প্রসঙ্গ রবীন্দ্রনাথ

PRASANGA RABINDRANATH

প্রশান্তচন্দ্র মহলানবিশ

মহলানবিশ ট্রাষ্ট পরিচালন সমিতি

৩০২৪৫
৭/১০/৮৫

ইণ্ডিয়ান স্ট্যাটিস্টিক্যাল ইনস্টিটিউট-
লাইব্রেরিয়ান কে
দিলাম--
পূর্ণেন্দু বসু
চেয়ারম্যান কমিটি অফ ম্যানেজমেন্ট -
মহালানবিশ ট্রাস্ট -
২৫/৭/৮৫

প্রসঙ্গ রবীন্দ্রনাথ

প্রশান্তচন্দ্র মহলানবিশ

মহলানবিশ ট্রাষ্ট পরিচালন সমিতির সভাপতি ডঃ পূর্ণেন্দুকুমার বসু কর্তৃক
৩৫, বালিগঞ্জ সারকুলার রোড, কলিকাতা ৭০০ ০১৯ হইতে প্রকাশিত।

১৪ই আষাঢ়, ১৩৯২

২৯শে জুন, ১৯৮৫

মূল্য : পঁচিশ টাকা

Price ; RUPEES TWENTY FIVE ONLY

শ্রীমফি আমেদ কর্তৃক, ব্রাহ্মমিশন প্রেস, ২১১/১ বিধান সরণী,
কলিকাতা ৭০০০০৬ হইতে মুদ্রিত।

সূচীপত্র

প্রকাশকের নিবেদন

কমিটি অফ ম্যানেজমেণ্ট মহলানবিশ ট্রাস্টের তরফ থেকে অধ্যাপক প্রশান্তচন্দ্র মহলানবিশের লেখা 'প্রসঙ্গ রবীন্দ্রনাথ' ছাপা হলো। ট্রাষ্টের শর্তাবলীর মধ্যে প্রথম শর্ত হচ্ছে যে ট্রাষ্টের অর্থ রামমোহন ও রবীন্দ্রনাথ সম্বন্ধে আলোচনার বা গবেষণার কাজে উৎসাহ দেবার জন্য অর্থ ব্যয় করা যাবে। আমরা ইতিপূর্বে রামমোহনের উপর কয়েকটী পুস্তকের প্রকাশনায় সাহায্য করেছি, এবং 'রবীন্দ্রবাণী' (সংকলন) প্রকাশ করেছি।

অধ্যাপক প্রশান্তচন্দ্রের সহিত রবীন্দ্রনাথের ঘনিষ্ঠ যোগাযোগ ছিল। তাঁর কয়েকটী কাব্য সম্বন্ধে ও তাঁর ব্যক্তিত্বের বিভিন্ন দিকের উপর অধ্যাপক মহলানবিশ কয়েকটী প্রবন্ধ রচনা করেন। সেগুলি এখন পাওয়া যায় না। কয়েক মাস পূর্বে কমিটি স্থির করেন যে এই প্রবন্ধগুলি একত্র করে একটী বই ছাপা হ'ক। এই সংকলন-গ্রন্থ রবীন্দ্র গবেষকদের ও অন্যান্য পাঠকদের কিছু নতুন আলো দিতে পারে এই কথা ভেবে আমরা এই সংকলনটী ছাপার কাজে ব্রতী হয়েছি। 'প্রসঙ্গ রবীন্দ্রনাথ' দুটী অংশে ভাগ করা হয়েছে। প্রথম অংশে অধ্যাপক মহলানবিশের ইংরাজী রচনা গুলি দেওয়া হয়েছে আর দ্বিতীয় অংশে তাঁর বাংলা লেখা গুলি সন্নিবেশিত হয়েছে। বাংলা লেখার মধ্যে 'রবীন্দ্র পরিচয়' শীর্ষক প্রবন্ধগুলি বিশেষভাবে উল্লেখযোগ্য। রচনার দিক দিয়ে 'বনফুল' পূর্ববর্তী হলেও 'কবিকাহিনী' পুস্তকাকারে প্রকাশিত রবীন্দ্রনাথের সর্বপ্রথম রচনা এবং ইহা একটী সম্পূর্ণ কাব্যগ্রন্থ। ইহা ছাপা হয় ৫ নভেম্বর ১৮৭৮, 'বনফুল' প্রকাশিত হয় ৯ মার্চ ১৮৮০, 'রুদ্রচণ্ড' প্রকাশিত হয় ২৫শে জুন ১৮৮১, এবং 'শৈশব সঙ্গীত' প্রকাশিত হয় ২৯শে মে ১৮৮৪। সবগুলি কাব্যগ্রন্থ রবীন্দ্র-রচনাবলীর—অচলিত সংগ্রহ—প্রথম খণ্ডে পুনরায় ছাপা হয়েছে। এই কাব্য-গ্রন্থগুলির উপর আলোচনা সহজে পাওয়া যায় না। বর্তমান সংকলনে এই কাব্যগুলির উপর আলোচনা রবীন্দ্রগবেষকদের কিছু কাজে লাগ্‌তে পারে বলে আমাদের বিশ্বাস। পাঠকসমাজে এই গ্রন্থটী সমাদৃত হলে নিজেদের ধন্য মনে করব।

এই গ্রন্থ প্রকাশে যারা সাহায্য করেছেন—শ্রীচিত্ত ভট্টাচার্য, শ্রীঅসীম আমেদ, ডাঃ অরবিন্দ মিত্র, শ্রীসুবিমল লাহিড়ী ও শ্রীবিশ্বনাথ মুখোপাধ্যায়, তাঁদের আন্তরিক ধন্যবাদ জানাচ্ছি। আর যাঁদের সাহায্য না পেলে বই ছাপা হতো না—সাধারণ ব্রাহ্ম সমাজ কর্তৃপক্ষ ও ব্রাহ্ম মিশন প্রেস—তাঁদের জানাই আমাদের কৃতজ্ঞতা—

পূর্ণেন্দু বসু
সভাপতি
কমিটি অব্ ম্যানেজমেণ্ট, মহলানবিশ ট্রাস্ট

ভূমিকা

স্বর্গত অধ্যাপক প্রশান্তচন্দ্র মহলানবিশ শিক্ষিত সমাজে লব্ধপ্রতিষ্ঠ পদর্থ-বিজ্ঞানী ও রাশিবিজ্ঞানী এবং উত্তর-স্বাধীনতা পর্বের ভারতীয় শাসনতন্ত্রের ইতিহাসে অদ্বিতীয় পরিকল্পনাকার রূপেই পরিচিত। সুতরাং রবীন্দ্রনাথ ও তাঁর রচনাবলী সংক্রান্ত তাঁর নিবন্ধসমূহের এই সংকলন প্রকাশ হয়তো পাঠক-মহলে কিছু বিস্ময়ের উদ্রেক করবে। কিন্তু রবীন্দ্রনাথের সঙ্গে তাঁর জীবনব্যাপী অন্তরঙ্গ পরিচয় ও বিশ্বভারতী সংগঠনে তাঁর বুদ্ধি ও কর্মশক্তির উপর কবির একান্ত নির্ভরশীলতার কথা মনে রাখলে সহজেই বোঝা যায় এতে সত্যই আশ্চর্য হবার কিছু নেই। পারিবারিক সূত্রে অতি অল্প বয়স থেকে তিনি জোড়াসাঁকো ঠাকুর-পরিবারের সঙ্গে ঘনিষ্ঠ হবার সুযোগ পেয়েছিলেন এবং তাঁর মনে সঞ্চারিত হয়েছিল ব্যক্তি রবীন্দ্রনাথের প্রতি যেমন অসীম শ্রদ্ধা, রবীন্দ্রসাহিত্যের প্রতি তেমনি গভীর আকর্ষণ ও অনুরাগ। প্রশান্তচন্দ্র স্বয়ং জন্ম নিয়েছিলেন যে পরিবারে তা ছিল ঊনবিংশ শতকীয় রেণেশাঁসের ভাবধারায় নিষ্ণাত। তাঁর পিতামহ গুরুচরণ মহলানবিশ ছিলেন আদৌ ব্রহ্মানন্দ কেশবচন্দ্রের মণ্ডলীভুক্ত প্রগতিশীল সংস্কারক; পরজীবনে গণতান্ত্রিক ভিত্তিতে প্রতিষ্ঠিত সাধারণ ব্রাহ্মসমাজের অন্যতম প্রতিষ্ঠাতা। বাংলার রেণেশাঁসের রামমোহন রায় প্রবর্তিত পরিপূর্ণ মানবমুক্তির আদর্শ—যেখানে মানুষের ঐহিক কল্যাণ ও পারত্রিক মুক্তিপ্রত্যয় তুল্য মর্যাদা লাভ করেছে—জন্মসূত্রে সহজ সংস্কাররূপেই প্রশান্তচন্দ্র লাভ করেছিলেন। এই নবজাগৃতির ইতিহাসের দুই প্রান্তে দুই বিরাট পুরুষ স্বমহিমায় বিরাজিত—রামমোহন ও রবীন্দ্রনাথ। রবীন্দ্রনাথের মধ্যে প্রশান্তচন্দ্র নিরীক্ষণ করেছিলেন রামমোহনের সাধনার পূর্ণ পরিণতি। রবীন্দ্রনাথের নিজস্বীকৃতি অনুযায়ী তাঁর 'হিরো' বা আদর্শ পুরুষ যেমন রামমোহন, তেমনি আমরা স্বচ্ছন্দে বলতে পারি জীবনে প্রশান্তচন্দ্রের 'হিরো' দু'জন—রামমোহন ও রবীন্দ্রনাথ। তাই কিছুমাত্র বিস্ময় জাগে না যখন দেখা যায় এই বিজ্ঞানসাধক মনীষী তাঁর সম্পত্তির একাংশ নিযুক্ত করে গেছেন রামমোহন ও রবীন্দ্রনাথ সংক্রান্ত গবেষণাকর্মের সহায়তার জন্য। আর তিনি স্বয়ং যে রবীন্দ্র-সাহিত্য সংক্রান্ত গবেষণার একটি অতি আবশ্যকীয় ধারার উৎস-মুখ উন্মোচনে ব্রতী হয়েছিলেন—উপরিউক্ত প্রেক্ষাপট

মনে রাখলে তাও মোটেই বিচিত্র ঠেকে না। এই সংকলনের অন্তর্ভুক্ত নিবন্ধগুলি তাঁর সেই বিশেষ উদ্যমের ফল।

সর্ববিধ বৈজ্ঞানিক কর্মের উপাদান বস্তু ও তথ্য। বস্তু সংস্পর্শহীন সম্পূর্ণ আত্মগত কল্পনাবিলাসের স্থান বৈজ্ঞানিক গবেষণায় নেই। লক্ষ্য করবার বিষয় প্রশান্তচন্দ্রের বৈজ্ঞানিক মন রবীন্দ্র-পবেষণার ক্ষেত্রেও মুখ্যতঃ বস্তুর কারবারী। রবীন্দ্রনাথের সাহিত্য-সৃষ্টির পরিধি বিরাট। প্রশান্তচন্দ্র যখন সে বিষয়ে অনুসন্ধান আরম্ভ করেন তখন পর্যন্ত বিশ্বভারতীর বা সরকারের উদ্যোগে রবীন্দ্ররচনাবলী প্রকাশিত হয় নি বা তার সূচনাও হয়নি। সমগ্রভাবে রবীন্দ্রনাথকে অনুশীলন করবার বা বুঝবার পথে তখন দুস্তর বাধা ছিল। অনেক লেখারই মুদ্রিত সংস্করণ পাওয়া যেতো না। তা ছাড়া মুদ্রিত রচনাতেও সর্বত্র প্রকাশকালের উল্লেখ দেওয়া ছিল না। তাই পৌর্বাপর্য রক্ষা করে রবীন্দ্রসাহিত্য অনুশীলন করাও এক দুরূহ কর্ম ছিল। এর উপরেও আর একটি বিশেষ অসুবিধার কথা প্রশান্তচন্দ্র উল্লেখ করেছেন: "নিজের লেখা সম্বন্ধে রবীন্দ্রনাথের কোন রূপ দয়ামায়া নাই, অতি নির্মমভাবে নিজের লেখা কাটিয়া কুটিয়া বাদ দিয়াছেন। শৈশবকালের অধিকাংশ লেখা পুনর্মুদ্রিত হয় নাই। দৃষ্টান্ত স্বরূপ বলা যাইতে পারে আঠারো বৎসর বয়সের পূর্বে লেখা প্রায় সাত হাজার লাইন কাব্যসাহিত্য এ পর্যন্ত সংগ্রহ করিতে পারিয়াছি। তাহার মধ্যে মাত্র তিন চারিশত লাইন আজকালকার প্রচলিত সংস্করণে পাওয়া যায়। এই বয়সের গদ্যসাহিত্য এক প্রকার লোপ পাইয়াছে বলিলেই চলে। কেবল শৈশব-রচনা নহে, প্রাপ্ত বয়সের অনেক লেখা, বিশেষত গদ্যপ্রবন্ধ ও সমালোচনা, মাসিক পত্রিকার পাতায় চাপা পড়িয়া গিয়াছে। এরূপ লেখা সমস্ত সংগ্রহ করিলে বোধ হয় যাহা আছে তাহার উপর আরও এক-তৃতীয়াংশ হইতে পারে। রবীন্দ্র-সাহিত্য সমগ্রভাবে আলোচনা করিতে হইলে এই সকল লেখা কোনমতেই বাদ দেওয়া চলেনা।" (রবীন্দ্র পরিচয়: ভূমিকা)। এই অভাব ও অসুবিধা বোধ থেকেই প্রশান্তচন্দ্র অনুভব করেন একটি নির্ভরযোগ্য, সম্পূর্ণ রবীন্দ্রসাহিত্যসূচি (bibliography)র একান্ত প্রয়োজনীয়তা। এবং স্বয়ং তিনি এই সূচি প্রণয়নে অগ্রসর হন। তাঁর প্রাথমিক প্রচেষ্টা ছিল প্রকাশিত গ্রন্থগুলির এক কালানুক্রমিক তালিকা নির্মাণের। এর পরিপূরক রূপে তিনি অপ্রকাশিত রচনা ও রবীন্দ্রনাথের মতামত সংক্রান্ত প্রবন্ধ ও সমালোচনার একটি স্বতন্ত্র সূচির কথাও ভেবেছিলেন। এই সূচি প্রণয়নের কাজে একক প্রচেষ্টা যে যথেষ্ট নয় এ বোধও

তাঁর ছিল, তাই তিনি এ কাজে সকলের সহযোগিতা প্রার্থনা করেছেন। এই ভাবে কালানুক্রমে সজ্জিত রবীন্দ্র-রচনাবলীর উপর নির্ভর করেই তিনি রবীন্দ্রনাথের জীবন ও সাহিত্য আলোচনায় প্রবৃত্ত হয়েছিলেন। ধারাবাহিক সমগ্র রচনাসূচি আলোচনার পূর্বে প্রকাশ করা সম্ভব হয় নি। সংকলন ও আলোচনার কাজ খণ্ডে খণ্ডে অগ্রসর হচ্ছিল। তাঁর আশংকা ছিল এতে আলোচনার সমগ্রতা ও ধারাবাহিকতা ক্ষুণ্ণ হতে পারে। সেই জন্য তিনি তাঁর রবীন্দ্রসাহিত্যালোচনাকে পূর্ণাঙ্গ সমালোচনা না বলে সমালোচনার পূর্বাভাস আখ্যা দিয়েছেন। এই প্রসঙ্গে লক্ষ্য করবার বিষয় সমালোচক হিসাবে তাঁর বস্তুনিষ্ঠা ও সততা। বস্তু-পরিচয় সম্পূর্ণ না হলে তদ্‌ভিত্তিক কোনো আলোচনা বা সিদ্ধান্ত সম্পূর্ণ নির্ভর-যোগ্য হতে পারেনা এ সম্পর্কে তাঁর প্রত্যয় দৃঢ় এবং তথ্যসংগ্রহে তখনো ঘাটতি ছিল বলে নিজের সমালোচনাকেও পূর্ণাঙ্গ বলতে তিনি নারাজ।

প্রশান্তচন্দ্র যখন রবীন্দ্ররচনাসূচি সংকলন ও তার ভিত্তিতে রবীন্দ্র-সাহিত্যালোচনার সূত্রপাত করেন (১৩২৮-২৯) তখন তাঁর পথের পথিক বিশেষ কেউই ছিলেন না সম্ভবতঃ এক পরমশ্রদ্ধেয় প্রভাতকুমার মুখোপাধ্যায় ছাড়া। সাধারণভাবে সেকালে সাহিত্যালোচনায় আত্মগত (subjective) ভাববিশ্লেষক রচনারীতিই প্রতিষ্ঠিত ছিল, এবং রবীন্দ্রসাহিত্যালোচনাও এ বিষয়ে ব্যতিক্রম ছিল না। এ কথা বললে বোধ করি অন্যায় হবে না, রবীন্দ্রনাথের জীবন ও সাহিত্য আলোচনায় বস্তুনিষ্ঠ, তথ্যভিত্তিক, বিষয়মুখী প্রণালীর প্রবর্তন বাংলা সাহিত্যে তিনিই করেন বর্তমান সংকলনভুক্ত নিবন্ধগুলির মাধ্যমে। পরিতাপের বিষয় উত্তর জীবনের কর্মভার তাঁকে ক্রমশঃ বিষয়ান্তরে ও ক্ষেত্রান্তরে আকর্ষণ করল, তাঁর রবীন্দ্র-গবেষণা অসম্পূর্ণ ও অপরিণত থেকে গেল, সাময়িক পত্রের পৃষ্ঠায় ইতস্তত বিক্ষিপ্ত কয়েকটি অসামান্য পরিশ্রমের পরিচয়বাহী রচনার বাইরে তার আর কোনো নিদর্শন রইল না। তবু কোনো মহৎ উদ্যম সম্পূর্ণ নিষ্ফল হয় না। প্রশান্তচন্দ্র প্রবর্তিত ধারায় উত্তরকালে এসেছেন একাধিক সার্থক গবেষক যাঁদের অক্লান্ত পরিশ্রমের ফলে রবীন্দ্রসাহিত্যের কালানুক্রমিক বস্তুভিত্তিক কাঠামোটি আজ প্রায় সম্পূর্ণ হতে চলেছে। এই প্রসঙ্গে বিশেষ-ভাবে মনে আসে কয়েকটি শ্রদ্ধেয় নাম—প্রভাতকুমার মুখোপাধ্যায়, ব্রজেন্দ্রনাথ বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়, সজনীকান্ত দাস, পুলিনবিহারী সেন।

যে রচনাগুলি সম্পর্কে আলোচনা করা হল সেগুলি ছাড়াও বর্তমান সংকলনে প্রশান্তচন্দ্রের কয়েকটি নিবন্ধ পাওয়া যাবে যার মধ্যে রবীন্দ্রনাথের

ব্যক্তিত্ব ও জীবনদর্শন সামগ্রিক দৃষ্টিতে মূল্যায়িত হয়েছে। এগুলি একটু স্বতন্ত্র ধরণের, কিন্তু লক্ষ্য করবার বিষয় আলোচনার প্রণালী কোথাও আত্মগত নয়, সর্বত্র বস্তুভিত্তিক।

শেষ করবার আগে দুঃখ ও লজ্জার সঙ্গে স্বীকার করতে হয় বর্তমান সংকলনটির অসম্পূর্ণতা। কয়েকটি রচনার সন্ধান পাওয়া গেলেও সেগুলি অনিবার্য কারণে গ্রন্থভুক্ত করা যায় নি। এর জন্য সহৃদয় পাঠকবর্গের কাছে ক্ষমা চাওয়া ভিন্ন গত্যন্তর নেই। যে রচনাগুলি অনুসন্ধানে পাওয়া গেছে অথচ বাদ পড়েছে সেগুলির উল্লেখ করছি :

চলতি ভাষার বানান—প্রবাসী জ্যৈষ্ঠ ১৩৩২

'সৎপাত্র' গল্প কাহার রচনা—বিশ্বভারতী পত্রিকা, বৈশাখ-আষাঢ় ১৩৫৫

পালকি-বেহারার গান—বিশ্বভারতী পত্রিকা, কার্তিক-পৌষ ১৩৫৬

রাশিয়ার এক প্রান্তে—বিশ্বভারতী পত্রিকা, মাঘ-চৈত্র ১৩৫৮

রবীন্দ্রবর্ষপঞ্জী—বিচিত্রা, বৈশাখ-আষাঢ় ১৩৩৯

শিক্ষার লক্ষ্য—শান্তিনিকেতন, ১ম বর্ষ, ১২শ সংখ্যা (চৈত্র, ১৩২৬)

এ ছাড়া বঙ্গসংস্কৃতি সম্মেলন উপলক্ষে ১৯৬১ সালে প্রকাশিত 'রবীন্দ্র-স্মারক-গ্রন্থে' প্রকাশিত 'বিশ্ববোধ' রচনাটি বর্তমান সংকলনে মুদ্রিত 'কবি-কথা' প্রবন্ধেরই অংশ। সেটি স্বতন্ত্র রচনা নয় বলে তালিকাভুক্ত করবার প্রয়োজন হয়নি।

সাময়িক পত্রের পৃষ্ঠায় আরো রচনা ভবিষ্যতে আবিষ্কৃত হওয়া অসম্ভব নয়। যদি কখনো এই গ্রন্থের দ্বিতীয় সংস্করণ প্রকাশের সুযোগ আসে তাহলে উল্লিখিত রচনাগুলির সংযোগে সেখানি নিশ্চয় পূর্ণাঙ্গ হবে। রচনা অনুসন্ধানে সাহায্য করেছেন শ্রীসুবিমল লাহিড়ী ও শ্রীঅরবিন্দ মিত্র। এঁরা আমাদের আন্তরিক কৃতজ্ঞতা ও ধন্যবাদের পাত্র।

দিলীপকুমার বিশ্বাস

PRASANTA CHANDRA MAHALANOBIS* AS I KNEW HIM.

The friends and well-wishers of the Indian Statistical Institute have laid those connected with the Institute under a load of gratitude by conceiving of and executing this plan of bringing out a volume of essays to be presented to Professor P. C. Mahalanobis on his Seventieth birthday in June, 1963. To one like me who can claim to have been a close friend of Professor Mahalanobis for over 40 years and who has had the privilege of working with him in guiding the growth and development of the Institute for the last 18 years, this gesture of regard and good-will is especially gratifying, as well as appropriate, for the attainment of the three-score years and ten span by Professor Mahalanobis happens to mark the consummation of a most remarkable period of achievement in the life of this eminent scholar and scientist, restless visionary and planner.

Mahalanobis had left Cambridge, with a brilliant degree in Mathematics and Physics, by the time I was admitted there in 1915. But a close friend of his who continued his studies became a close friend of mine also, and through him I came to know Mahalanobis sufficiently well to say as his guest in Calcutta in October, 1920, when I visited that city to appear in some Oriental Languages examination.

It was during that visit that I learnt of the high standing of the Mahalanobis family in Bengalee society, as well as getting a glimpse of Mahalanobis's interest in statistics—connected at that time with meteorology, purely as a powerful side interest of a professional teacher of

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physics. Mahalanobis introduced me to his aunt, a daughter of Keshub Chandra Sen and in his company I called on Dr. Brajendra Nath Seal and Dr. Nilratan Sircar. A year later, I visited Calcutta again and got to know Srimati Nirmalkumari Maitra, then Mahalanobis's fiancee and soon after Mahalanobis's wife. Dr. Heramba Chandra Maitra, her father, was a strict Brahmo and there was much ado over the proposed mode of marriage ceremony but love triumphed in the end.

I learnt of the difficulties that had been overcome only years later, as between 1921 and 1939 I had very little contact with the Mahalanobises. The threads of friendship, not any the worse for desuetude were resumed in Simla where I came to be posted as Joint Secretary to the Government of India in the Department of Education, Health and Lands whither Mahalanobis had come to persuade the Government of India to give him a small grant—not of more than four digits—for developing his statistical laboratory and Institute. For, in the meanwhile this was the stable but unsubstantial from his interest in statistics had taken, an interest which had grown into a passion as the years went by and the time for his retirement from his official post of Professor of Physics at the Presidency College, Calcutta drew nearer. Some space, sparing which was becoming increasingly difficult to an expanding department, had been permitted to be used for the purposes of the Statistical Institute and Laboratory.

My joining the Reserve Bank of India in 1939 as Secretary, to rise to be Deputy Governor (1941) and Governor (1943) marked a turning point in my own relations with Mahalanobis and my interest in his extra-professional work. The Reserve Bank top-level staff, with Headquarters in Bombay, spends about three months of the year (from mid-November to mid-February) in Calcutta, in order to maintain contact with that of other great industrial and commercial capital of the country. My

duties therefore involved a three-month sojourn in Calcutta and far more extended opportunities of keeping up contacts with the Mahalanobises. I had taken the opportunity of this sojourn to learn a little Bengali, in order to know better my many friends in Bengal—from Cambridge days, principally. And this forged another link in my friendship with the Mahalanobises as I discovered how closely they had been associated with Rabindranath Tagore and Santiniketan in its early days. Mahalanobis had been Secretary of Visva-Bharati and Rani (the name by which Tagore called Srimati Nirmalkumari Mahalanobis) a deeply devoted ministering angel to the Poet.

Many a Sunday I spent with the Mahalanobises, upto 1942, in a house beyond Baranagar Railway Station and after 1942 in 204, Barrackpore Trunk Road, the present somewhat bewildering Panch Mahal like house. Indeed, I was one of those who strongly advised the purchase of that property—during the war—as I felt attracted by its two tanks and gardenland, mangoes predominating (Amarpali was the apposite name given to it by Rabindranath Tagore). The war led to many profound changes in the location and organization of work of the Institute. Some staff had to be located in far away Giridih in the Santhal country. The Presidency College became less and less of an asylum and the precincts of Amrapali took up the strain.

It was soon after my joining the Reserve Bank that I became a member of the Indian Statistical Institute, to become its President in 1944. Although I have studied lower mathematics it is not a subject I am at ease in or have a talent for, and my only connection with statistics had been carrying out random agricultural crop sample surveys, after Hubback, as a Settlement officer in Raipur in Madhya Pradesh (then Central Provinces and Berar) between 1926 and 1931. as a cross check on soil classifica-

tion, correlated to soil analysis, and rent-rates fixed by me. However, increasingly I felt a sense of involvement in Mahalanobis's work in statistics and a growing desire to help him in obtaining financial support from the Government of India. As Deputy Governor and later Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, I had some influence with the Finance Ministry and felt I should use it in what appeared to me be a decidedly deserving cause.

But statistics was not the only bond between the Mahalanobises and myself Apart from their special relations with the Poet, I discovered Mahalanobis's deep intetest in the social intellectual movements in Bengal, especially in the life and work of Raja Ram Mohun Roy, and I learnt of his great competence as a speaker and writer of Bengali. Tagore became more and more a powerful theme of talk with us—the room reserved for him in Amrapali, from which the Poet numerous could greet the morning sun if ever he stayed with them, the tours in different parts of the world in which the Mahalanobises had accompanied the poet, incidents of these travels that it was a pleasure to recall, particularly the triumphs ; the poet's sense of humour ; his amazing speed in composing poetry, often a flow like that of the great river in a sailing boat on which he had loved to write ; and the Poet's many letters to Rani,

It was inevitable that the Mahalanobises and I should make plans for me to pay my respects to the Poet, and this was hastened by his illness at Santiniketan. The Mahalanobises and I went to the Abode of Peace in February 1941, just for a day or two. I ventured to take a small offering, in the shape of a poem in Sanskrit, which the Poet received graciously and in return for which at my request he read out one of his own (*Abirbhavo* ', selected by Rani Mahalanobis. Alas that was the first and the last time that I was to see the Poet. I returned to Bombay, to my duties in the Reserve Bank, and in August 1941 the sad tidings reached me that the Poet had passed away.

I became the Governor of the Reserve Bank in February, 1943 with a more perceptible capacity to interest the Government of India in helping the Indian Statistical Instiute, and in 1945 the Education Ministry agreed to make its first large and regular grant of Rupees Five Lakhs to the Institute for its Research and Training School. For Mahalanobis the period after the end of the war was one of more frequent professional trips abroad—he had in the meanwhile been made a Fellow of the Royal Society of U. K. for his work on large-scale agricultural sample surveys—and had also been elected a member of the International Statistical Institute. It was about this period that he resolved in his mind and discussed with me his idea of initiating a National Sample Survey as well as his growing interest in Statistical Quality Control.

This latter interest matured in the shape of a plan to invite Dr. Walter Shewhart, Director of the Research Laboratory of the Bell Telephone Co., the Father of Satistical Quality Control to India, in an effort to arouse interest in the movement in the business world of India. This effort had the welcome support of Dr. Lal Verman of the Indian Standards Institution and took shape in 1948. Dr. Walter Shewhart, accompanied by his wife Edna Shewhart, came to India, stayed in Calcutta with the Mahalanobises at Amrapili and in Bombay with me at the Reserve Bank House. Whilst the visit sowed the seed of statistical quality control in India, which after a late germination is at last showing signs of growing into a tree of considerable size, it laid the foundation of a deep and abiding friendship between the Shewharts and the Mahalanobises on one hand, and the Shewharts and myself on the other, a charmed circle to which my wife, Srimati Durgabai Deshmukh, was admitted on our marriage in January, 1953. Edna is *didi* to both Rani and Durgabai, and the Shewhart home in New Jersey is our American home.

Soon after relinquishing the Governorship of the Reserve Bank in 1949, I was appointed, on the suggestion of the late Dr. John Mathai, then Union Finance Minister, Financial Ambassador in U. S. A. and Europe to the Government of India, and in that capacity accompanied Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in part of his travels on his first visit to the U. S A. in October-November 1949. Soon after that I was called to Delhi for consultations, but stayed to organize the Planning Commission for the Prime Minister and to become the Union Minister of Finance in May 1952 as a result of a concatenation of events which this is not the place or occasion to elaborate.

It is necessary to state at this stage that Mahalanobis had known Shri Jawaharlal Nehru and had occasion to inform him of what he had been doing to promote statistics in India. Once, I remember, Shri Nehru had come to Bombay to speak on South and South East Asia and International Relations before the Bombay branch of the Indian Council of World Affairs. That evening I was invited to dine with Shri Nehru by his sister Srimati Huthee Singh, and I had occassion to refer to Mahalanobis's work for statistics and to discover that Shri Nehru was appreciative of it and conscious of the need to encourage it. This friendly interest was to bear fruit later in the appointment of Mahalanobis as Statistical Adviser to the Government of India by Prime Minister Nehru.

My coming on the scene as Minister of Finance led to many important developments of significance to the growth of the country's statistical apparatus, developments which would not have been possible but for Prime Minister Nehru's awareness of the role of statistics in planned economic development. The institution of a Central Statistical Office, the establishment of the National Sample Survey, the regular annual compilation of the National Income Report, with intensive statistical investigations

within these fields, whenever and wherever required, the formation of a Statistical Quality Control Policy Advisory Committee—all these were the product of the conjunction of the favourable circumstances which provided for the Indian Statistical Institute and Mahalanobis's ever-burgeoning ideas about the range of its potential services the strongest possible support in the Union Government, in the shape of the understanding by the Prime Minister of the importance of statistics, organized by a non-official, academically oriented and professionally competent body like the Indian Statistical Institute. Apart from the proliferation of its activities as indicated above, this period (1950-1956) saw the strengthening of the Research and Training School and its diversification, including an International Statistical Training Centre, thanks to the support extended by the Government of India.

The recognition of the Indian Statistical Institute into an Institution of National Importance by means of a piece of legislation most understandingly piloted by the Prime Minister himself, about a couple of yeare ago, put the coping stone on this imposing edifice the rising of which owes so much to the enthusiasm, energy, initiative and professional competence of Mahalanobis.

The last eight years have seen Mahalanobis grow into a figure of national importance. His name leapt into prominence with his putting out a draft outline of the Second Five Year Plan in the beginning of 1956. Much preliminary work, including the labours of well-known foreign specialists, had gone into this venture. That the Second Plan as finally formulated contained much of the philosophy underlying the Draft Outline testifies to the deep thinking that informed it. Since then Mahalanobis has had an assured place as a *de facto* member of India's Planning Commisson, and today he is in charge both of Science and Perspective Planning as a member of the Commisson—still

de facto, because of the impossibility of divorcing him from his major interest : the Indian Statistical Institute.

As President of the National Institute of Sciences of India, Mahalanobis had recently an opportunity to contribute to the stabilization of the resources of that eminent body, includiug the completion of its new home on Tilak Marg, New Delhi.

It is inevitable that with his assured status in the world of science, statistics and planned economic development Mahalanobis should be frequently called upon to participate in international conferences or to advise Government of developing countries. With no political predilections he has friends all over the globe and easy access to scientific circles in the countries of both the Western and the Eastern Blocks. Scientists and academicians from both blocks respond to his invitation to spend some time at the Institute as visiting professors or experts. Ronald Fisher, Simon Kuznets, Richard Stone, Frank Yates, Norbert Wiener, John Strachey, J. K, Galbraith, Nicholas Kaldor, A. N. Kolmogorov, J. B. S. Haldane and numerous others have at one time or another helped in the work of the Institute and added new ranges or dimensions to it. Today the Indian Statistical Institute, with its journal Sankhyā, its Ural Computer and its plans for the manufacture of calculating machines can claim to be in the forefront of scientific institutions of international importance, and its School of Research and Training, under its highly competent Director, C. R. Rao, confers graduate and post-graduate degrees of B. Stat. and M. Stat. and research degree of Ph. D. which are recognized as the hall-mark of advancad traning in statistical science and practice.

With all his remarkable achievments, Mahalanobis remains a modest man. His absorption in his work and his catholicity of interest make him a man not too easy to get on with. He has no small talk and little capacity to com-

promise with unreason. But he has no malice and no guile—indeed the intricacies of bureaucratic administration nonplus him—it is here that I have been able to help him a little and to make his path a little easier.

Mahalanobis's eternal preoccpation with work suppresses genuine capacity for affection—which in any case he would think it his duty to conceal—except towards canine pets. His absent-mindedness is often the butt of Rani's affectionate badinage, It is probably true to say that without Rani's unremitting help and attention, Mahalanobis would make a mess of his foreign travel leave things behind and catch the wrong planes.

But all these are superficial shortcomings. Functionally, he is extremely efficient and the volume and despatch of his work are amazing. The proudest thing that a friend like me, of over 42 years of standing, can say is that Mahalanobis and I have never had the slightest misunderstanding, not to speak of a quarrel. May he be spared for many more years to enrich the intellectual. academic and scientific life of the country and raise ever higher the stature of her statisticians.

C. D. Deshmukh

Part I

(প্রথম ভাগ)

ON RABINDRANATH

RABINDRANATH TAGORE THE HUMANIST

I

The humanism of Rabindranath Tagore has two aspects : the actuality of individual joy and suffering in the concrete, with the reality of a world-culture of humanity as its background. Both give full scope for creation, one in the life of action, the other in the life of the spirit. Rabindranath has worked unwearingly to relieve the distress due to flood and famine, chronic poverty, ill-health, and want of education in his own villages of Bengal ; equally untiringly he has endeavoured to spread to the four corners of the world the message of the coming together of the races of mankind, of universal humanity. The poet is not interested in the arid region of abstract principles ; uplift has no appeal for him. He does not believe in the cult of organized patriotism nor in that of an unfocussed cosmopolitanism. His is not the philosophy of negation, of barren renunciation, but a realization completely comprehensive. Rabindranath has placed his faith in the Kingdom of Man on earth, rich with the variety of human relationships. For him true freedom lies in the growth of personality from the life of the flesh to the life of the spirit which finds its supreme expression in the divinity of Man the Eternal.

II

Rabindranath was born in the atmosphere of the advent of new ideals in Bengal, ideals 'which at the same time were old, older than all the things of which that age was proud.'

That atmosphere was created mainly by Ram Mohun Roy. The Poet has repeatedly acknowledged that the first

source of his inspiration was from that large-hearted man of gigantic intellect :

> Ram Mohun Roy was the first great man of our age with the comprehensiveness of mind to realize the fundamental unity of spirit in the Hindu, Moslem, and Christian cultures. He represented India in the fullness of truth based not upon rejection but on perfect comprehension. I follow him, though he is practically rejected by my countrymen.

That atmosphere was a confluence of three movements—intellectual, spiritual, national—all of which were revolutionary. The poet's father Debendranath was the great leader of that movement after Ram Mohun, a movement for the sake of which he suffered ostracism and braved social indignities. The Poet was thus born in a family which had to live its own life, and which made him seek guidance for his self-expression in his own inner standard of judgement.

It is, therefore, not at all surprising that the Poet's faith in his own country and in a culture of universal humanity transcending all barriers of time and place both find expression in his earliest writings. At the age of sixteen he discussed the promotion of material prosperity in Bengal, and the possibilities of building up a new civilization through the meeting of East and West in an essay entitled *Hope and Despair of Bengalis** published in the *Bhārati*. The titles of other essays such as *The Anglo-Saxons and their Literature*, *Dante and Beatrice*, *Petrarch and his Laura*, *Goethe's Loves*, *Anglo-Norman Literature* and *Tasso* reveal his wide interests at this period (1878-80).

This was the time of the awakening of national sen i-ments in Bengal, traces of the Poet's share in which are left in a number of patriotic songs of which '*To you have I dedicated my body and my spirit, my Motherland*' (1877) is probably the best known.

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* I have given everywhere a literal English translation of the original Bengali titles. The dates also refer to the Bengali writings unless otherwise mentioned.

Along with the national movement occurred the neo-Hindu revival in Bengal. The sentimental obscurantism and the bellicose patriotism of this pseudo-religious movement repelled the Poet strongly, and with merciless logic and biting sarcasm he lashed the smug self-satisfaction and shallow boastings in scathing satire in *Boot-rations*, *Loud Speaking*, *Tongue-waving*, *The Agitation of Neo-Bengalis*, and in a small group of poems in the *Mānasi*: *Wild Hopes*, *Up-lift of Our Country*, *The Heroes of New Bengal*, and *The Propagation of Religion*. The anger of the Poet flamed up against the social thinking which glorified caste and child-marriage and the sophistry which discovered pseudo-scientific justifications of unintelligent customs and fantastic superstitions in such essays as *Moustache and Eggs*, *Superiority of Monkeys*, *Truth*, *Hindu Marriage* and in the poem *Love-making of a Newly-married Bengali Couple* (1882-88). The darkest pictures were, however, invariably relieved by a touch of humour.

Rabindranath was convinced that there could be no real political progress until social injustices were removed. He asked his countrymen if the freedom to which they aspired was one of external conditions. Was it merely a transferable commodity? Had they really acquired a true love of freedom? Had they faith in it?

> Unless we have true faith in freedom, knowing it to be creative, manfully taking all its risks, not only do we lose the right to claim freedom in politics, but we also lack the power to maintain it with all our strength. Men who contemptuously treat their own brothers and sisters as eternal babies, never to be trusted in the most trivial details of their personal lives,—coercing them at every step by the cruel threat of persecution into following a blind lane leading nowhere, often driving them into hypocrisy and into moral inertia,—will fail over and over again to rise to the height of their true and severe responsibility.

In all these discussions he maintained, however, a remarkable detachment of mind, and although he always

showed an enthusiastic appreciation of the intellectual greatness and strength of character of the European nations, he vigorously denounced the habit of blind imitation, and emphasized the need for preserving much of permanent value in the traditional culture of the country. In an article written in 1883, on the occasion of the opening of the National Fund, he foreshadows, at the age of twenty-two, his later outlook on the political work of the country. He protested against political agitation being made the sole object of the proposed fund ; he felt that the only aim of such agitation was to influence an alien government and had no real connexion with the welfare of the country. This policy of 'begging favours from the white masters could only foster an infantile mentality of irresponsible criticism and a spirit of parasitic dependence on others. He distrusted rights which could be conferred or withdrawn at the sweet pleasure of the rulers. He realized that the use of English as the sole language of political work effectually isolated such work from the people ; he urged that a vigorous attempt be made to awake the mind of the masses by spreading education, and to create a spirit of self-reliance by initiating welfare work by our own efforts. The patriotic songs of this period are inspired by the same spirit of independence ; in one the Poet implored his countrymen to throw away 'the salver of petitions and memorials.'

The appeal of a wider humanism was not lacking in the writings of this period. At the age of twenty, Rabindranath made an angry protest against the forcing of opium on the Chinese in an article, *The Traffic of Death in China* (1881). In another essay he said : The call of humanity is ever sounding. Have we nothing of permanent value to contribute to the future of human civilization ? He pointed out that true freedom consists in subordinating selfish interests to the universal spirit of humanity, while isolation, even in independence, was bondage. In the *Song of Invitation* (1885) he called upon Bengal to take her place in the

world of humanity. At the same time he made clear his dislike of a nebulous cosmopolitanism. In an essay on *A Plot of Land* (1884), he said : The universe is present in each and every small holding. To be able to know truly even a small plot of land is the only way of realizing the Universe. In an essay on *Ram Mohun Roy* (1884), he pointed out that the significance of a people lay in the individuality of its contribution to sum of human culture.

III

In 1891, Rabindranath took charge of the Tagore estates in North Bengal and went to Shileida, where he stayed for several years. He came into intimate contact with 'the poor, patient, submissive, family-loving, home-clinging, eternally exploited ryots of Bengal,' and gained a deep insight into their everyday life and needs. His passionate preoccupation in village welfare work which is such a marked feature of his latterday activities may be said to be a direct resultant of his stay among the peasants. He wrote at this time :

> I feel a great tenderness for the peasant folk—our ryots —big, helpless, infantile children of providence. I know not whether the socialistic ideal of a more equal distribution of wealth is attainable, but, if not, then such dispensation of Providence is indeed cruel, and man a truly unfortunate creature. For, if in this world misery must exist, so be it ; but let some little loop-hole, some glimpses of possibility, at least, be left, which may serve to urge the nobler portion of humanity to hope and struggle unceasingly for its alleviation. . . . If there be any under current along which the souls of men may have communication with one another then my sincere blessing will surely reach and serve them.

The relation between the rulers and the people increasingly engaged his attention at this time. In an essay on *Englishmen and Indians* (1893) he pointed out the lack of human touch in the British administration of India. The British rule was terribly efficient, but was purely mechanical

and thoroughly impersonal. The rulers need never come into any personal contact with the people; they might help or hinder their aspiration but only from a disdainful distance. And what might be a matter of mere policy to the rulers might pierce into the very core of life, might threaten the whole future of the governed but never touch the chord of humanity. This was his greatest condemnation of British rule in India.

In a large number of short notes and comments (1893 98) he showed how this mechanical administration was creating in the bureaucracy a mentality which looked upon the subject people as less than human, in dealings with whom the human code of honour and morality could be abrogated. It weakened the moral sense of the white man, and debased the humanity of the rulers as well as that of the governed. In *Remedy to Insults* and in *Digestion of Whipping* (1896) he suggested that the best interests of both Englishmen and Indians demanded that the former should be taught the lesson that the latter could not be insulted with impunity. The lynching of Negroes in the United States, the pogrom against Jews in Russia, or the atrocities in Belgian Congo did not escape his attention and called forth forcible protests (1898).

At the same time, he grew more and more dissatisfied with the activities of politicians which had protests as their sole aim, and proposed that the Indian National Congress, instead of passing resolutions for the benefit of Government, should take up a definite programme of constructive work in the country. The problem of education thus began to loom large in his mind. In *The Tortuosities of Education* (1892) he vigorously advocated making Bengali the medium of instruction and emphasized the need for making education fit in with the life of the people.

Amidst the growing perplexities of social, educational, and political problems, his mind slowly turned to the past in an endeavour to discover in the history of India a central

ideal for regulating our life and work. In 1895 we find a small group of poems ; *Brāhman* (in *Chitrā*), *To Civilization, Forests, Forest homes. Ancient India* (all in *Chaitāli*) in which the mind of the poet was evidently captivated by the Message of the Forest :

> The forest, unlike the desert or rock or sea, is living ; it gives shelter and nourishment of life. In such surroundings the ancient forest-dwellers of India realized the spirit of harmony with the universe and emphasized in their minds the monistic aspects of truth. They sought the realization of their soul through union with all.

Shortly after this we have a series of studies in which Rabindranath emphasized that the history of India had not merely been one of the rise and fall of kingdoms, of fights for political supremacy. The history of our people was that of our social life and the pursuit of spiritual ideals.

> The Nation is the organized self-interest of a people where it is least human and least spiritual. The spirit of conflict and conquest is at the origin and in the centre of Western nationalism ; its basis is not in social co-operation. It has evolved a perfect organization of power, but not of spiritual idealism.

He contrasted the political civilization of the West which is based on exclusiveness with the social civilization of India which is based on human relationship and co-operation.

He rejected the cult of nationalism very decisively, and in a series of essays and sermons (1898-1902) expounded the ideals of the social civilization which he considered to be the most valuable contribution of India. It was the peculiar gift of India to invest even utilitarian relations with human value. The ideal of Indian civilization was the unitary society which was maintained through the social regulation of differences on one hand, and the spiritual recognition of unity on the other. Rabindranath rejoiced in the fact that when Asoka was the Emperor of India, he sent messengers of peace and universal love, instead

of conquering armies, to the different countries of the world. The Poet found the truth of India in the spiritual message of the Upanishads and of the Buddha.

The *Naivedya* poems of this period (1900-01) are permeated by an austere spiritual idealism. At the close of the 19th century, just before the outbreak of the South African War, he wrote with almost prophetic vision :

> The last sun of the century
> sets amidst the blood-red clouds of the West
> and the whirlwind of hatred.
> The naked passion of self-love of Nations,
> in its drunken delirium of greed,
> is dancing to the clash of steel
> and the howling verses of vengeance.

He knew that this was not the way of India :

> Keep watch, India.
> Be not ashamed, my brothers to stand before the proud and the powerful.
> Let your crown be of humility, your freedom the freedom of the soul.
> And know that what is huge is not great, and pride is not everlasting.

Rabindranath reminded his countrymen again and again :

> With the help of unrighteousness men do prosper.
> With the help of unrighteousness men do gain victories over their enemies.
> With the help of unrighteousness men do attain what they desire.
> But they perish at the root.

In order to give concrete form to his ideas he left Shileida and started the *Brahma-Vidyālaya* (as the school used to be called at that time) at Santiniketan in December, 1901, on the model of the forest-hermitages of ancient India. Rabindranath sent his invitation in the name of the One who was *Santam, Sivam. Advaitam :*

> The Peaceful, in the heart of all conflicts ; the Good, who is revealed through all losses and sufferings ; the One, in all diversities of creation.

IV

In 1904 the Swadeshi movement broke in tumult all over Bengal. To Rabindranath it came as a splendid opportunity for constructive work of which he had been dreaming so long : We must look after our own interests, carry out our own work, earn our own welfare, do everything ourselves.

Of our impoverished and helpless villages he said : It will not do merely to remove wants ; you can never remove them completely ; the far greater thing is to rouse the will of the people to remove their own wants.

He gave a complete scheme of constructive work in the presidential address to the Provincial Congress at Pabna (1907), and suggested that our young men should form themselves into bands of workers who would go round the villages ; give a new orientation to the village fairs (*melās*), bring together Hindus and Muslims in fruitful work ; confer with and help the villagers in starting schools, making roads, supplying drinking water and the like ; devise other ways and means in regard to all matters of general interest. In his address to the students (1905) he said :

> The down-trodden and the despised who have become callous to insults and oblivious of even the rights of their humanity must be taught the meaning of the word brother. Teach them to be strong and to protect themselves ; for that is the only way. Take, each of you, charge of some village and organize it. Educate the villagers and show them how to put forward their united strength. Look not for fame or praise in this undertaking. Do not expect even the gratitude of those for whom you would give your life, but be prepared rather for their opposition.

His sympathy for the lowly and the despised has also found expression in his poems, for example, in the *Gitanjali* in '*My unfortunate land, you must come down in humiliation to the level of those whom yon have despised.*'

Rabindranath threw himself heart and soul into the agitation against the Partition of Bengal. He gave

lectures, wrote articles, composed a large number of songs such as '*My Golden Bengal*,' '*From the heart of Bengal, you have arisen in your glory, my Mother*' whose central theme was Bengal and which created a patriotic fervour never known before. He spread the use of the hand-loom, experimented with the *charka*, and actively participated in the organization of co-operative societies and cottage industries. It is interesting to note that in *Leader of the Country* (1905), he proposed that a single individual should be invested with full powers of leadership. In his opinion such a step would consolidate the discipline of the people in a personal allegiance to an individual man.

In his writings of this time he made it clear that he considered it a moral duty to fight evil. In fact, although he has no faith in force or violence, he has never given non-violence the status of a cult. His position in this respect is more akin to that of the Gita. For example, in an article written in 1903, he thought it right, under certain circumstances, to have recourse to force, provided this could be done without hatred or anger.

Throughout the Swadeshi movement his mind remained essentially creative and positive. In one of his letters we find :

> I remember the day, during the Swedeshi movement in Bengal, when a crowd of young students came to see me, and said that if I would ask them to leave their schools and colleges, they would instantly obey. I wss emphatic in my refusal to do so, and they went away angry, doubting the sincerity of my love for my country.

This incident took place in the midst of his activities in connexion with the Bengal National Council of Education, which had been set up as an independent organization in opposition to the University of Calcutta. He was one of its founders, and he worked hard in its cause, made plans, raised money, gave courses of lectures to the students, but was not prepared to support a merely destructive boycott of the official university.

Politics was always a secondary thing with him. His views on the function of the Congress are significant. He said that even if all the political aims of the Congress failed completely, the Congress would still serve a most useful purpose if it succeeded in bringing the different provinces of India into closer personal contact At the height of the Swadeshi movement he declared that the ultimate object of political work was to mould the mind of the people into one.

In the midst of his activities, as the excitement and the heat of the movement increased, Rabindranath suddenly retired to Santiniketan. The Hindu-Mahomedan problem and the clash of varying interests in India continued, however, to trouble his mind. In his novel *Gora* (1907-09) he laid more and more emphasis on the unifying principle which manifested itself throughout the whole course of the history of India :

> To India has been given her problem from the beginning of history—it is the race problem. Races ethnologically different have in this country come into close contact. This fact has been and still continues to be the most important one in our history. It is our mission to face it and prove our humanity by dealing with it in fullest truth. We have to recognize that the history of India does not belong to one particular race but to a process of creation to which the various races of the world contributed—the Dravidians and the Aryans, the ancient Greeks and the Persians, the Mahomedans of the West and those of Central Asia.

Just at this time violence made its first appearance in Indian politics. In an important essay on *The Way and its Fare* (1908), Rabindranath tried to stem the impatience which sought quick results through violence. He opposed recourse to violence, not by an appeal to an abstract moral maxim, but on the ground that it violated the truth and ultimate purpose of the history of India.

In the same essay he insisted upon the need for toleration in the face of opposition, and advised the lifting of

the ban on British goods on the ground that the boycott movement was accentuating Hindu-Mahomeden differences and was encouraging race hatred. He described the conflict of ideals of this period at a later date in the novel *The Home and the World* (1915-16)

In East and West (1908) he said : In India, the history of humanity is seeking to achieve a definite synthesis. The history of India is not the history of Aryans or non-Aryans ; it is not the history of the Hindus, nor that of only Hindus and Musalmns taken together. He declared :

> Now at last has come the turn of the English to become true to this history and bring to it the tribute of their life, and we neither have the right nor the power to exclude this people from the building of the destiny of India.

His vision of the meeting of humanity in India was now complete. It found magnificent expression in two *Gitanjali* poems (1910) begining with, '*I see before my eyes the rolling clouds of humanity*,' and '*On the sacred shores of the ocean of humanity of this India, Awake my heart.*'

V

The award of the Nobel prize in 1913 gave him opportunity of establishing personal contacts with the different countries of the world. During the Great War he joined the intellectuals of the world in issuing a Manifesto against war. In 1916 he toured in Japan and America, and delivered the well-known lectures on '*Nationalism*' which contain his indictment of the modern Nations which had become organized as machinery of rapine and destruction. The contrast between the aggressive spirit of the modern West and the peaceful ideals of the ancient East became increasingly vivid. When he returned to his own country his thoughts naturally turned to the heritage of ancient India. He felt the need for an institution which would be a true centre of human culture.

In 1918 in his lectures on *'The Centre of Indian Culture'* he faced the two stupendous problems of India : the poverty of intellectual life and the poverty of matetial life. He proposed to start an institution which would be a centre of Indian learning for the coordinated study of the philosophy and literature, art and music of the various cultural streams of India : the Vedic, the Puranic, the Buddhist, the Jaina, the Islamic, the Sikh, and the Zoroastrian ; to which would be gradually added the Chinese, the Tibetan and the Japanese. This institution would also be a centre of the economic life of India

> It must cultivate land, breed cattle, feed itself and its students ; it must produce all necessaries, devising the best means and using the best materials, calling science to its aid. Such an institution must group round it all the neighbouring villages, and vitally unite them with itself in all its economic endeavours.

The Poet coined the word 'Visva-bharati' at this time *Viśva* in Sanskrit means the world in its universal aspect ; *Bhārati* is wisdom and culture.* The Visva-bharati was to be the centre of learning for the whole world. Appropriately enough the following Sanskrit text was selected as the motto of the Visva-bharati ;

Yatra Viśvam bhavaty eka-nīdam :
'Where the whole world forms its one single nest.'

Since the days of the Swadeshi movement Rabindranath had kept himself aloof from political activities, devoting his energies to his institution at Santiniketan. In 1919, the Jalianwalla Bagh incident, however, brought him into a momentary contact with the political life of the country. He renounced his knighthood, "taking all consequences upon himself in giving voice to the protest of millions of his countrymen, surprised into a dumb anguish of terror." It was a protest recorded in the name of humanity, not in

*There is an allusion to India (*Bharata*) in the word *Bharati*, which thus also represents the Spirit of India.

the hope of gaining concessions or to make political capital out of it. This was made clear by his emphatic refusal to support the movement for erecting a memorial at Jalianwalla Bagh.

After the end of the Great War, Rabindranath undertook a long tour in 1920-21 in Europe and the United States. He spoke everywhere on the need of the meeting of East and West in a common fellowship of learning and a common spiritual striving for the unity of the human races.

Western science was destined, through the mastery of the laws of nature, to liberate man from the bondage of matter. This was not all. Rabindranath was convinced that the West owed its greatness not only to its marvellous training of intellect and its readiness to suffer martyrdom for the cause of justice and truth but to its spirit of service devoted to the welfare of man. In his appeal to the peoples of the West, he said :

> The world to day is offerd to the West. She will destroy it, if she does not use it for a great creation of man. The materials for such a creation are in the hands of science ; but the creative genius is in Man's spiritual ideal.

When he returned to India in 1921, the non-co-operation movement was at its highest. Although great pressure was put upon him from all sides, he steadfastly refused to join it. He was unable to accept the claim of a spiritual movement made in its behalf.

He could never agree to isolating India from the stream of world thought and progress. In the midst of an unprecedented political unrest and excitement, and against the whole force of the current of popular sentiment, he expounded his own views with great courage in two lectures, *The Call of Truth* and *The Meeting of Cultures* (1921). He said :

> It is fact of unique importance in the history of the world to-day, that the human races have come togother as

they have never done before ... ... The mentality of the world has to be changed in order to meet the new environment of the modern age. Just as, hitherto, the collective egoism of the Nation has been cultivated in our schools, and has given rise to a nationalism which is vainglorious and exclusive, even so will it be necessary now to establish a new education on the basis not of nationalism, but of a wider relationship of humanity.

It has been said in our scriptures : *'atithi devo bhava,'* asking us to realize that the Divine comes to us as our guest, claiming our homage. All that is great and true in humanity is ever waiting at our gate to be invited. It is not for us to question it about the country to which it belongs, but to receive it in our home and bring before it the best we have.

Our wealth is truly proved by our ability to give, and Visva-bharati is to prove this on behalf of India, Our mission is to show that we have a place in the heart of the great world ; that we fully acknowledge our obligation of offering it our hospitality.

Rabindranath founded the Visva-bharati in December, 1921, and proclaimed that Visva-bharati was India's invitation to the world, her offer of sacrifice to the highest truth of man.

VI

Since then he has carried the message of the Visva-bharati far and wide. In 1924 he visited China. In his address to his hosts, he reminded them of those days when India sent her messengers of peace and universal love who found their unity of heart with the people of China. The Poet hoped that the old relationship was still there, hidden in the heart of the people of the East, and his visit would reopen the channel of communication. Asia must seek strength in union, but not in competition with the West in selfishness or brutality.

In the autumn of the same year he went to South America at the invitation of Peru on the occasion of the Centenary of its independence, and visited Italy on his way back.

The growing strength of the cult of power with its increasing tendency towards the mechanization of institutions and the repression of personality stirred the Poet deeply. He gave voice to his protest in a number of lectures and essays, and also indirectly in two dramas of this period, *Waterfall* (1922) and *Red Oleanders*(1924).

The possibilities of acquiring money has increased tremendously in modern times. Production has assumed gigantic dimensions. This has led to an enormous number of men being used merely as material; so that human relationships have become utilitarian and men have been deprived of a large part of their humanity. Modern society has lost its integrity; its different sections have become detached and resolved into their elemental character of forces. Labour is a force; so also is Capital; so are the Government and the People. The repressed personality of man is smouldering in the subconscious mind of the community, and has created a dangerous situation. Faced with the possibility of a disaster, the great Powers of the West are seeking for peace by concentrating their forces for mutual security. The Poet warned them, however, that the conflict of selfish interests was bound to grow more acute so long as their league was based on the desire for consolidating past injustice and putting off the reparation of wrongs.

Rabindranath does not believe in systems or organizations. All systems produce evil, sooner or later, when the psychology which is at the root of them goes wrong :

> Therefore I do not put my faith in any new institution, but in the individuals all over the world who think clearly, feel nobly, and act rightly, thus becoming the channels of moral truth.

In 1926 he again went to Europe and received a great welcome in Italy as an honoured guest. He was favourably impressed by the material prosperity of the country, but inspite of his delicate position in having accepted her hospitality, he was unable to accord his approval to a

political ideal which had declared its loyalty to brute force as the motive power civilization. He made an extensive tour in the countries of Western and Central Europe, and visited the Balkan States, Turkey and Egypt. In *The Rule of the Giant* (1926), one of the lectures delivered during this tour, he described the suppression of the human personality as the parent ill of the present age. He admitted the need for having organizations. These help to simplify the application of energy for attaining our purpose. They are our tools. But if this fact is forgotten, and huge and hungry organizations are allowed to overwhelm the individual man, then the life stuff of humanity will be eaten up. The only remedy was to restore the value of personality in human civilization.

> I believe in life, only when it is progressive ; and in progress, only when it is in harmony with life. I preach the freedom of man from the servitude of the fetish of hugeness, the non-human. I refuse to be styled an enemy of enlightenment, because I do stand on the side of Jack the human, who defies the big, the gross, and wins victory at the end.

In 1927 Rabindranath visited the Malay States, Java, Bali, and Siam, and revived the ancient bond of India with these countries, which at one time were culturally integral parts of India. In 1929 he attended the Triennial Conference of the National Council of Education of Canada. He was the outstanding figure at the Conference, and he roused a wonderful enthusiasm wherever he went. The welcome given to him gradually became not only a personal homage to his greatness but also a testimony of good will from Canada to India itself. On his way home to India from Canada, he visited Indo-China. In 1930, in his seventieth year, he again undertook an extensive tour in the West, visiting England, France, Germany, Denmark, Russia and the United States.

The visit to Russia created a deep impression on his mind, and his *Letters from Russia* (1930-31) give a re-

markable picture of the Soviet experiments in State Socialism. On the eve of his departure from Moscow he said :

> I wish to let you know how deeply I have been impressed by the amazing intensity of your energy in spreading education among the masses, I appreciate it all the more keenly because I belong to that country where millions of my fellow countrymen are denied the light that education can bring them. You have recognized the truth that in extirpating all social evils one has to go to the root, which can only be done through education.

But he remained a convinced individualist. Freedom of mind was essential for the reception of truth, Creative activity would cease in a world rendered completely sterile by a mechanical regularity of opinions. In his farewell message he told his hosts :

> I must ask you : Are you doing your ideal a service by arousing in the minds of those under your training, anger, class hatred and revengefulness against those not sharing your views ? You are working in a great cause. Therefore you must be great in your mind, great in your mercy, your understanding, and your patience.

VII

The humanism of Rabindranath Tagore has deeper source of inspiration in his Religion of Man which is the highest expression of his own spiritual experience.

The universe has significance only in terms of human values. Beauty has no existence apart from the appreciation of man. All values have their origin in the mind of man. Even the truth of science is reached through the process of observation and reasoning which is human ; its value as truth being a creation of the human mind. Science can only deal with such facts as man can know and understand, and the Absolute which is beyond the intellect of man can never be the subject matter of scientific inves-

tigations. The nature of the universe does not, however, depend. upon the comprehension of the individual person. There exists a universal mind of humanity which transcends separate individual minds, and has an integrity of its own which is something more than sum of its components. It endures beyond the life of the individual person. It is super-individual, it is the Universal Mind. The truth of science receives its validity by reference to the standards of judgement of this Universal Mind. Truth thus has its existence in the Universal Mind, and is independent of the comprehension of the peculiarities of individual minds which are limited in space and time.

It is not merely a reasoning mind. It is also the ultimate ground of all other values. It is the Supreme Personality : "The God of this human universe whose mind we share in all true knowledge, love and service."

It is the Eternal Person manifested in all persons. It may be only one aspect of *Brahman*, the One in which is comprehended Man and the Human Universe. But this is the only aspect in which he can reveal himself to human beings.

> He is the infinite ideal of Man, towards whom men move in their collective growth, with home they seek their union of love as individuals, in whom they find their ideal of father, friend, and beloved.

For Rabindranath this is not an abstract philosophical system ; it is a matter of direct spiritual realization. In his Hibbert Lectures (1930-31) he has described his first experiences when he was working in the Tagore estates :

> On that morning in the village the facts of my life suddenly appeared to me in a luminous unity of truth. I felt sure that some Being who comprehended me and my world was seeking his best expression in all my experiences. To this Being I was responsible ; for the creation in me is his as well as mine. I felt that I had found my religion at last, the Religion of Man, in which the infinite became defined in humanity and came close to me so as to need my love and co-operation.

This idea found expression in the group of poems addressed *jivan devatā*, the Lord of Life. 'The idea of the humanity of our God, or the divinity of Man the Eternal' was the one theme which unfolded itself through all his religious experiences. Speaking of the time of starting the Santiniketan school, he said :

> I am sure that it was this idea of the divine Humanity unconsciously working in my mind which compelled me to come out of the seclusion of my literary career and take my part in the world of practical activities.

The meeting of humanity now receives a new significance. It is the acknowledgement of the spiritual kinship of man which is universal. Rabindranath has said :

> So long men had been cultivating, almost with religious fervour, that mentality which is the product of racial isolation ; poets proclaimed, in a loud pitch of bragging, the exploits of their popular fighters ; money-makers felt neither pity nor shame in the unscrupulous dexterity of their pocket-picking ; diplomats scattered lies in order to reap concessions from the devastated future of their own victims. Suddenly the walls that separated the different races are seen to have given way, and we find ourselves face to face.

And thus to all men :

> The God of humanity has arrived at the gates of the ruined temple of the tribe. Though he has not yet found his alter, I ask the men of simple faith, wherever they may be in the world, to bring their offering of sacrifice to him. I ask them to claim the right of manhood to be friends of men.
> I ask once again, let us, the dreamers of the East and the West, keep our faith firm in the Life that creates and not in the Machine that constructs.

ya eko' varno bahudhā śakti-yogāt
varnān anekān nihitārtho dadhāti :
vicaiti cānte viśvam ādāu sa devah,
sa no buddhyā śubhayā samyunaktu :

He who is One, and who dispenses the inherent needs of all peoples and all times, who is in the beginning and the end of all things, may He unite us with the bond of truth, of common fellowship, of righteousness.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

It has been my fortune to have seen the poet from very near for more than thirty years. It lies on me to speak of what I have seen. Let the memory of what I saw prevent me from the excesses of my own words and lend my speech dignity.

We all know that many a lofty ideal can be found in the poet's works. But only those of us who were lucky enough to come near him know how real all those ideas were in the poet's actual life. Today he is far away and one thinks all the more of the deep unity between his writing and his own conversation, his laughter, all the little details of his daily life. That we have apprehended the full beauty of Tagore's *oeuvre* in his own life, that is our good fortune. His work is a stupendous affair, a thing for rapt and long contemplation. Today I only bear witness to the great and wonderful life I had seen.

Very early in his life, the poet came to know the hymns of the Upanishads These hymns formed the bed-rock of his life. That is why we find in his *Sadhana* the tranquility and the solemnity of the Upanishads. There is no excess there. I had heard from him that in the early days he used to incant the *Gayatree Mantram*, but later on the words for his meditation were simply *Shantam Shivam Advaitam* (the calm, the benevolent, the undivided)

In his life too his path was always straight and simple. He wrote once in a letter :

> "To me religion is too concrete a thing, though I have no right to speak about it. But if ever I have somehow come to realize God, or if the vision of God has ever been granted to me, I must have received the vision through this world, through men, through trees

and birds and beasts ; the dust and the soil... I feel his touch in the sky, in the air, in water, everywhere I feel it. There are times when the whole world speaks to me,"

Again and again he sang of this :

My heart sings at the wonder of my place
in this world of light and life ;
at the feel in my pulse of the rhythm of creation
candenced by the swing of endless time
I feel the tenderness of the grass in my forest walk
the wayside flowers startle me.
that the gifts of the infinite are strewn
in the dust
wakens my song in wonder
I have seen, have heard, have lived ;
in the depth of the known have felt the truth
that exceeds all knowledge which fills
my heart with wonder and I sing.

Again and again he declared :

Once again I wake up when the night has waned,
when the world opens all its petals once more,
and this is an endless wonder.

Perhaps it was only the sunlight on the leaves at the sight of which he would sing out :

How one likes the light dancing from leaf to leaf.

In May or June, whether in Calcutta or Bolpur, even in the burning heat and glare of midday, he would never shut the doors and windows. I had also seen him with windows open to the moonsoon so that, as the song goes, the sweet smell of the rain might come freely in windy gusts. When younger, he would saunter forth against the stormy wind on the open Bolpur fields with *Kalbaisakhi* clouds darkening the sky. Throughout the year, he would love to sit out on the open terrace from the afternoon on. He never liked the closed windows in England during winter ; he would say, "I don't like this, my soul gaps."

The external world really fascinated him. That is why at the time of writing he used to sit, away from the window. When he was at our Alipore house, his room had windows on the east, which looked out on a number of palm trees and then a stretch of open lawn against a background numerous big trees like Banyans and Asokas. He used to turn his table round when he sat down to write and would turn his back to the window. In our Baranagar house, in the very small corner-room which he called *Netrakona* (literally : eye-corner, also the name of a town in East Bengal), he used to place his table away from the window between two walls. He used to say : "I won't be able to write if I sit by the open window. My mind will roam far out there." And when his work was finished he would sit still, gazing out for hours on end.

I spent two months at Santiniketan before the fiftieth birthday celebrations. At that time he was staying in the eastern room on the first floor of the building that later became the guest-house. It was the smallest room leading to the open terrace. I put up in the western room across. In those days there were few visitors. The poet lived very simply. After a meagre dinner before sunset, we would sit out on the terrace, Now and then some of the teachers of the asram would come. Then the evening would darken. The teachers would leave one by one. And I would find him at 11 or 12 sitting in the silent darkness. I would go to bed and when I rose before dawn, I would find him sittina *rapt*, facing the east.

On certain days, sometimes he would go out when it was still dark and sit on the eastern verandah of the Temple (or the Prayer Hall). Two or three men would gather behind him, he would speak a few words at sunrise. Many of the sermons in the volumes called *Santiniketan* were spoken like this.

I have seen him like this for more than thirty years. There never was any break in this habit except during his

last days when he lay unconscious on his sickbed. Even in illness, he would wait for the dawn, and when dawn came, say repeatedly : It is dawn, please lift me up. And he always preferred to have the eastern room wherever he was, so that the first rays of the sun could fall on his face he would never shut the windows. He used to say, "Every day I get up early and try to merge myself in the big 'I' away from my small 'I'. It is not quite that I can't do it, but it takes some time". We would object, "It would be better to have a little more rest." But he would say, "I've found that it is easier in the early hours of the morning when it is quiet."

Funny things happened over this early rising when he went abroad. When we were in Norway, his bed room was next to ours with a door between. On the first day it was late when we went bed after the meetings and the receptions and deep at night we woke up at the sound of knocks on the door and we heard the poet saying. "How long will you sleep ? It is quite late !" Black curtains were hanging all round the room. I put the lights on and saw that it was three o'clock. It was summer, when in Norway, the sun rises at midnight. The poet had drawn the curtains off before he went to bed and at midnight the room was filled with the light, and he had got up. However, I explained to him that it was only three and that in Norway one could not rise with the sun. In the morning, at the tea-table, he laughed over this.

He has sung and spoken of the glory of the dawn : "the honour that morning lights confers."

Just as in the morning, at night too he would sit silent, before going to bed. He used to say, "I want to wash off all the petty details of the day and, bathed clean, go to bed." There was no showing off in this. As a matter of fact, he never used to feel at ease even to speak of this habit of meditation to strangers, in case they made light of what

was so real to him. When he felt oppressed, he would at times go on singing to himself. Twenty years ago, at the time of the Seventh Pous Festival, he was depressed over some family matter. I had reached Santiniketan on the 6th. He was living in a new small house with only two rooms, later on called *Prantik* (on the edge). I was asked to stay there and the writing-table was removed to make room for my bed. At midnight, I woke up and beyond the curtain between the rooms, I heard him singing, "To the blind give light, to the dead life" (there is a gramophone record of this song sung by him). The song went on again and again throughout the night. Again and again those words: "To the blind give your light." It had been a cloudy day but towards morning it cleared up. In the morning after the service in the temple I said, "You had no sleep the whole night." He said with a smile, "I sang, I was so oppressed. But in the morning it cleared up, like the sky."

The poet had declared many a time how his 'daimon' had given its directions through many major and minor incidents in his life. Quite a number of his poems and songs speak of this. Many a time, as has been our experience, plans arrangements were suddenly changed, at times even against his own wish. What appeared a mistake at first, later on proved beneficial.

Soon after his fiftieth birthday celebrations he wanted to go abroad. It was arranged that he was to leave Calcutta by a City Line steamer. He was to start very early in the morning. On the previous day there were lots of visitors at the Jorasanko house to bid him farewell. When it was past ten at night, I touched his feet in farewell and said, "I had better go straight to the docks tomorrow." He said, "Yes, at least that is how the arrangements stand." But there was a doubt somewhere in my mind. I thought, on my way home, "Why did he say that? Is it that the journey might not take place? I decided that the next

morning I would go to his house first and not to the steamerghat.

Early in the dawn, before the street lamps were put out, I went up to his bedroom on the second floor at the Jorasanko house and found that he was indisposed. The trip to England was postponed. It was not a serious illness, but he was very tired and depresssed. It was decided that he would have rest for some time, outside Calcutta. He went to Silaidah and, to while away the time, he translated some of his songs into English. That is how the English *Gitanjali* was composed. Sometime after this, the poet went to England. What happened after this is well-known. It was through the English *Gitanjali* that he had a wider introduction to the world. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for this book. The poet had no doubts that his visit to England had to be postponed in order to give him the opportunity of writing the English version of the *Gitanjali*.

Things happened the other way as well. In 1928, during the centenary celebrations of the Brahmo Samaj, he was to conduct the service at the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj Mandir. But the poet was quite ill We had brought him back to Calcutta from Colombo on his way to Europe. His illness increased in Calcutta and the doctors had to stop interviews with his visitors On the day before the festival, he was in the same condition. It was taken for granted that he would not be able to conduct the service. But when I went to see him very early on the centenary day itself, he said at once, "Take me to the Mandir, I want to go." We somehow brought him and he not merely conducted the prayers but on his own began to sing, "Thou wakest me up the thyself with thy living touch." And at the time of the sermon, he spoke with deep feeling of all that he had to say of Rammohun Roy. He spoke with a great deal of passion but it did not affect his health in the least, On the contrary, in the afternoon,

he said "It was good that I went to the Mandir, even physically, I feel well."

He had for Rammohun Róy a profound respect and admiration and felt bound to him with a kind of personal bond. In this connexion I may tell of another incident. The poet was in Europe when the non-cooperation movement was started in India. He was receiving numerous letters from home. His countrymen wanted him to join the movement and he left for India. He was, we learnt, not going to stay a single day in Bombay, nor was he coming to Calcutta, but was going staight to Santiniketan via Burdwan. I went up to Burdwan the previous evening and spent the night at the station. At dawn, his train came. I found him grave and his first words were : "Prasanta, I come back to the country where Rammohun is called a pigmy." Then, he said, "While in Europe, I was getting letters from Andrews, Suren and others and was thinking that I would do my part when I came back home. All through the voyage on the steamer I had been preparing myself. And at Bombay, even before I had landed on the soil of our land, a newspaper came into my hand. Rammohun Roy was a pigmy because he had learnt English—that was the first news of India. I cannot forget this." I knew, from the look on his face that day that the expected participation in the non-cooperation movement would never be realized

The reason he explained in the two lectures he gave in Calcutta, shortly after that, on "Unity through Education", and "The Challenge of Truth." The unity between the people of one country and another can be brought about only through education and culture. India has always invited all humanity on the level of the Universal Man. Rammohun also had carried this message and had built anew the bridge between the universal man and India through English education. The poet himself founded the Visva-Bharati to realise the same ideal. This is why his

heart did not agree with the idea of rejecting Western education.

To talk of another day. It was at the time of the foundation of the Visva-Bharati, In Bengal the non-cooperation movement was in full swing. People wanted him to write, particularly against the arrests and lathi-charges by the police in Calcutta. Important leaders went to Santiniketan and requested him to write and he agreed.

I reached Santiniketan the same evening. I was told that he was engaged on that writing in the little room on the first floor of "Dehali". He said. "Do you know what happened today? I agreed with them when they came that I would write. I sorted out my ideas but the whole afternoon I wasted lazily. In the evening I thought, no, I must write it down. I rehearsed the whole thing in my mind, how to make it effective. But just as I drew the paper and took up the pen, my hand turned limp. After a shake-up, I tried again but the pen dropped down from my hand. Never in my life has such a thing happened to me. Since then I have been sitting quiet. I can't write it, I realize."

There was a lot of displeasure over this. There was more adverse criticism too But the poet had no doubt that his presiding deity had saved him from doing something which was not according to his will.

As in major affairs, so I have seen the same thing happen in trivial things as well. Even he himself could never say when he would go to some place or what he would do and when. We have seen again and again how all arrangements had to be cancelled. At least on five occasions his visit to Europe was cancelled. Once he was going to Madras and came back from Kharagpur (only a short distance from Calcutta). Once I remember his luggage had been sent already to Howrah Station and as he himself was going to Howrah, near the bridge, the traffic police signalled. The car stopped

and he said, "Turn the car back." We came back to the house.

I remember, the day, when in 1926 we were to leave Budapest. The first destination was Constantinople, so I reserved berths in the Orient Express going east, After a while he changed his mind for Paris, and so I booked our seats for the Orient Express going west. But Constantinople won again. Luckily, the booking office was on the ground floor of our hotel building. I explained to them the poet's moods and booked seats both ways. And whenever the poet would change his mind I would go down and come back to tell him that it was all arranged. Of course, I had to wire and phone Paris a number of times. Both the Orient Expresses arrive at Budapest at about ten at night and so we packed up and sat for dinner, when somebody came and insisted that the poet must go to Zagreb in his country Croatia. We travelled neither east nor west, but boarded at the last moment the southern train for Zagreb It was very crowded but somehow out of respect for the poet, seats were found. However, this journey brought him in direct touch with people in Serbia, Bulgaria. Greece, and Turkey.

Again and again, arrangements had to be altered in this way. He himself used to comment, "Why should one have to accept a thing just because it is all fixed?" May be, it was all a poet's moods. But he himself used to say, that his presiding deity guided his life as in the major so in these minor events. In an essay he wrote in 1903, he dealt at length with this idea.

He also believed that he had signs and hints to get ready before a disaster or danger. It was not like knowing the future and that sort of thing. But a kind of mental preparation for some unknown danger or death without knowing what exactly was impending. He once told me how during the year his wife died, seven months before the actual event, on New Year's Day, he felt a great sorrow

or parting was coming. It was so real to him that he wrote of it to his wife to keep themselves ready.

I have found him feel like this about himself as well. In 1940, the night before he was leaving Calcutta for Kalimpong I saw him at the Jorasanko house, sitting in the western room, with a cheerless look. Bauthan (daughter-in-law, Pratima Devi) had gone up to Kalimpong and the poet did want to join her there. Yet there was some discord in his mind, as he told me, "I don't feel like going up mountains. It won't be good this time. But every thing is settled, Bauma has gone and I don't want to upset anything. But there is a feeling against it, inside me." A few days later in Kalimpong he became ill. We had to bring him down to Calcutta in an unconscious state. It was his last illness.

In 1941, in July, I went to Santiniketan when talks were going on about the operation. But the poet did not approve at all. Later on, however, he agreed. I myself had all along been against the operation. Even on the day of the operation, in the morning I begged the doctors to stop. Since then when one thinks of the terrible things happening all over the world and of the evil days gathering round India, particularly Bengal, one feels that perhaps it was good after all that the poet had agreed to the operation, inspite of his own feelings.

He realized in his own life the truth of his words: "Good and evil whatever comes, accept reality with easy grace,' As he used to say, "Reality is more important than good and evil, Hence our prayer *Asato ma satgamaya* (from the false or the unreal lead us to the real or the true).

It was this true vision which gave him his calm of mind even during a great bereavement. He would say, "As life is real, so is death, Grief it brings but without death life loses its quality. Just as fulfilment of love means little without the sense of the insatiable. Why

exaggerate the grief? Life's claims are more urgent than death's."

The poet never liked clinging to souvenirs after a dear one's death. I remember the days when he was writing "Unregenerate Grief", "Seventeen Years", "First Grief", "Release", etc., all contained in *Lipika*. One day I was sitting near him on the verandah by his bedroom on the second floor at Jorasanko. It was evening, above the western sky was still red, below, the lane leading to his house was getting dark and one or two street-lamps were being lit. Maharshi's death had taken place exactly on the top of the first floor room where the poet died. As a child I had come to look at the Maharshi. On the south wall there used to hang a picture of a church with a real clock in its tower. As I was very young, my eyes dwelt on it. And that was the only thing left in the room which spoke of those days, I spoke of these things to the poet. After a while he said, "Father was very ill at that time in the Sudder Street house. We never expected he would recover and then one day he called for me and spoke to me: 'I asked for you as I have to say something special. I do not wish to have my picture or sculpture or any such thing at Santiniketan. You must not keep any. And see that nobody else does'.

The poet added, "I know that father was worried that there might be excesses to keep alive his memory, and he knew that he could depend on me. So he asked for me." After a pause he said, "Do you know, at times I think that it was wise of Rammohun Roy to die in England. You never know with our country here. There might have been a great fuss over him, if he himself had not stopped it before. I also think at times that it would be better for me to die abroad."

The poet had told me more than once what Maharhi had told him at the Sudder Street house. At the Santiniketan asram, there was no portrait or figure of the

Maharshi ; it was forbidden. Not only that, many people had wished to keep apart, as a memorial, the room at the Jorasanko house where the Maharshi died, but the poet never agreed. He used it like any other living room, and the room did not even contain the Maharshi's picture.

He never kept anybody's photo. Not that he objected to photos or portraits. He had given photos of his own with his autogtaph to immunerable people who had asked for them. But he himself never felt the need of keeping any. In 1914 or 1915, the poet spent a few days at Allahabad in the house of his nephew Satya Prasad Ganguli. I heard from him how there he had come across an old photograph of his Natun Bauthan (Jyotirindranath's wife) to whom he addressed his poem "Chhabni" (The picture) in *Balaka* where he says :

> In thousand streams rush the wild fountain
> of life ringing the anklets of death.

It was only a few days after "Chhabi" that he wrote "Shahjahan" :

> The mausoleum
> Does not stand still
> Lying on the dust of the earth
> Under the shroud of memory tenderly covering death
> who can withhold life ?
> Every star beckons to her from the sky
> Her invitation is in world after world
> To ever-new sunrise hills, from light to light.

This he was spoken of again and again, in songs and in poems. And I have seen repeatedly how in actual life he accepted death.

It was the summer of 1918. His eldest daughter Bela was ill, in the house of her husband Sarat Chandra. The poet was at Jorasanko and every morning I used to take him to visit his daughter. He would go up, while I would wait below. The patient was slowly going down. One

day, as usual, we went and that day within a few moments he came down and got into the car, and just as I looked at his face, he said simply, "She left before I came. They told me as I was going up the stairs and so I came down."

While in the car, he did not speak. When we reached Jorasanko he said as on other days, "Let us go up." I followed him to his bed-room on the second floor. After some time he spoke, "After all, I could do nothing. I had known for a long time that she would leave, yet every morning. I went and sat with her head in my lap. When a child, she used to say : Father, tell me a story. As in her childhood, during her illness, too, she used to say now and then : Father, tell me a story. I used to tell her whatever would come into my head. That too is at an end."

Then he sat silent in calm repose. That same day in the evening he had some work in hand. I asked if there should be any alteration in the arrangements. He said, "No, why ? No need for that." And then he added in explanation, "Such things have happened before." And then he talked of the time when his second daughter's death took place.

Many visitors used to come every day for important discussions, among them being Ramendra Sundar Trivedi. On the day the poet's daughter died it got very late with the talks. Before leaving, standing on the stairs, Trivedi Mahasaya asked the poet, "How is she today ?" The reply was simple, "She is dead." Trivedi Mahasaya, it is said, only stared at the face of the just bereaved father and, without a word, walked down.

Let me record what I heard of the days when his youngest son died at Monghyr of cholera. The poet reached at the last moment. It was he who had to console the distracted host. I had heard from Jagadananda Babu how he came back to Santiniketan. The telegram was brief, he was coming back, nothing more, Jagadananda Babu

and others thought that he was bringing Sami back. So they went to the station with a bullock-cart, the transport of those days. The poet stepped down from the train alone. They did not realize at the time from his face that Sami was dead. Nothing was changed from his usual programme at Santiniketan.

Immediately after Sami's death, on the occasion of Maghotsab, he spoke of the Great King of Sorrows.

Though, at the time of Sami's death, no one saw him in grief, yet years after, one day, I saw his eyes fill with tears as he spoke of his youngest son. He had fever and was in the Jorasanko house. It was summer. Rathi Babu had gone out of Calcutta. There was no one in the great house. In the evening, I went up and heard him reciting quite loudly. He smiled shyly and explained, "You see, there is a little fever. Perhaps the brain is a little excited, and I felt like reading out loudly."

Samindra was in his thoughts that evening. He said, "It with like this with Sami. He was very small when his mother died. I brought him up myself. His make-up was like mine. Like me, he loved poetry. And could sing. At times, I would find him walking about restlessly or reciting loudly, and I would know he had fever. And would bring him to bed. Even now, in old age, such things happen with me."

After a pause, he went on, "I wrote a lot of poems for him, Sami used to say, 'Father, tell me a story'. I would write a poem and he would learn it by heart. He used to recite with his whole body and head swaying just like my own childhood days. How he used to roam about on the terrace. He had so much play in his mind, all by himself. Looked like me, too." His eyes were wet.

I also remember the time when, twenty years ago, I was at the Alipore Meteorological Observatory and he was with us, one day news came that his brother

Satyendranaths' illness had taken a bad turn. He went to Ballygunge and when he came back, he looked grave, but nothing more. He said, "It is over", and then went up to his room and turned to his work as on other days. I had another guest in the house, an Englishman, Sir Gilbert Walker. That evening, I asked the poet if he would like to meet a foreign guest. "I'll come to the dining-room," he said. Conversation did not lag at the dinner-table. I remember a long talk after dinner on Indian and European music. My guest told me before going to bed, "I had heard of him for years. I have known his books. Today I have come to know him in a big way."

Let me speak of another day. It was August 1932. He was in our Baranagar house. His only grandson Nitu was in England and was very ill. Andrews had taken his mother, Mira, to bring him back home as early as possible. One day, a letter came from Andrews that Nitu was a little better. The next morning, the poet said to Rani (Mrs. Mahalanobis), "Though Sahib writes that Nitu is better, yet my mind feels heavy." He spoke on death, and concluded, "I got up at dawn, and looked out at your trees, your garden and have been trying since then to tune myself to them. How refreshed they look with the monsoon. Their mind knows no fear. Their joy is that they live. When you spread yourself out in harmony with great nature, how the mind revives, even like those trees."

I, in the meantime, opened the newspapers and found a Reuter cable—Nitu was no more. I rang up Rathi Babu at Khardah. He came over and went up to his father, "There is Nitu's news." At first the poet said, "What news ? Better ?" Rathindranath replied in the negative. He understood by Rathindranath's silence, and turned all so still. Just two drops of tears—nothing more. After a pause, he said ; "Duri (Nitu's sister) is alone. Let Bowma go to Santiniketan today. I go with you tomorrow." He sat still for a time but only for a time. That very day he

wrote the poem, "By the Pool," which is included in *Punascha* dedicated to Nitu. The next day he went to Santiniketan where preparations were going on for the Barsa-mangal, or the Monsoon Song Festival. There was a proposal to cancel it for Nitu's death. But he didn't allow that, and took part in it himself. It was at that time that he wrote in a letter to Mira :

"In the midst of all our lapses and omissions, all our troubles and sorrows, the major fact is that we have loved. From the outside, the tie may snap, but if you had been deprived of the relation within, then that lack would have been a great void. We have come to our human world. We have united in many a relationship, and then when the time comes, we have to drift apart. Again and again this has happened, and will happen again. Life is fulfilled with this happiness, and this sorrow. Whenever there has been a gap in the world of my life. the larger life, I find, exists, it moves, and I must keep step with it with an undisturbed mind·····I loved Nitu much ; besides, for you, an enormous sorrow weighed with me. But one feels ashamed to expose one's sorrows to others' gaze.·····There was a suggestion to stop *Barsa-Mangal* in deference to my grief. I said, no, I shall bear my share of grief. I have done my usual work in the usual way·····The night Sami left, I said with all my heart, let him have free movement in the great universe. Let not my grief drag him a jot. Similarly. since I came to know of Nitu's death, I had been repeating to myself, I have no more responsibility. Now I can only wish him well in the Great where he moves now·····The night after Sami's death on the train, I saw the sky flooded with moonlight. My soul prompted that nothing fell short, everything continued to remain in the whole, even I had my place therein. I was yet to complete my task towards that whole— and my work should continue without interruption as long as I lived. May I have courage, may not weariness overpower me, may not any link snap anywhere—let me accept whatever has happened with

equanimity, let me not fail to accept whatever is in store for me."

This is how he accepted death. That is why he could say emphatically in his verse :

Often has my mind crossed Time's border—
Is it to stop at least for ever at the boundary
of crumbling bones ?
Flesh and blood can never be the measure of
the truth
that is myself, days and minutes cannot wear
it out with
their passing kicks ; the way-side bandit,
Dust, dares
not rob it of all its possessinons,
Death, I refuse to accept from thee
that I am nothing but a gigantic jest of God,
a blank annihilation built with all the wealth
of the Infinite
That is why, face to face with death he could say,
I am greater than death, this my last word
I will say and then go.

He considered it barbarous to make a man work for you just because you can make him do so. As he used to say, civilization consists in establishing some relationship beyond the mere necessity. He was ever considerate to men in humble stations, labourers or men who have to work as servants. In the afternoon, he would never call for servants. He knew they had their rest then. He would wait till they came by themselves, If necessary, he would do what he could, himself.

He always tried to establish an affectionate relationships with these people. During the last few years, Banamali was his personal servant. There were numerous jokes about him, a lot of laughter, lines of song. And how worried he used to be when Banamali would get some news of illness from his home.

He never had contempt for the least important of men. Whoever wrote to him, and thousands wrote to him always, all got replies in his own hand, so long as he was capable of writing himself. He never drove away anyone who came to see him and innumerable people came. And this, even if he happened to be unwell, even if he had important work to finish. He would be vexed if he came to know that we had refused somebody, because he had some work in hand. "If a person is pleased only with a few words, only a visit, can't I do that much for him ?" he would say.

His sympathy extended to the animal world as well. Particularly for those who are neglected. He never had the hobby of keeping birds or tame animals. But we have seen helpless animals used to come to him for protection. At Santiniketan, there used to be a bowl of water for the birds in front of his room. And he himself used to give them their food. All sorts of birds used to collect round him. Even the common crows sometimes would join. In the poem "Bird Feast" in *Akaaspradeep* he talks about these crows and how he accepted even these. In the same book, he has another poem about a peacock. There was one at Santiniketan. It used to take shelter behind the poet's chair, whenever there was a move to put him in its cage. It just would not budge, with the servants about, until he told the servant to leave it alone, and then it would stalk forth.

Latterly, a rufous dog used to come, which he named Laloo (Lal means red). It was only a street dog. But it had more of his sympathy than Rathi Babu's pedigreed dog. He used to give it food from his own plate. And the dog was quite an interesting animal. It used to be the model of self-control, while sitting near him . It would sit with its head turned away, till the end of his meal, and would turn back when called to have its dinner. And if some one commented that it was a greedy dog shamelessly

waiting for food, it would walk away. The poet used to say, "A street dog, but he has real aristocracy." In *Arogya* he writes about it.

> Every morning this admirer a dog
> Sits still near my chair
> Until I accept his company
> With a touch of my hand....
> The pathetic expression of his wordless gaze
> Reveals an intelligence which he cannot convey,
> Conveys to me though—man's true place in life.

During his last illness when he was staying on the first floor of Uttarayan, he asked that Laloo should not be prevented from coming upto him once a day.

When he put up with us, we saw how our pet dog would do something wrong and at once go to the protection of his chair or near his feet, knowing full well our helplessness in such a situation, He would notice how the dog would get restless when we went out and he would say, "I don't like this. You people suddenly leave and come back, poor fool, he does not quite understand and gets quite sad."

The poet was greatly attracted by plants which people do not usually take care of. Once, when he lived in the house callee Konarka at Santiniketan, he grew a regular garden of wild thorny plants, collected from various places. He used to water them himself and would call us and point out, "Look, what thorny flowers !" He gave his own names to these nameless wild beauties—Gold-drop, Wood-joy, Gold-cluster, Spring-time. It was not for nothing that he wrote that famous essay on the women who have been neglected in our classical literature. These unnamed flowers figure in his poetry, sung for the first time.

The fact is that all his life, his sympathies streamed for the insignificant, for the scorned. The luckless of this world. the oppressed always moved him, Early in

youth in his great poem "Let me turn back," he had written :

.....Obese contempt
Sucks the blood from helpless breasts
And drinks, hydra-mouthed. Insolent inequity
Laughs at pain in selfishness....
..... To these dumb pale beings
We must give speech, these broken dry hearts
We must cheer up with hope.

And it was not merely in verse that he pleaded for the poor and the oppressed. In his life he helped such people in various ways. That is shown even in his management of his family estates. In this connexion I might mention an incident. Five or six years ago we were going to the village Hijlabat by boat from Kushita. The elderly boatman told us on enquiry that he belonged to the Tagore estates. I asked in curiousity if he had seen Rabindranath. His face brightened up and he said, "Oh ! yes, I've seen him. Many a time he passed through our village. I also saw him at the Cutchery house. What looks ! Not like a human being, rather like a god. Such looks are rarely to be seen. And what kindness ! We had free access to him. Nobody could stop us. That was his order. And whenever we would complain to him of our troubles he would remedy them."

There was a talk of the poet's coming on a trip to Hijlabat. When the boatman heard that he exclaimed, "Oh I'd like to look at him again. When is he coming ? Please let us know, we will all come to see him." It was strange how this old boatman, who had seen him forty years ago had not forgotton him. His face brightened up to hear of the poet and he went on repeating, "Such a man one rarely sees. Such a man is rare."

The poet was pleased when he told him of this humble boatman. He said, "They really loved me. I remember when as quite a young man I took charge of the estates how

an old Muslim tenant came to me. That year the harvest was bad and the tenants had come for remission of rent. I did my best and they were pleased. But this old tenant came up and said, "You are remitting a lot of money, won't the old master scold you ? You are young. Think well and then act.' He was so fond of me, that he was worried that my elder brothers might scold me."

He had again and again spoken of village reforms and the motive of all that as well as his own activities in that direction had one end in view : how to brighten up the life of the poor and the deprived. That explains why Sriniketan came to form a major part of Visva-Bharati. He himself had tried in practice the big ideals he wrote about both during the period of this management of the family estates as also the Swadeshi movement. He utilized the entire amount he received from the Nobel Award for an agricultural bank to help the farmers. Up to his last days he was preoccupied with how the common man of our country could have a little more food, and better living conditions. He never deceived himself or others with ture of big ideals. On the contrary, he was always, on the alert not to allow words to cover up real action. As he wrote in one of his poems :

I wait in eagerness for the words
Of the poet who is a partner in the kisan' life,...
Who is close to the soil.

He had wonderful patience and tolerance for all sorts of men. And he never interfered in anybody's freedom whether in opinions or personal matters nor did he put any pressure from above.

He was ever alert that there were no lapses, as far as fundamental ideal of Santiniketan was concerned. Beyond that he allowed complete freedom. Many a time there had been talks in Santiniketan against his own ideals and aims, there had been even, one might say, moves in the matter. There had been demonstrations of the kind he did not like.

We would often lose patience, and tell him to put a stop to such activities. But he, with his forbearance, would never agree. He would say that nothing much is gained by imposing an order from outside. For ten years I was intimately connected with the Visva-Bharati's organizational work, having acted as the Secretary. At times, we had differed, he had been displeased or sorry, but he never issued orders on me in executive matters.

He had the strangest generosity towards those who had criticised him unfairly or attacked him, or had tried to do damage to him. I remember some twenty two years ago, I was sitting one evening on the verandah at the Jorasanko Red House, when a well-known writer of those days came to see him. This gentleman had indulged for months on end in attacking the poet with ridicule. He had done his best to stop the poet's fiftieth birthday celebrations in Calcutta. For years, he had nothing to do with the poet, and so I was surprised when he came. However, after a few preliminary words he informed the poet that he was bringing out an annual publication and wanted the poet to contribute to it. The poet had a fine piece in hand, which he gave away at once. When the man had gone, I said "You contribute even for him ?" With a smile he replied, "I gave it so easily because, it was him. That he criticizes me is his sweet will. That he ridicules me or abuses me may perhaps increase his fame. But now he has come to me for his own need. Why deprive him there ? What does it matter to me ?"

This sort of thing was quite common. I know of one writer who spread in cold print some false scandal, which cannot be even mentioned, relating to the poet's personal life. He was shocked. He was also disturbed that such horrible misrepresentation might be accepted in future, without protest as a fact of history. But a libel suit could not be brought against the man as even that would be humiliating for the poet. Yet this same literary gentle-

man was received with grace when later on he came to see Rabindranath.

I had heard from him of another poet who held an eminent position in the fields of Bengali letrers and politics. He used to act hostilely in various ways. but for a long period he went on receiving fifty rupees a month from the poet. As he used to say, "What I fear is that I might expect a return from a man whom I help."

He had faith in everybody, as he choose to look for the betrer part in the make-up of everything. After the great Bengal earthquake, he received a letter from Rajshahi, which said that it was from a widow. who had lost her home by the earthquake and who with her children, was utterly stranded. Monthly help began to be sent to her. Then later on, when he went to Rajshahi, he enquired after this family, and came to know that there was no such widow, but a good-for-nothing young man had been living on his money. But even then the donation did not stop at once and then he called for the young man and got him provided for.

On account of his faith in the basic goodness of man. he had been cheated quite often. I had heard from him how while on a trip on a ferry-steamer, a boy came up to his wife and called her his mother of a previous life and said that his great desire was to drink the sanctified water touched by her feet every morning. The history of the previous life was laughed away, but the youth came to stick to the Jorasanko household. He announced that he had been admitted to a college. So, he had free board and lodging and money for his college fees, for books to be brought. The poet gave him charge of his own library. After a time, a number of books could not be found. He had faint thoughts of suspicion, but he felt quite ashamed for that. However, he called the young man, and asked him to make a search to find out the books. After a few days he came and told the poet that he had found out the

reasons why books were getting lost. What was the reason? The youth replied with a solemn face that Suren Babu, Sudhi Balu, Babu Balu—they all had free access to the library. The poet could not at first realize the connexion between his nephews' visits to the library and the loss of books. When he did, he himself felt quite uncomfortable that anyone could utter such a thing. But he told his nephews, who naturally were furious. And they found out on enquiry that the young man, far from being a college student, was not even a matriculate. The second-hand book shop was also found out, and some of the books were even recovered. But even after this young man came to him and said, "Father, (in the heavy Sanskritic address) I am guilty," the poet could not drop him. Some arrangements were made even for him.

So many persons had cheated him like this. But it was really a kind of choosing the liability to be cheated, as he himself would say, "I don't want to lose my faith in man. If I can keep it up at the cost of my own loss, even that would be good. You people don't understand. I have a suspecting sort of mind. As you know, there is a streak of insanity in our family and one of the symptoms of madness is the passion of suspicion. That is why I have to be all the more on guard against unfair suspicion against anybody. I do have suspicions, perhaps more than most people and that is why I have to shed them off again and again."

Not that was never angry or vexed with people. But he never would nourish such feelings, because, as he used to say, it meant that he himself forgot himself, and that would be a shame. When his second daughter was mortally ill he took her to Almora. But the illness turned worse and he had to hurry back to Calcutta. There was no proper transport. With his daughter in the *dandi*, he had to walk the long mountain-path down to the railway station. Midway, on the train, he found that the purse containing

two hundred rupees was missing from the bench. The poet told me, "At first it was anger with the unknown thief." Then I tried to persuade myself that the man must have needed the money badly. Perhaps his home was in some danger greater than mine. Then I tried to think that I have made a gift to him of the money. He was not a thief, I gave it to him. The moment I thought like that I regained calm of mind."

The poet used to say, "It is the injunctions of religious books which say : Do not do this evil deed, do not do that. God never had such strictures. His one wish he had declared to be ; Express yourself, reveal yourself. That is his one order—to the Sun, to the Earth, to Man. All over the universe this is his one command : Express yourself." The poet never judged a man according to rules of 'should'or should not'. Man was always man to him. He had no puritanism. In his works, one finds this attitude revealed quite often.

That is why people whom the moralists would keep away came to him freely. He never could bear with any falsehood or with meanness or pettiness, but he never believed that any lapse from the customary code should make a man an outcast. Nor did he ever hold the children guilty for the social mistakes of their parents. To quote his own words, "The important thing to consider is not the mistakes a man commits, but the man that he is."

Some seventeen years ago when preparations were on for the performace of a play by the Visva-Bharati, the poet called for a girl who was an excellent actress. He asked her to take a part in his play and coached her for days. It so happened that the girl had a bad reputation in our usual social world, she was an outcast. Objections arose over acting with her. And he was forsced to leave her out, but he was sorry. And he never could forget that he had to accept this for the sake of others.

When his stoy *Laboratory* was first published, he was ill and had to be brought down from Kalimpong. When I

went to see him in the evening, I was told that he had been enquiring after me since the afternoon. He pointed to the story at once and asked, "Have you read it?" I said, "I liked it very much, a really powerful story." He said, "Oh! Yes, you of course will like it. But what do the others say? I won't be able to show my face! Rabi Thakur has lost his head at eighty, how else could he write about a girl like Sohini!" With a smile he added, "I have done it deliberately. What sort of a person Sohini is, her strong mind, her loyalty, that was the main consideration—the episode of her bodily affairs is secondary. Neela will pass quite easily in society, but Sohini will be difficult to accept Yet I have shown with emphasis the great difference in the mental make-up between the mother and the daughter."

The mind of man—that was his preoccupation. The externals were secondary. Let me tell you here of a play which never came to be written. I heard from him that at the time of *Kacha and Devayani*, *Chitra* and all those Mahabharata stories, he was moved by the idea of another episode—when a plundering horde stole and took away the Yadu women (Krishna's clan), even old Arjuna could not stop them. At first he thought he would write this play in fourteen lettered verse, but as he had done in a number of pieces during those days, he postponed it. Then after a decade or so when he wrote the *King of the Dark Chamber* and the *Immovable Establishment*, he thought he would make a prose-play out of this theme. One day he gave me his idea of the play. Krishna, the five Pandava brothers and the heroes of the clan of Yadu were engrossed in big wars, big talk, big ideals and had no time to devote to their women. Women were there only for their household work. But they were not satisfied with that. In the meantime, the non-Aryan dasyus who were men of the earth used to come and talk to the women, sing to them and the women were drawn to them. It was the women who destroyed the weapons of the Pandavas so that the robbers could easily

abduct them. Arjuna went out to resist and found that his great Gandiva's string was cut. He under-stood but it was too late. This play somehow was never written. But he used to talk of it now and then and used to laugh, "My readers will be furious if I write the play,"

He had gone preaching from country to country in writing and in lectures the ideal of man beyond nationalities. But it was not mere words with him. How pleased he used to be when a foreigner came as his guest, and he would build up a kind of kinship. From Norway came Professor Stem Konow, who came to be known as Kanva (the paternal sage in Sakuntala). A girl from Denmark acquired the name, Haimanti. Somebody else would be called Basanti and so on. While abroad, he used to say, "When people in foreign countries came to me, gives me things to love, do this or that for my comfort, then I realize deeply that I am a human being, blessed in my man's life." He wrote ;

Woman, thou hast made my days of exile
tender with beauty,
and hast accepted me to thy nearness
with a simple grace
that is like the smile with which the
unknown star welcomed me
when I stood alone at the balcony and
gazed upon the southern night.
There come the voice from above : "We know
you, for you come as our guest from the
dark of the infinite, the quest of light."
Even in the same great voice thou hast carried
to me : "I know you,"
And thought I know not thy tongue, Woman,
I have heard it uttered in thy music,—
"You are ever our guest on this earth,
poet. the guest of love."

And it was not merely the foreign faces, the men and women. In South America, he wrote :

O foreign flower, when I asked you,
What is you name,
You swayed your head smiling
And I knew what is in a name !
Enough that your smile identified you.....
O foreign flower, when I ask you, tell me
Will you forget me ?
You smile and swing your head, and I know
I know you will think of me always,
Two days hence
I shall go to another land
and you will know me in dreams of distance—
And you won't forget. (*Purabi*)

He had declared in *Gitanjali*,

"Thou hast made me known to friends whom I know not. Thou hast given me seats in homes not my own. Thou hast brought the distant near and made a brother of the stranger."

This was literally true in his own life.

In November, 1926, when we were going from Serbia to Bulgaria, the train stopped at the frontier at the dead of night. The sky was flooded with moonlight and some one came up in front of the poet's compartment and began to play on the flute. The melody was a little strange to us, though it had in it something common with our music. The music went on even when the train started again. We never knew who the flute-player was nor did he meet the poet. His only reward was that he played for the poet who was moved.

Bent as he was on admiring the best in foreigners, he never could tolerate that the power of arms should stop the march of humanity. He went to Italy at Mussolini's invitation. He was surrounded day and night by die-hard fascists. And when the poet wrote, he praised Mussolini's