

RABINDRANATH TAGORE INVITES MAN TO REHARMONIZE HIMSELF WITH NATURE

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Abstract

Man is the product of nature and part of nature, like all beings living on the Blue Planet (Earth). As all the other species, man is the result of evolution on this planet. Through man, nature and, generally speaking, matter, have learned to know their own inner side.

The Judeo-Christian religion considers man to be the king of creation, having the mission of mastering nature. But, in his megalomania, man has misinterpreted the notion of master. A master should take care of his subjects; he is not above nature, but only one of its components.

Along his evolution, man has become an enemy of nature, the only one of all species who has turned against it.

By analyzing the behavior of Indians, who live in harmony with nature, and that of the Western civilization representatives, who consider themselves above nature and dare to intervene for modifying it, before truly knowing it, Rabindranath Tagore addresses MEN and invites them to reharmonize themselves with nature. Return to nature and man's reharmonization with nature is the only solution that can grant the survival of both NATURE and MAN, as an earthly being.

Keywords: nature, forest, civilisation, upbringing, spirit.

Migratory peoples coming from the Eastern Europe, more likely from East Asia, besieged us over more than one thousand years ago. Aryans were among the various races that invaded Europe. Originating from India, they spread over large areas. But when did Aryans immigrate in India? It was much before the so-called migration of people, at the dawn of modern man's formation.

Anthropological data revealed that the cradle of mankind was Africa.

Ian Tattersal¹ provides proofs on the fact that bipedal hominids appeared 4.2-3.9 million years ago in Africa. The *Arhipithecus ramidus* species would have lived 4.4 million years ago in Ethiopia. Hominids gathered around the big lakes and in savannah areas, leaving the forests in search of food and shelter. The *Homo erectus*

species, characterized by a human-like bipedal gait, lived in Turkana approximately 1.9 million years ago. The fossil remains of a teenage boy, a member of the *Homo erectus* species in Turkana, were surrounded by tools made of carved stone.

It seems that the representatives of *Homo erectus* from Turkana and the nearby area were the first emigrants to leave Africa for Asia. Turkana boys reached a height of 1.8 m, which would have supported an augmented walk.

The 1.8 million-old fossil remains of an individual belonging to *Homo erectus* were discovered in Georgia, at Dmanisi, permitting to establish the itinerary made by *Homo erectus* from Africa, crossing Georgia and wandering about Southeast Asia and China.

This is the first humanoid exodus.

A great while, it was believed that *Homo sapiens neanderthalensis* descended from *Homo erectus* and that *Homo sapiens sapiens* descended from *Homo sapiens neanderthalensis*. Actually, things appear as wholly different².

If *Homo erectus* reached Indonesia, Borneo, Sumatra and China, the only conclusion is that the modern man did not descend from the *Homo erectus* individuals established in these geographical areas.

Modern genetic data prove that the modern man has descended from a single ancestral population, formed 150,000-100,000 years ago, in Africa. According to the so-called **chandelier or multi-regional hypothesis**, the modern man would have evolved from a type of *Homo sapiens arhaicus* resulted from *Homo erectus*. The territory of modern man genesis would be Africa, wherefrom several evolutionary branches would have been formed, through a massive migration, leading to the advent of *Homo sapiens sapiens* in

Africa, Asia, Near East and Europe. The Neanderthal branch was separated from the very beginning and had no direct affiliation to that of the modern man³.

The Mitochondrial Eve hypothesis considers that *Homo sapiens sapiens* has a unique origin and that the place of his genesis is Africa. Study of the genetic materials from mitochondria, transmitted solely through the egg cell, therefore only through the mother, shows a uniform human species, having appeared in Africa 150,000-100,000 years ago, from where it spread through a massive exodus to Asia, Near East and Europe. No genetic blending between the modern and the Neanderthal man occurred. Hence, the second exodus of the human forms is in fact the first exodus of humans. It starts from the human population in the Mitochondrial Eve, which spread through the entire ancient world: Africa, Asia and Europe. Much later, after the modern man occupied the Old World and the population increased, the historic human formations began their migration – a phenomenon totally different from the migrations present in the phylogenetic human tree^{4,5}.

Along his migration, the modern man established himself on river banks, not only in forests, but also in savannah areas, building shelters, practising agriculture and breeding domestic animals, or living a nomadic life up to the present days.

Speaking of the Indian civilization, Rabindranath Tagore⁶ mentions the occupation of the Indian subcontinent by Aryans.

“When the first Aryan invaders appeared in India, it was a vast land of forests, and the new-comers rapidly took advantage of them. These forests afforded them shelter from the fierce heat of the sun and the ravages of tropical storms, pastures for cattle, fuel for sacrificial fire, and materials for building cottages. And the different Aryan clans with their patriarchal heads settled in the different forest tracts which had some special advantage of natural protection, and food and water in plenty.” (p. 19)

Tagore connects the life of the first Aryan tribes with forests, an aspect representing a return to the life spent in forests. Human ancestors, namely the first proto-human forms, were forced to leave the forests and live, as already mentioned, in the forest steppe and

steppe. Coming back to forests was caused by the entirely particular conditions present on this subcontinent.

“Thus in India it was in the forests that our civilisation had its birth, and it took a distinct character from this origin and environment. It was surrounded by the vast life of nature, was fed and clothed by her, and had the closest and most constant intercourse with her varying aspects.” (p. 17)

This return to forests means a return of the modern man, in the beginning of his evolution, to the natural condition, as the forest became his home and shelter. However, this is not a return to the state when the pre-humans had left their natural surroundings. It is a return at a higher level, involving experiencing the natural surroundings and harmonizing the social life of the modern man with natural harmony. In this respect, Tagore states that:

“Such a life, it may be thought, tends to have the effect of dulling human intelligence and dwarfing the incentives to progress by lowering the standards of existence. But in ancient India we find that the circumstances of forest life did not overcome man’s mind, and did not enfeeble the current of his energies, but only gave to it a particular direction. Having been in constant contact with the living growth of nature, his mind was free from the desire to extend his dominion by erecting boundary walls around his acquisitions.” (ibid.)

The Aryan settled in the forests of India did not turn against nature, did not intend to overcome it, to subdue and transform it. He simply entered the natural life, hearing the lisp of waters, discovering the clock of flowers, listening to the concert of birds, watching the grass blade growing, observing nature’s renewal from one season to another. He never attacked the forest of game, killing the snakes no matter how venomous were they, depleting the natural surroundings of tigers, killing them for their ravenousness, instead he tamed elephants and treated them as animal kings, and he sanctified the cow; he did not build slaughter houses for exploiting the cattle, but worshipped them alongside the Egyptian sawyer, considering them sacred animals.

This does not mean that Indians did not hunt, apart from practising agriculture and building cities. Hunting was no sport for the Indians and

no fun for the nobility and rich people, an occasion to manifest their thirst for blood and to make a show of the intelligence, ability and "refinement" of their culture. From the very beginning, they did not organize hunting parties in India as today, when, each year, they hunt 150-200 boars and other animals of the forest, only to impress the world with their terrible actions.

Let us continue with Tagore's comments:

"Having been in constant contact with the living growth of nature, his mind was free from the desire to extend his dominion by erecting boundary walls around his acquisitions. His aim was not to acquire but to realise, to enlarge his consciousness by growing with and growing into his surroundings" (ibid.).

Two perspectives on mastering nature may be derived from here: on one side, the above mentioned hunters from hell, organizing hunting parties on their properties and, on the other, the Indian masters of nature who have tried and have succeeded not only in experiencing nature, but also in becoming part of it. They felt that *"truth is all-comprehensive, that there is no such thing as absolute isolation in existence, and the only way of attaining truth is through the interpenetration of our being into all objects."* (ibid.)

By really living in nature and harmonizing life with nature, this type of civilization actually attained the harmony between **"man's spirit"** and **"nature's spirit"**. This does not mean that Aryans were not forced to cut down forests to extend their pastures, to gather wood for fire or for building houses, to build up large cities, later to become impressive metropolises. However, never has the Indian isolated himself from nature by raising walls, he was never isolated from nature, he "looked back with adoration upon the early ideal of strenuous self-realisation, and the dignity of the simple life of the forest hermitage, and drew its best inspiration from the wisdom stored there" (ibid.)

From the beginning, Indian thinking was channeled towards other dimensions than the Western thinking. As Tagore states, Indians acknowledge no gap between man and nature. For the Western people, nature is limited, made of inanimate things and animals which have nothing in common with them, more than that, nature is considered to be inferior. One cannot

help feeling horrified when discovering that even biologists see the world as unfulfilled, that some beings are inferior, as if they were scraps of nature, and that man, allegedly "the great master of nature", should intervene and improve the situation. Even man could be improved through genetic engineering. One should understand that there are no scraps of nature, neither nature (for the science-centred people), nor God (for the religion-centred people) has ever produced scraps scattered in the environment. Each being, irrespective of its species, subkingdom or kingdom, is more or less perfectly functional and adapted for its life demands. Every species has its evolutionary development, irrespective of its existing bearing, on top of the evolutionary trend at that time. Biological progress is real, whereas evolutionary development is determined by higher life expectancies.

Tagore justly states that:

"The man whose acquaintance with the world does not lead him deeper than science leads him, will never understand what it is that the man with the spiritual vision finds in these natural phenomena. The water does not merely cleanse his limbs, but it purifies his heart; for it touches his soul. The earth does not merely hold his body, but it gladdens his mind; for its contact is more than a physical contact--it is a living presence. When a man does not realise his kinship with the world, he lives in a prison-house whose walls are alien to him. When he meets the eternal spirit in all objects, then is he emancipated, for then he discovers the fullest significance of the world into which he is born; then he finds himself in perfect truth, and his harmony with the all is established." (p. 19)

Indian thinking is strongly tied to the natural experience and sees man as related to all beings living in nature, body and soul, together with whom he forms a whole. They acknowledge human primacy on the creational scale but consider that human superiority is not the result of nature's conquest and transformation, but of its unification.

It is difficult for us, Western people, to understand Indians in terms of thinking and behavior, and how was possible that a previously meat-eating people renounce this food only for love of all living beings. Nicolae Labis soaked in bitter tears the mouthful ripped from the chunk

of the deer meat so joyfully hunted. How could "the animal" who shoots down hundreds of boars, deer and other animals only just for the satanic pride of displaying his power and useless "greatness" understand this way of thinking?

The Indians managed to understand what we cannot understand, namely that if we separate ourselves from natural life, hiding ourselves against material and spiritual walls, that if we consider ourselves above nature and not as part from it, we are doomed to be lost in the labyrinth of inward wanderings, in the desert of illusions devoid of love. Tagore considers that man cannot know the abyss of his being if he detaches himself off nature, if he breaks all his connections with it or if he ignores it.

"Man must realise the wholeness of his existence, his place in the infinite; he must know that hard as he may strive he can never create his honey within the cells of his hive; for the perennial supply of his life food is outside their walls. He must know that when man shuts himself out from the vitalising and purifying touch of the infinite, and falls back upon himself for his sustenance and his healing, then he goads himself into madness, tears himself into shreds, and eats his own substance. Deprived of the background of the whole, his poverty loses its one great quality, which is simplicity, and becomes squalid and shamefaced." (pp. 20-21)

In the Green Ocean of the Amazon, there still are human tribes who live now, in the Third Millennium, like in the Stone Age. These people live truly amidst nature and are part of it, knowing its finest secrets. How else can one explain that these people know all natural remedies for curing diseases - even cancer? And this happens while, in the civilized world, the great pharmaceutical monopolies impose laws and ban homeopathic medicine only for selling their synthetic drugs.

Here is a truth chiseled in marble by Tagore. His thoughts can be compared to **the Tablets of the Law** given by God to Moses:

"When man's consciousness is restricted only to the immediate vicinity of his human self, the deeper roots of his nature do not find their permanent soil, his spirit is ever on the brink of starvation, and in the place of healthful strength he substitutes rounds of stimulation. Then it is that man misses his inner

perspective and measures his greatness by its bulk and not by its vital link with the infinite, judges his activity by its movement and not by the repose of perfection--the repose which is in the starry heavens, in the ever-flowing rhythmic dance of creation." (p. 23)

There is an ecological principle according to which **everything is related to everything**. No being lives alone. All beings forming the biosphere, which represent life, rely one on each other along their existence. The beings from Earth do not represent a mob; they form a whole called LIFE. Now try and extract man from this whole. Man cannot be extracted or ripped from the inextricable canvas of life, he cannot break down his connection with his peers, with the beings with whom he replenishes LIFE, and with God as well. Man cannot lock himself in the ivory tower and cannot just move around his narrow circle, as Tagore states; he communicates with the infinite life horizontally and with the Holy Spirit vertically. This is the perspective delivered by Indian thinking on man and life as a cosmic phenomenon. Just as Tagore advises us, we cannot come out, not even for a moment, from "**the ever-flowing rhythmic dance of creation**".

Tagore's thinking is profound and tied to reality; matter is in perpetual motion, from the cloud of electrons moving around the atomic nucleus up to the planets moving around the suns, and even galaxies are in perpetual spiral motion, everyone and everything joins the ever-flowing rhythmic dance of creation.

In relation to motion and the speed of motion, matter turns into energy and energy turns into matter: $E = m \cdot c^2$, as Einstein convinced us.

How naïve and childish seems now the idea of extracting man from world's natural forms, and of placing him somewhere above it. Nature is not only the immediate surrounding of our comprehensive sphere, not only the inanimate world, plants and animals that we meet at every turn, nature is EVERYTHING, it is the whole which forms the cosmic infinite, and this infinite represents an entity, the universal egg, as the ancients saw it.

To convince us on the extent of man's integration in nature, Tagore continues with the

following idea: "For its full accomplishment, humankind needs all the living elements which form its life, so that its food should grow on different fields and its water should spring from various wells." (p. 22)

To assure us of the measure of man's integration into nature, Tagore continues: "Man for his perfect growth requires all the living elements that constitute his complex life; that is why his food has to be cultivated in different fields and brought from different sources." (ibid.)

Apparently paradoxically, Tagore could not realize what food additives of our times mean, nor he ever ate a "fast food"; he did not taste artificial and altered food and his pieces of advice sound like a prophecy. Nowadays, artificial juices are more expensive than natural wine and water is more expensive than cow milk, which means that man's health and biologic future are being questioned.

We do not intend to make religious comments or to accept as such Tagore's comments on Brahma, Buddha and even on God.

However, I cannot help from underlining that, whichever the divinity we worship: God, Brahma or Buddha, we are oriented towards a universal conscience based on light and love; therefore, we should aspire to this universal conscience, the behavior expected from its part being the same: dropping the selfish style and the self:

"We have, however, to pay a price for this attainment of the freedom of consciousness. What is the price? It is to give one's self away. Our soul can realise itself truly only by denying itself." (p. 26)

Tagore draws our attention on what the Upanishads state: "Thou shalt gain by giving away, Thou shalt not covet."

This teaching is extremely profound, but who is to observe it today? Only following this teaching, only giving up desires, someone is able to ascend to the real social hierarchy.

"The man who aims at his own aggrandisement underrates everything else. Compared to his ego the rest of the world is unreal. Thus in order to be fully conscious of the reality of all, one has to be free himself from the bonds of personal desires. This discipline we have to go through to prepare ourselves for our social duties--for sharing the burdens of our fellow-beings. Every endeavour to attain a larger life requires of man

"to gain by giving away, and not to be greedy." And thus to expand gradually the consciousness of one's unity with all is the striving of humanity." (ibid.)

Do such people exist, we wonder? Certainly, they do exist, as long as we accepted Pico della Mirandola's truth according to which man is aameleon-like being, oscilating between Devil and God. People from the right wing, whom we call saints, but who can be found in other religions, as well (a powerful argument for ecumenism), know to renounce their selves and practise true love. They are just a few, but they show us that, indeed, they do exist.

"It fills me with great joy and a high hope for the future of humanity when I realise that there was a time in the remote past when our poet-prophets stood under the lavish sunshine of an Indian sky and greeted the world with the glad recognition of kindred. It was not an anthropomorphic hallucination. It was not seeing man reflected everywhere in grotesquely exaggerated images, and witnessing the human drama acted on a gigantic scale in nature's arena of flitting lights and shadows. On the contrary, it meant crossing the limiting barriers of the individual, to become more than man, to become one with the All. It was not a mere play of the imagination, but it was the liberation of consciousness from all the mystifications and exaggerations of the self. These ancient seers felt in the serene depth of their mind that the same energy which vibrates and passes into the endless forms of the world manifests itself in our inner being as consciousness; and there is no break in unity." (pp. 26-27)

I admire Tagore's meditations and his profound thinking and belief that the world would find the true way to come back to Mother Nature. Horrified by the generalized moral decay of today, I used to think that we would never see the end of this, that the exit could be blocked by the social trash of our time, but Tagore convinced me to orient myself towards honest people, because, in our history, we had great personalities who remain true prophets for us; I think firstly of Mihai Eminescu, but I can present here a coherent list of names of visionaries who felt that our people would find the inner strength to come back and raise to the height it really deserves.

CONCLUSIONS

Along his evolution, man detached himself from animality through the ability of building tools and using them, of speaking articulately and of thinking. Along his biological evolution, man behaved like a predator, an ethological feature assuring his biological progress. Paradoxically, even if, by his ability to think, man reached the spirit and knowledge of the universe and of his own interiority, and realized a new sphere of Planet Earth- the Noosphere - he still tries to detach himself from nature, to subdue it and transform it according to his own interests.

With the calm and wisdom of the philosopher and stirred by his passionate love for nature, Rabindranath Tagore invites us to return to NATURE, to reharmonize us with it and to make PEACE, if we wish to survive.

We consider that he is right and we launch the invitation to all those who still do not know this.

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