the Beloved, the latter decides to lead them. After a long and perilous journey and having gone through the seven valleys of trial, and having had many of them perished on the way, the survivors, only thirty in number, attain the goal so longed for, but only to find out that they came to discover their own selves, or to contemplate the King Sâymurgh in themselves. Rumi the classic representative of the Iranian poetic mysticism expresses the same idea by inviting those who go to Makka for a pilgrimage, to look for the Beloved One in their heart rather than seek Him in any material edifice. This is the sense of: *tat tvam asi!*

Tagore like any other great thinker is a monistic-animistic mind. His great soul lives in his poetic ideal world, he is therefore an idealist. One can trace in his thinking, which he prefers to see that rather a poetic vision than a philosophical reasoning, belief in the whole momentum of life as an onward movement accelerated as an ever growing and ever creative surplus in man which exceeds the requirements of the biological animal, a theme so vastly defended by many other Indian leaders of thought from the days of the Upanishads till our day, by men like Radhakrishnan. This onward movement is destined to reach perfection in uniting with the God-man, nara-narayana. This induces one to think of the «elan vital» of Bergson or even entelechy of Aristoteles. In our Soufi doctrine the individual soul takes its course from its origin a «descending curve» (قوس نزول) in order to cover the cycles of perfection and start the «ascending curve» (قوس صعود) striving to gain its celestial abode again. In the terms of Fichte, the great German idealist, the stages of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis are, this way, arrived. As we know the very opening verses of Masnavi of Rumi begins with the penetrating song of the Reed or the flute, telling the story of its having been cut off from the reed-bed and lamenting the separation of the yearning soul from its spiritual home. This separation of the individual soul from the universal Soul and the Atman from the Brahman is the basis of the eternal aspiration of the real human self for the final union. Therefore the individual soul strives all the time to get freedom and liberation, «mukti», from the fetters of the material desires in order to realize the mystic union, unio mystica, of the form and the formless, that nothing else than the one Eternal survives. Evidently reason and science alone are not able to secure such a union with the unfathomable Being. Science urges us to the immensity of the knowable world only, but it is the urge of the infinite spirit that we try to go beyond that and strive to feel the Eternal

basic human culture or civilization, or that he thought there are two different, Eastern and Western, civilizations rather alien to each other and irreconcilable. He immediately and very enthusiastically declared that according to him there is only one single human civilization and that the differences are but of local nature, subject to chronological and transitional gradation. At the end of that stimulating conversation he asked me whether I had seen his last work (published in 1931) called « The Religion of Man, » and, if I remember well, he promised to send me an exemplary, which he never did. Either my negligence or my destiny wanted that I should not have seen the book till the last October when I was summoned by H.E. the Indian Ambassador and the Indo-Iranian society of Tehran to deliver a speech at the occasion of the 91th anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, and the occasion made it possible for me to get a copy of « The Religion of Man » unexpectedly as a gift from the Embassy. When I got it, I never dreamed that I was destined to come to India in order to share the celebration of Tagore centenary. So my having desighed to put before this honourable congregation few remarks concerning this great book, has been rather a matter of destiny than a matter of choice, or chance, if you prefer.

Tagore considers the main subject of his book to be « the humanity of God or divinity of Man the Etenal. » His anthropomorphic trend of mind is evident throughout the whole work, yet not in the sense of superficial incarnation or any other commonplace conception of anthropomorphism; for any platitute on the subject may degenerate to a sort of idolatry, rendering the idea of transcendence of God irreconcilable with the idea of his immanence. A trite and vulgar treatment of this delicate subject is evidently unphilosophical. This kind of sublime anthropomorphism, that is the vision of the divine Being in human self, is tracable in our Islamic saying :

« Who knoweth his Self, knoweth his God. » This is the self that makes for the consciousness and reflects a quality of mind which as Radhakrishnan explains so clearly, is above anything quantitative. The idea of the realization of God in man, is related so in the long poem of Shaikh Attar, the forerunner of our great mystic who lived in 12th century. The poem is entitled « The Language of » . A number of birds so very anxious to get to see their ideal king » come to their leader asking

## **Rabindranath Tagore and The Iranian Mind**

### **Delivered at the Tagore Centenary Celebration, Bombay**

*By Dr. Rezaqade Shafaq .*

As any other student in the civilized world, I had heard of Rabindranath Tagore's name, as a student, while studying in Germany. I think it was in 1924 that Tagore visited Berlin, and I managed to go and hear him deliver a speech. After the lecture he was surrounded by the young ladies to get his autograph, therefore I could not approach him. He was inapproachable as he was irreproachable. It was in April 1932 that Tagore came for a visit to Iran, upon the invitation of the Ministry of Education. After his arrival to Iran I was privileged to be invited to speak on him at the Literary Society of Tehran. On this occasion I read some of his poems like Gitanjali, The Gardner, And The Crescent; and some of his philosophical works like the Home and the world, Sadhana and his Reminiscences. In Theran he was so besieged by various visitors that I almost thought my calling on him would be fruitless. But to my delight he desired to see me and my lamented friend Dinshah Irani the Zoroastrian delegate who accompanied Tagore, intermediated the visit and after having treated us with a luncheon he took us to the poet-philosopher of India. Soon we found ourselves in the presence of that great personality. As I knew how he had been inaudated by various questions during those few days, I preferred to keep quiet and let him talk to us. After having made some pleasant remarks concerning my speech on his behalf, he asked me whether I had been in India. After some hesitation I answered in the affirmative, and began to say things about my imaginary India. «O you must have read my reminiscences» he exclaimed, «Yes Sir» I retorted, « this is India I have seen.» He was amused, sat more lively and began to talk with a smiling face, making charming remarks about Iran and the East in general. After having carefully listened I thought it was time that I should venture a question, after all, and him wether he believed in one