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TAGORE- A VISIONARY POST-HUMANIST: A READING OF TAGORE'S POETRY FROM ECOCRITICAL PERSPECTIVES

***Dr Vikas Sharma, **Alka Sharma**

*D.Litt, Professor and Head, Department of English, Chaudhary Charan Singh University Meerut. (UP), India

**Research Scholar, CCS University, Meerut
Associate Professor in English, Govt. PG College for Women, Panchkula

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ABSTRACT

The paper analyses and discusses the Posthuman theory, which emerged after the breakdown of humanism so well celebrated since the advent of the Renaissance in the western world. The depletion of ecology, the problems like ozone layer pilferage, global warming, glaciers melting, sea level rising and resultant danger to humanity have been traced to the over importance given to the human entity and how humans exploited everything around them and consumed nature and animal kingdom. This dented nature and started a vicious circle where sustainability has become the victim. This paper looks at Tagore's poetry as a provider of the same solution that post-humanists are reaching after a hundred years or so. Hence proving Tagore to be a visionary writer.

Keywords: *Tagore, Ecocritical, Post-Humanism, Upanishads, Nature*

Degrading the natural environment and exploiting human resources pose a massive danger. The depletion of ecology has been a concern among humans and is seen as their greatest challenge. Amitav Ghosh and other authors have been quite loud in their criticism of the literary and cultural community for failing to speak out against this pervasive degradation. Literature is among the disciplines with the loudest voices warning humankind of impending threats. Rabindranath Tagore's poetry depicts this threatened environment via the use of dwindling natural items. In his poetry, there is tension and struggle between the moral and immoral, natural and cultural, and holy and profane. He writes in one of his short poems titled "Questions to God":

Choked is my voice, mute are my songs
today, and darkly my world

lies imprisoned in a dismal dream; and I
ask You, O God, in tears:

"Have You Yourself forgiven; have even
You loved those who are poisoning Your
air and blotting out Your light?"

The times when Tagore was writing differed from the current status of the ecocritical situation, but the more one reads Tagore, the more one realises that Tagore was ahead of his times. One realises that Tagore was a visionary and could easily see that the world was moving in the wrong direction. Post-Renaissance, the western world made humans the centre of all activities and every aspect of life was looked at from human positioning at the centre of the world. In the theoretical framework, it is referred to as being anthropocentric. And the depletion of ecology at a rampant speed has awakened

contemporary thinkers to realise that the anthropocentric approach is the cause of environmental degradation. Resultantly a new approach to understanding the world is taking shape. As it blasts the human approach and comes after the breakdown of anthropocentric focus, it is called the post-humanist approach for the sake of historicity.

Posthumanism refers to a spectrum of contemporary theoretical perspectives advanced by academics with disciplinary training in philosophy, science and technology, literary, critical theory, theoretical sociology, and communication studies. For these organisations, posthumanism represents a series of ruptures with the fundamental assumptions of current Western society, most notably a new perspective on the relationship between the human subject and the natural world. Posthumanist philosophy promotes the development of a new epistemology that is neither anthropocentric nor based on Cartesian dualism. It attempts to destabilise the traditional distinctions between humans, animals, and technology. Ihab Hassan, a postmodern theorist, coined the term and provided its meaning in an article titled "Prometheus as Performer: Towards a Posthumanist Culture?" (1977). Transhuman and antihuman are related concepts with their own unique theoretical complexities. Whatmore (2013a) and

Haraway (2004) emphasised posthumanism as a critical component in understanding relationships between persons and the material world. The word material encompasses our interactions with our physical, mental, and spiritual environment (Castree, 1995). Posthumanist theory sprang from feminist and poststructuralist schools of thought, including a broad range of relational methods. According to Castree and Nash (2006, p. 501), post-humanist practices might be seen as disruptions to humanity, such as new biotechnology, or as an idealised notion of the posthuman subject as detached and emancipated from human people. This revelation was discovered in a recent and intriguing contemplation by Castree and Nash. According to Fukuyama (2003), the arrival of contemporary biotechnology offers a challenge not just to the traditional idea of a human being but also to the existing social fabric. Posthumanism may be regarded in two ways: as more-than-human thinking and acting or as a shattering of the human subject.

There are two significant sprouts of the Posthuman jargon: the environmentalist and the technical. The technical aspects project the issues where technology enters human life and robots, humanoids, and androids are posing as humans and need a separate set of tools to

be understood for their social, cultural and economic results. Such posthuman approaches lead to cyborgs and try to analyse the impact of such entities on the world. On the other hand, environmental humanists try to recreate the Upanishadic view of life where the trinity of man, animal, and vegetation combine and make a meaningful life in sync with nature. It dreams of a world where animals and nature are not for human consumption and projects life in full synchronisation of all participants equally and at par. Tagore's poetry provides a perfect example for such enterprises and looks visionary as it says in the early twentieth century, what the thinkers have reached now.

Rabindranath Tagore's poetry reveals his deep affection for nature. He was a tremendous admirer of God and His magnificent creation. In his famous essay, *What Is Art?*, he states: "We sense his closeness in every human interaction of love and devotion, and in our celebrations, He is the honoured guest of honour. We may see the hem of His cloak and hear His footsteps throughout seasons of flowers and fruits, the arrival of rain, and the peak of autumn."

As a nature enthusiast, he felt very anxious and uncomfortable seeing the deteriorating environment. In his poem *The Fugitive*, he laments, "In a blaze of passion, they appear to have burned their

future to ashes, along with their flowering season." "The air is harsh with cry, 'Victory to the Brute!' The children look haggard and aged; they whisper that time revolves but never advances, that we are goaded to run but have nothing to reach, and that creation is like a blind man's groping. (p.283)

Rabindranath Tagore, the first Asian to receive the Nobel Prize in Literature, has a significant position among contemporary Indian intellectuals owing to the many works he authored. His immense trove of ideas and thoughts dramatically affected every aspect of society, especially in climate, education, politics, and social reform movements. This corpus of work examines his worry about climate change from a philosophical standpoint. The focus is broad here. The present deteriorating status of nature is not a secret since we are all aware of it. When confronted with issues of this kind, doing a new study on the topic is of the utmost importance. With the assistance of Tagore's many philosophically-oriented writings, an attempt has been made in this research paper to handle concerns about the local environment.

Nobody linked with Rabindranath Tagore ever introduced the notion of ecology, nor does he have a scientific or systematic understanding of the climate.

He is probably a professional artist. Therefore, it is standard practice to raise contentious topics concerning the problems, such as whether an artist should be called a philosopher or if philosophy impacts natural issues. It is not impossible to categorise an artist and a philosopher in the same category. Philosophy is not an autonomous academic discipline. In the area of philosophy, the process of defining and analysing abstract concepts is anything from simple. That is no longer possible. Philosophy is advantageous since it allows us to grasp every aspect of the universe. Again, it has been reliably shown that philosophy considerably impacts environmental issues.

During a discussion on the three fundamental challenges of natural philosophy, Simon P. James offered evidence that philosophy substantially influences the environmental issues we face. He was aware that the destruction of the ecosystem was due to the selfish actions of humanity. Tagore's perspective on climate change is connected to the notion of sustainable provincial development, which emphasises a mutually supportive and complementing relationship between humans and their natural surroundings. He envisioned a plan for long-term sustainability that included the rehabilitation of regional industry,

increased agricultural output, and improved the surrounding countryside.

Tagore could see the harmful effects of the sophisticated civilisation's strong machinery dependence on the natural world. He sought methods to create environmentally friendly modifications that would not harm the surrounding ecosystem.

Consequently, he endeavoured to teach people about the interwoven relationship between the living and nonliving things on earth and the responsibility individuals have toward the natural environment and commonplace items. The establishment of Santiniketan and Sriniketan amid nature, the plays *Muktadhara* and *Raktakarabi*, and the entire programmes he initiated, such as plantation and *Halakarshana*, as well as nature-related festivals of various ceremonies, such as *Poushmela*, *Barshamangal*, and *Saradotshaba*, are all authentic examples of his philosophical mind. In light of all his acts, it is feasible to refer to him as a natural philosopher in the conventional term.

Tagore thus provides a clear perspective on the problem of climate. His attitude toward the environment is similar to the Upanishads and Naess' profound comprehension of the natural world. Therefore, neither an eastern nor an

occidental approach can be taken to his climate philosophy; rather, his climate philosophy is a synthesis of both of these schools of thought. The present ecological dilemma that the world is experiencing may be linked to Tagore's climate philosophy, as is commonly accepted. This allows him to be classified as an environmental philosopher to some degree.

Again, it is logically and rationally shown that philosophy considerably impacts natural issues. During a discussion on the three fundamental challenges of natural philosophy, Simon P. James offered evidence that philosophy substantially influences the environmental problems we face. The three characteristics he chooses are a tool to cultivate individuals who are aware of humanity's challenges, relevant, and reasonable. In many of his writings and acts, sufficient to identify him as a natural philosopher, these three aspects of philosophy can be unequivocally and verifiably discovered, indicating that he was a natural philosopher.

A natural philosopher's actual image lies beyond the surface of his exquisite demeanour. His recognition of the man-nature fellowship, his realisation that all living and inanimate creatures contain souls, his perception of the law of unification, his emotion of devotion, and

the several initiations he underwent to safeguard and maintain the whole shared habitat are instances. His philosophical thinking on climate is not restricted to a narrow scope of seeing and analysing his surroundings. His review is also not limited to seeing and analysing his immediate environment. Still, it remains a valuable guide for shaping the proper mentality of the masses towards climate so that our present situation is sustainable.

Tagore's poetry depicts the unusual blend of intelligence and instinct in a highly structured manner. With the aid of poetry, he attempted to fathom the unchangeable truth that lies underneath the surface. Despite lacking academic training or education in philosophy, he could present a clear image of a philosopher via his demeanour. S. Radhakrishnan concluded while studying Tagore's philosophy in his 1919 book *Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore*, that Tagore's works lack a coherent presentation of his philosophy of life. Radhakrishnan arrived at this conclusion while discussing the philosophy of Tagore. He cited *Sadhana*, a novel by Tagore, as an illustration. *Sadhana* cannot be claimed as a philosophical system; instead, it is an environment accused of having a specific view of the real world. Despite this, we consider him a philosopher since he has an exceptional understanding of every aspect

of the universe. Consequently, his writings show his philosophical disposition.

The actual image of a natural philosopher lies just beyond the surface of his exquisite demeanour. In many of his writings and acts, which adequately define him as an ecological philosopher, these three aspects of philosophy may be found clearly and unmistakable, demonstrating that he is an environmental philosopher. His recognition of the man-nature relationship, his realisation that all living and nonliving creatures contain souls, his perception of the law of unification, his emotion of attachment, and the several initiations he performed to protect and maintain the whole indigenous ecosystem are examples. His philosophical thinking about climate is not restricted to a narrow scope of seeing and analysing his surroundings. Still, it remains a trustworthy guide for forming the proper mentality of the people towards ecology to guarantee that our present situation is sustainable.

Within the sphere of Tagore's climate philosophy, we encounter the two phases of his climate perception. These stages represent his unfavourable environment or climate and his typical habitat. In contrast to what he was raised to think about the atmosphere of the plain, his view of the original environment is

drastically different. The surrounding environment bounded by a given boundary is referred to as the plain climate, while the unique environment is unrestricted. It has no limitations or bounds. Tagore believed that a child's closeness to nature was crucial to their healthy development and evolution throughout infancy. He was mindful of the logical connection between man and nature. The second phase of Tagore's impression of climate is a boundless common habitat. His impression of the indigenous habitat is objective and instinctive. Man-nature bond is the most ruling piece of this space. He confessed that the first acknowledgement of his life is the closeness with nature. To him, all the biotic and abiotic creatures on earth are naturally associated with one another. The changes in a single aspect also roll out the improvements in the others. To him, the bond is because of the fundamental law of nature. He treated every one of the creatures on earth as having the exact worth of existence. As indicated by him, every living being, including animals, trees and plants, was supplied with a soul. Because of this, humans possess the same position as different creatures and plants.

Tagore understood the man-nature relationship in the genuine sense of the term. He time and again asserts that it is the responsibility of humanity to keep the climate sustainable. Tagore could see the

corrupting state of regular habitat. In his opinion, it results from man's intellectual capacity to overcome nature. He said that the advanced scholarly brain creates present-day scientific technologies to carry on a peaceful life. He understood that as long as their intellectual skills make, their avaricious sentiments also increased bit by bit. As a result of their excessive greediness, they treat the typical habitat to satisfy their individual physical needs, as it were.

Tagore expressed in his essay *Aranya Devta* that cutting-edge man indulges much in luxurious living. They disregard the harm to the climate of their greedy actions. He called attention to the distinction between city dwellers and forest dwellers that as soon as they lived in a forest, they had love and respect towards nature. After turning into the city tenant, they neglect to show love and affection towards nature. On the whole, we are mindful of its result, for example, the debasement of climate, similar to the contamination of water, land, and air, as well as the erosion of the landscape. So, Tagore calls the city inhabitant to restore love and respect to typical habitat as they understand that love and care for nature are essential for a sustainable climate. Even though Tagore has censured present-day man and the cutting-edge mechanical advancements, at this point, he understood

that the use of current technologies is essential for the appropriate improvement of society. He was not against the machine-development and wanted to bring advancement sustainably without causing any harm to the typical habitat. He understood that biological crisis and ecological debasement result from human impedance and the disturbances of common conditions. He repeatedly wanted to show that no organism can alone live in this world. All organisms live respectively in a specific local area called the local natural area. The success of this local area depends upon its interrelations with the physical climate, for example, air, water, light, warmth and soil. So, it is a man who can handle and impact the atmosphere as per his own needs.

Tagore called attention to obviously how we should treat climate. Tagore considered characteristic things as an everlasting blessing to humanity. So, it is essential to be conscious while using specific things. Tagore had an expansive standpoint concerning the use of characteristic things. He said that we should not utilise nature to meet the demands of any particular human being. Perhaps we should utilise it to meet humanity's fundamental necessities. Nature is more than a supply of resources; it delivers much more. It safeguards a wide range of creatures. Nature is not, in any

way, an escape route for humans. It encompasses the whole surrounding area. Consequently, Tagore never sees nature as a tool people may exploit to make their lives more pleasant.

The guideline of solidarity in diversity and a synthetic way to deal with life emphasised by Tagore corresponds to the standard of biotic equity as upheld by Naess. To Tagore, each substance, whether biotic or abiotic, has esteem that contributes to humanity's prosperity on the loose. These entities have the option to live and flourish, even the elements of typical habitat, for example, rivers, mountains, creatures, and so on. Tagore also said that, although human beings possessed excessive covetousness and passion, still they should not endeavour them. They should treat everyday things reasonably by limiting their needs. Human beings can use them to satisfy their fundamental needs by staying away from the demands of luxurious living.

Tagore can easily be traced asserting that the traditional Hindu culture and philosophy also respected and included each component of life and nonlife in the entire universe and planets. It kept an ideal balance and solidarity in diversity. Still, Tagore didn't wholly sabotage present-day culture, philosophy and ways of life. He esteemed some

positive aspects of them. He not just censured the conventional universal religious visually impaired beliefs and rituals but also denounced excessive developing eagerness, passion, individualism and materialism of present-day industrial societies, which leads to the misuse and destruction of all the existing systems of the earth.

Tagore's philosophy of climate corresponds to the philosophy of profound nature. Profound nature is a philosophical perspective in ecological philosophy. As per profound ecologists, it is necessary to have a biological consciousness that forms the basis of natural ethics to save our planet. Their first focus was on resource conservation, wilderness preservation and good extensions, which have instrumental values for human beings. After that, they stressed environmental sensibility, which appreciates the inalienable values of the characteristic world. Tagore has also offered importance to the preservation and conservation of legal entities and esteeming them in his philosophy of climate. He has perceived many inborn values of nature, like financial worth, social and religious worth and virtue.

Tagore only reflects what Upanishads and ancient Indian wisdom have always said: this universe is one, and no two entities are different. The idea

behind *Advaita* philosophy, so much celebrated in Indian philosophical circles, underlines non-dualism and considers everything in the universe to be dependent on each other and not separate from the plan of the universe. Tagore has been able to precipitate it in simple words in his poetry, and thus what the western world has reached now is a pearl of ancient Indian wisdom and is the panacea of all ecological problems the world is facing today

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