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Relevance of Tagore's Religious Philosophy in the Modern Age

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Abstract

According to Rabindra Nath Tagore in true religion there should not be any fixed limits around it. It should be free and spontaneous in every individual. He believes that the aim of true religion is the realization of one's kinship with everything. Man has to realize his kinship with everything; he has to cultivate a universal feeling of love. In Tagore's philosophy man's religion has been described as the spontaneous expression of the essential and inner aspect of man. This is why Tagore says "in my language the word religion has a profound meaning. The wateriness of water is essentially its religion, in the spark of the flame lies the religion of fire. Likewise, man's religion is his innermost truth." In the modern age we some time perceive growing religious intolerance among the masses. But Tagore believes that true religion is free and spontaneous in every individual. It is not that which is limited only in one community. It has no boundaries around itself. According to him man has to cultivate feeling of love which is very essential in the modern age. Thus the aim of my paper is to show the relevance of Tagore's religious philosophy in the modern age.

Key words: True religion, Spontaneous, Inner aspect, Innermost truth.

Introduction

In this paper an attempt has been made to discuss the relevance of Tagore's religious philosophy in the modern age. By religion we mean to believe in a particular path. Some time it is said that Religion is the language of the mind and the heart, contemplation and acceleration of excellence and ascent. But according to Rabindranath Tagore Religion is more than that. For him it is self realization and, for that end-in-view, continual and unending Endeavour for the best and most illumined efflorescence of the innermost one, the all serene, who always pervades anywhere and everywhere. In India the different schools of thought have rise to various religious movements, reform, movements, and philosophical thought. 'Because India is the birth place of many religions.'¹ It is also home to many other religions which are now found at the outside of the country. So, from the different standpoint different thinker has discussed religion differently. Among all Tagore's thinking is something different. Here I shall discuss his religious thinking and its relevance in the modern age.

Tagore's thinking of religion: According to Rabindranath Tagore religion is an expression of the essential and inner aspect of human beings. Religion is the 'spiritual truth'. He describes religion as the realization of truth. This truth is the truth of paramatman, the supreme soul-jeevandevata. Thus unlike any other thinker on religion he identifies and highlights religion as the truth of the eternal man. His quest for religion is therefore a quest for truth where man stands on the threshold of an eternal victory blessed with the crest of Tat tamosi-thou art that. It is a victory that speaks of the truth that comes out of the depths of freedom and creative impulse towards the beauty of awe and silence, humility and goodness, simplicity and vastness. That is why Tagore says "in my language the word religion has a profound meaning.

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The wateriness of water is essentially its religion, in the spark of the flame lies the religion of fire. Likewise, man's religion is his inner most truth."² According to Tagore this realization has to be a realization in love and joy. One question arise here what is the inner most truth of man? In Tagore's philosophy man's religion has been described as the spontaneous expression of the essential and inner aspect of man. What is this essential aspect of man? According to Tagore, "Man possesses an extra awareness that is greater than his material sense this is his manhood. It is this deep abiding creative force which is his religion."² From this it can be said that man has a special awareness which reveals to him the fact that he has a capacity of going beyond himself which is constantly pushing him ahead towards higher and higher region. According to Rabindranath Tagore religion and religious institutions are not the same thing. For him true religion preaches freedom, whereas religious organization makes religions a slave of their own institutions. For Tagore religion is not the belief of a particular group of man rather in true religion man has to realize his kinship with everything, he has to cultivate a universal feeling of love.

Relevance of Tagore's religious philosophy in the modern age: In the modern time we some time perceive the disagreement between different group of religion. Not only disagreement in their teaching but also some time we perceive the quarrel between them. In the modern age we have so many examples that one religious organization is strictly involved in quarrels with another religious organization. We have so many examples of the demolition of the Temple, Church, Mosque and others religious institutions which are the ugly side of the country. Such incidents have developed the religious conflict in the country and all these pose a challenge to our communal harmony. But Tagore's thinking of religion is something different from this institutional religion. According to him true religion must not be confused with, what is called, 'institutional religion.' Tagore says "it should be remembered that religions or churches or religious organizations are not the same. They are to one another as the fire as to the ashes. When the religions have to make way for religious organization it is like the river being dominated by sand beds, the current stagnates and its aspect becomes desert like." Tagore vehemently asserts that institutional religions are false. According to him true religion is characterized by the qualities of naturality and spontaneity in it. It is free and spontaneous in every individual. It has no boundaries around itself. Tagore prefers to call true religion a poetic religion. Because a poet is a free thinker, he revels in flights of imagination without any constraint. Tagore calls his religion 'the religion of man.' The religion of man that Tagore advocates is the religion of an evolution of consciousness which guarantees the wholeness of man and society. Such wholeness admits truth for a fullness of personality in harmony with everyone in the society. So Tagore's religion is relevant today. Because he does not accepts any variety in religion. He says religion is the religion of man. In his religion there is unity at the heart of all diversity. This is why swami Adiswarananda of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda centre of New York says "Rabindranath Tagore's philosophical and spiritual thoughts transcend all limits of language, Culture and nationality. In his writings, the poet and mystic takes us on a spiritual quest and gives us a glimpse of the infinite in the midst of the finite , unity at the heart of all diversity, and the Divine in all beings and things of the universe."³

Conclusion

From the above discussion it can be concluded that Tagore's thinking of religion is not the religion of one particular group of people, but it is the religion of all mankind. Tagore makes religion wide open to embrace all the finer sentiments and softer feelings of mankind well assessed and re-assessed in terms of truth, beauty, and goodness, modesty, simplicity and greatness. So, his thinking of religion can very well be described as universal religion also. Because it throws its gate open to every individual.

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