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## The Nature Paradox: How Tagore's Deep Affection for the Natural World Challenges His Identity as an Advaita Vedāntin

**Sk Hasibul**, Former Assistant professor (Guest), Seacom Skills University, Bolpur, Shriniketan, Junior Research Fellow (UGC-NET-JRF), Sidho-Kanho-Birsha University, Purulia, West Bengal, India

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### Abstract

The present paper's focus is to give a clear view of Tagore's vision of the natural world, and challenges caused by it to Advaita Vedanta. Shankara posits "*Brahmā*." as the immutable, pure consciousness, with the *Jīva* being identical to *Brahmā*. while the natural world is an illusory manifestation of *Māyā*. In contrast, Tagore perceives nature as an integral reflection of God, not an enemy. He argues that separation from nature diminishes the human experience, leading to suffering and artificial solutions. Tagore emphasizes that spirituality is rooted in the natural world, asserting that true harmony arises from our connection with it. Unlike Vedanta's dismissal of individual entities, Tagore advocates for recognizing both the natural and universal worlds as equally real, culminating in unity through love. His philosophy challenges dualism, highlighting the necessity of engaging with nature for the development of human consciousness. Ultimately, Tagore's vision affirms that the essence of reality and spirituality intertwines with the richness of the external world, urging a harmonious relationship between humanity and nature as essential for achieving ultimate truth.

**Keywords:** *Brahmā*, Nature, Interconnectedness, Human experience, Advaita Vedāntin, Illusion, *Māyā*.

### 1. Introduction:

According to Shankara, *Brahmā* is the only reality which is immutable and attribute less, pure conscious and pure intelligence. The *Jīva* or individual is identical with *Brahmā*. On the other hand, world has no absolute reality; it is just the apparent of *Vivartā* transformation through the *māyā* of the Nirguna *Brahmā*. The *Jīva* is all-pervading and identical with Braham. Shankara also suggest the way of knowledge to attain Braham. In order to that, it has been said that; "The fire of Knowledge burns all Karma to ashes. There exists nothing so purifying like Knowledge". Now let us see the view of Shankara regarding the world, he said world is false but he does not mean that it is absolutely nothing but the world has relative existence. It is true for time being but the time true knowledge drawn, it disappears. It is not true for all the time beings. Shankara said world is neither exist nor non-exist but *Anirvacanīy*. That is why Shankara has emphasised upon the liberation from the worldly

objectives. Further support came from the line which said that; “The only way to liberation from this worldly existence (Samasar) is to get rid of this wrong notion through the real knowledge of Brahṁā” Shankara’s view revealed clearly when he said, when Brahṁā is realized, this phenomenal world disappears automatically.<sup>1</sup> The big difference related to the reality of physical world come here in this point in Tagore philosophy.

By following Tagore’s philosophy regarding nature and its role in achieving human goals, we cannot classify him as an Advaitin. Shankaracharya, the founder of Advaita Vedanta, taught that the physical world lacks true reality and is merely a creation of *māyā*. In contrast, Tagore argued that nature may be perceived as *māyā* only when we separate ourselves from God. He emphasized that since God is immanent in the universe, we cannot reject the material body. For Tagore, the physical world and its design are manifestations of divine perfection. He believed that the world is neither an enemy nor a denial of God; rather, it is an image of God. Furthermore, Tagore did not support the idea of ignoring the senses, as Shankaracharya did. In *Gitanjali*, he wrote, “No, I will never shut the doors of my senses. The delights of sight and hearing and touch will bear thy delight.” Tagore always viewed the senses as a means to create harmony with nature and the divine.<sup>2</sup> The Indian civilization had its origination in the forest not in the city wall, this makes India, separated from west countries. They always kept the nature at the back and made the big wall in between natural and spiritual world, which is followed by the principle “divide and rule”. It is said in Tagore’s book *Sadhana* that at the time Aryan came in India, there was the vast land of forests and they took the advantage of it. They made their shelter here, the forest gave them food, shadow to protect the hit from sun, flower and most importantly the peaceful environment for their spiritual practice. What is unique in Tagore’s philosophy is that he has seen nature as the part of ultimate reality. He said; “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.” This was the aim of ancient India to realise the harmony between the man’s spirit and the spirit of the world.<sup>3</sup> In Tagore vision *Avidyā* is little bit different from the view of Advaita Vedanta. He said that the true deliverance of man is the deliverance from *avidyā*, from ignorance. Ignorance in his view cannot destroy anything positive, but negative which obstructs our vision of truth. It is true that ignorance is cause of not realising our true nature of soul and when it removed from soul, we will be at the infinite state. Tagore said that *avidyā* is the thing which makes us believes that our self at present is the real one and that believe stop us to get true freedom. That is why the wise man comes and says,

“Set yourselves free from the *avidyā*: know your true soul and be saved from the grasp of the self which imprisons you.” (Tagore, 1915, p. 42)

## 2. Nature as a Central Theme in Tagore’s Work:

From the dawn of Indian civilization, people have sought to connect their language with the language of nature. Their thoughts and emotions often draw inspiration from the natural world, reflecting its colours and rhythms. Poetry emerges as a way to express these feelings, capturing the harmony found in nature. In this way, every aspect of human experience is intertwined with nature; nothing exists in isolation. The enduring conflict between nature

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<sup>1</sup> Vireswarananda, S. (1936). *Brahma-sutras*. Advaita Ashrama, p. 4, 5.

<sup>2</sup> Radhakrishnan, S. (2015). *The philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore*. Niyogi Books, p. 57.

<sup>3</sup> Tagore, R. (1915). *Sadhana: The realisation of life*. The Macmillan Company, p. 6, 7.

and the human spirit has persisted through the ages, embodying the dualities of constraint and liberation, the finite and the infinite. It is essential to recognize that the resolution does not lie in the rejection of the external world but in embracing it as a fact of the ultimate reality. This acceptance invites a harmonious interplay between our inner selves and the vast, intricate tapestry of existence, urging us to find balance within the dynamic dance of being. After beginning of Indian civilization when man become truly conscious about the soul, they have started to walk in the path of realizing the unity with the absolute. That time they made the forest as their shelter, fruits as the only food. So, nature the place from where Indian civilization got her birth. Therefore, in nature people got their ultimate aim of Indian philosophy and in nature it will be achieved. In order to that Tagore said; "*from the time when Man became truly conscious of his own self, he also became conscious of a mysterious spirit of unity which found its manifestation through him in his society. It is a subtle medium of relationship between individuals, which is not for any utilitarian purpose but for its own ultimate truth.*"<sup>4</sup> Indian chose forests under open sky so that their mind could come from the bondage of the narrow necessities and reach at the infinite. Surroundings things are integrally connected with the human beings beside their physical function. In order to that Tagore said "*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.*" Therefore, according to Tagore, separation from the nature make the human merely man, not man-in-universe. When men get separate from nature, they started to live in the prison. They unwillingly welcome pain and difficulties in their life and the methods they adopt to overcome from the situation are artificial which bring more pain and unpleasant into their life. (Tagore, 1915, p. 9) It is believed from the ancient India that we live, move, and have joy in the *Brahmā*, who is all-consciousness, all-pervading spirit. It is also said that the extension of our consciousness is the way to realise the all-pervading spirit. The way to develop our consciousness of Tagore make him somehow separated from pure *Advaita Vedāntin*. He emphasises upon the natural things. He also said that when we detached from the nature we get limited in our narrow, egoistic, individual desires. As a results, we are far away from the pleasure and happiness in our life. Here, Tagore said that the pleasure, joy, happiness is the unity through which we connect ourselves to all the existing things. He also said that when the children have started learning separate letter of the alphabet, they find no pleasure in it. But they got pleasure when they combine all the letter and make a sentence which convey the message. Similar things happen to our soul as well; due to the detachment from the nature, our soul find no pleasure but pain. Unity of all can only give us true pleasure and make us understand the real nature of soul, and without the oneness with the surrounding things it would be impossible to realise unity. In *Sadhana*, it has been said;

*"The harmony that prevails between reason which is of the soul of man and the workings of the world. This is the bond of union through which man is related to the world in which he lives, and he feels an exceeding joy when he finds this out, for then he realises himself in his surroundings."* (Tagore, 1915, p. 18-19)

Tagore's concern for nature is caused by nature as the creation of God; God somehow ordered everything in the world to be expressed with their own quality. He creates earth, sun and ordered them to be expressed, that's why sun got expressed and give sunshine to

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<sup>4</sup> Tagore, R. (1922a). *The religion of man*. George Allen & Unwin Ltd, p. 143.

the world, earth become the holder of every existing thing of the world. The same order has been given to the man also; he orders us to express our soul. Since, everything is the creation of the God, we should look at each and every objects as like looking to God. If we see something without the sense of it as God's creation then our soul will never get Ananda (bliss). So, He said God's perfection spread among all the individual things of the world; what we got in our life is nothing but the gift of the god. Since we have got nature and its elements in our life as gift of God then how can we ignore or separate it from our life?<sup>5</sup>

In Western civilization, nature is often viewed as essential for human survival. In contrast, Indian culture sees nature as an integral part of human existence. The *Upaniṣads* emphasize that peace arises from the harmony of all beings. Rabindranath Tagore highlighted that India embodies non-aggression and non-violence, promoting harmony among living and non-living entities, as well as between humans and nature. Ancient Hindu philosophy posits that everything is interconnected, leading to a longstanding concern for the environment in Indian thought. While modern individuals, influenced by Western perspectives, have begun to recognize environmental issues primarily due to their impact on human life. Ancient Indian sages and poets approached the subject differently; they understood that to live fully, one must engage with the universe and recognize our place within it. Nature was seen as familial: the earth as mother, the sky as father, and vegetation as siblings. This holistic view underscores a deep-rooted reverence for the environment that transcends mere utilitarian concerns.<sup>6</sup> Spirituality is the integral part of man's life, but it is not something which is beyond the natural world. In general, we understand the transcendental something as the meaning of spirituality. On the other hand, Tagore has rooted the spirituality in the natural world which we got by the sense-organs. Spirituality is in the depth of the moving and changing facts of the world. So, the function of human artistic nature is to realize the manifestation of personality in the world of appearance. The harmony is in the nature, and where this harmony is not deeply felt, there we are aliens and homesick. So, no nature no harmony. The more we come close to the nature the more realised the harmony with all deeply. In order to that Tagore said;

*"to live efficiently man must know facts and their laws. In order to be happy, he must establish harmonious relationship with all things with which he has dealings. Our creation is the modification of relationship."* (Tagore, 1922a, p. 133)

Tagore said that the approaches of Indian philosophers to realise universal being in all the objects of the world lead them to the higher than any other philosophers from western countries. The only advice to the peoples by the ancient Indian Rishis is to look at every object as the symbol of God's love and take them as the gift of God. He presents in fire, water, in paddy field, in all over the universe. Due to his presence, tree gives us fruits, flowers, shadow, the sun gives us light and energy. So, until we realise the presence of ultimate being in all, the realisation of ourself as one with *Brahmā* is not possible. Therefore, the world has to be considered as real as *Brahmā*.<sup>7</sup> Tagore was never ready to accept that truth is not in this world. The real truth is present even in very small grass. The universe has a heart, if not then there would have not the presence of absolute in the small to smaller

<sup>5</sup> Tagore, R. (2009). *Shantiniketan* (Vol. 1). Visva-Bharati University, p. 192. (Bengali)

<sup>6</sup> Bandyopadhyay, D. (2019). *Rabindranath Tagore: A life of intimacy with nature*. Rupa Publications India Pvt. Ltd, pp. 51, 52.

<sup>7</sup> Tagore, R. (2009). *Shantiniketan* (Vol. 2). Visva-Bharati University, p. 284. (Bengali)

things in the world. Due to our ignorance, we think that our knowledge expressed the world, which is not true. Our knowledge will not be the knowledge anymore if it has no connection with *Brahmā*'s knowledge. Our all power is not our own but the power of *Brahmā*. (Tagore, 2009, Vol. 2, p. 477)

### 3. Contradictions in Advaita: Nature vs. Illusion:

In Advaita Vedanta, natural world does not have true reality but it is the illusory creation of the power '*Māyā* or *Avidyā*'. So, *avidyā* creates illusion and also make us believe in that illusion as real. In Vedanta philosophy peoples get very attracted to the objects of the world due to the power of *avidyā* and that attachment to the physical objects is the cause of not realising our true self which is same with *Brahmā*. But on the other hand, in Tagore philosophy the concept of *Avidyā* and Nature is different from Vedanta. He said that the first thing which *avidyā* does is makes separation of human from nature, and for that separation peoples consider the nature only as the provider of the essential things to them for survival. It is the *avidyā*, cause of man's approach to overpower the natural sources. It is *avidyā* which keep us far away from the unity to all. It is *avidyā* which is the reason of the multiplication of individual wants which makes us slave of material pleasure and unaware about the universal right of all man on every natural resources. So, whereas Vedanta said that the meaning of the true self is to be found by denying individual self and detaching ourself from nature/physical word. But Tagore said in Sadhana "*we must know that the meaning of our self is not to be found in its separateness from God and others, but in the ceaseless realisation of yoga, of union; not on the side of the canvas where it is blank, but on the side where the picture is being painted.*" So, though in Vedanta being too must attach to the natural object is caused by *avidyā* but in Tagore philosophy *avidyā* is the cause of the separation of man from the nature. And according to Tagore the realisation of the absolute being is not possible by being detached from the nature, because nature and its elements are the one with Brahmā. Without all these, *Brahmā* will be incomplete. (Tagore, 1915, p. 46) In Vedanta philosophy, natural world is nothing but an illusion. They have said that it is for *māyā*, we see the varieties in the physical world but the true reality is one. But on the other hand, Tagore said in his philosophy that all the different things in the physical world have their own limitation, but they are neither the illusion nor absolutely separate from the ultimate one reality. In order to that Tagore said; "*If all forms remained obstinately separate, then there would be a fearful loneliness of multitude. But the varied forms, in their very separateness, must carry something which indicates the paradox of their ultimate unity, otherwise there would be no creation.*" So, natural world is nothing but the manifestation of the God's joy, which Vedanta philosophy is lacking in it.<sup>8</sup> Tagore always gave priority to the nature before anything; generally, when we talk about nature in philosophy, it seems that nature is something which is abstract and cosmos. But in Tagore philosophy, it is said that what we call nature is neither philosophical abstraction nor cosmos. Whatever is revealed to man is nature, in fact it is included in man's reality. Through the nature man can feel his full existence; here Tagore said,

*"Man's art and literature are constantly giving expression to this intimate communication of man with his world. And the Vedic poet exclaims in his hymn to the sun; Thou who nourishest the earth, who walkest alone, O sun, withdraw thy rays, reveal thy exceeding beauty to me and let me realize that the Person who is there is the One who I am."* (Tagore, 1922a, p. 115)

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<sup>8</sup> Tagore, R. (1922b). *Creative unity*. Macmillan and Co. Limited, p. 31.

Tagore said that the separation from natural world could not be either pleasurable or helpful to achieve ultimate reality to man. Same Ananda is in the nature and in the soul both. So, we could not say that action is the cause of our separation or bondage, if we say so then it will be difficult for man to realise the Ananda which is in all of the world. He said that the man's truth is not to be achieved within them, they have to come out to the external world. The truth is in the harmony which connect the two worlds (human world and natural world). So, the light, water, food has another purpose beside serving the human. The world is not the creation of illusion but it is something which complete the human feelings of Ananda. Similarly, our soul has also the need of the external world. He always needs the world and its objects, not only make his consciousness alive but for applying it and giving it to the world. He also said who talks about falseness of the world they have no complete idea of the God. If we run away from the world then, where do we get *Brahmā*? We have to feel always that he is with us at everywhere. This world is the creation of the *Brahmā*; he creates this beautiful world as expression of his infinite love. Thus, to reject the natural world is to turn away from the profound embrace of *Brahmā*'s love. Such a denial distances us from the interconnectedness of all existence, severing the sacred bond that weaves together the cosmos and the soul. Embracing the natural realm allows us to fully experience the divine presence that permeates all aspects of life, nurturing a deeper understanding of our place within the universe. (Tagore, 2009, Vol. 2, pp. 263-268) The absolute bring himself to the human in a form of world, so that we could easily get him in our life. This is the reason that we don't need any science to know the power of the world as power of God; we can perceive it. The absolute which is behind everything in the universe is appearing to man as external world. So, we are not only using them but loving them, and not leaving them. They are very close to our heart that if we leave them, then our identity will be lost. Tagore believed that whose world it is, he himself raise up all the beauty of it to man. If we analyse any objects in the world, it will stop us to the *Brahmā*, because he is inside the all. Human egoistic nature always tried to separate human from nature because nature never tried to overpower to man, but man do that. So, what we need to do is not rejecting the nature or conceiving it as the creation of *māyā* (illusion) but as the world having same reality with *Brahmā*. (Tagore, 2009, Vol. 2, pp. 275, 276) It is true that the too much attraction towards the physical objects is the cause of suffering of man's life. But Tagore never look at this world as the cause of our pain, he always says that pain and suffering is not caused by our love to the world but by being separated from the natural world. He said that there is no doubt about the presence of suffering in the world, we should not ask the question about the existence of suffering. We have to find out the way to transmute the suffering into the good. He also said that to know the one truth, man have to suffer. So, according to him we need the world and the connection with it to realise the ultimate one. Our desires of love get satisfied in the world-love, our will gets fulfilled in the world-will, our knowledge gets its value in the world-knowledge. He said in *Shantiniketan*; "Amar e gyaan Sharthak biswagyaan a, amar e shakti sharthak biswashaktite, amar e prem sharthak biswaprem a". So, how can we say that world is not real, it has just practical reality (*vyavaharika satta*). Without the world, the aim of man which is to realise the harmony of unity of all will be meaningless. (Tagore, 2009, Vol. 2, p. 427)

Tagore had a vision for the future when he established his institution at Shantiniketan. His approach to spiritual education, emphasizing the importance of nature to nurture inner energy, holds significant value today. While the modern world often pursues pride, hatred,

greed for wealth, and lust for land, Tagore's teachings and his concern for nature encourage people to rise above individual desires and recognize the consequences of material comforts. Tagore's philosophy can be viewed from two angles: on one hand, he is influenced by Vedanta, drawing inspiration from the Upaniṣads; on the other, he is an advocate of theism. However, there is a key difference between traditional Vedanta and Tagore's perspective. Vedanta presents the idea of an absolute being that dismisses all individual entities in the world, while Tagore describes God as a personal being present in all things. He does not accept the concept of Mitha (neither real nor unreal) reality, nor does he view the world as an illusion. In Vedanta, attachment and *māyā* arise from the world and its objects, suggesting that the absolute is entirely different from the nature of the world. This leads Vedanta to conceptualize an abstract Absolute that is disconnected from the universe. In contrast, Tagore believes that the absolute manifests through the things in the world and that the universe and its objects are part of ultimate reality. He rejects the Vedantic notion of an absolute reality that is separate from the physical world. Tagore presents a "human God," dismissing the idea of the world as an illusion, valuing action, and promising a fulfilling life to those with a religious spirit. (Radhakrishnan, 2015, pp. 20-25) Rabindranath Tagore's view of nature stands in stark contrast to perspectives that see nature as opposed to the self. He holds a positive view of the relationship between spirit and nature, considering both the self and nature as two aspects of the Absolute. Tagore believes that humans should strive toward realizing the world spirit. He asserts that the divine spirit reveals itself through both nature and society. According to Tagore, the absolute spirit shines in both the outer world and our inner selves. He emphasizes the eternal connection between humans and nature, highlighting their spiritual bond. In his work *Sadhana*, he writes,

*"The text of our everyday meditation is the Gayatri, a verse which is considered to be the epitome of all the Vedas. By its help we try to realise the essential unity of the world with the conscious soul of man; we to perceive the unity held together by the one Eternal Spirit, whose power creates the earth, the sky, and the stars, and at the same time irradiates our minds with the light of a consciousness that moves and exists in unbroken continuity with the outer world."* (Radhakrishnan, 2015, p. 32)

#### **4. Tagore's Philosophical Evolution: From Duality to Unity:**

In Tagore philosophy nothing was exempted from the spiritual aspect, in his view all the objects of the world have two side; one is natural and spiritual. Even the 'harmony of all' or 'principle of unity' which is the most important contribution of Tagore in the history of Indian philosophy is been possible due the spiritual aspects of all the existing things in the world. He said; *"the world with the men as one great truth. India put all her emphasis on the harmony that exist between the individual and the universal."* He also felt that our communication with the surrounding thing is being possible due to the connection with them, if they were completely alien to us then no communication would not have possible. Our daily works, thoughts, activities are taking their place because of that connection; in *Sadhana*, Tagore said

*"the great fact is that we are in harmony with nature; that man can think because his thought are in harmony with things; that he can use the force of nature of his own purpose only because his power is in harmony with the power which is universal and that in the long run his purpose never can knock against the purpose which works through nature."* (Tagore, 1915, pp. 7, 8)

In Tagore philosophy *māyā* is been considered as the other side of the *Satyam* or truth. He talks about the two different side of all the objects like; appearance and truth (*māyā* and *Satyam*). So, he believes in dualism of this. So according to him it is not possible to know the appearance independent of truth, then our efforts will be meaningless. He himself said *"Everything has this dualism of 'māyā' and 'satyam', appearance and truth. Words are māyā where they are merely sounds and finite, they are satyam where they are ideas and infinite. Our self is māyā where it is merely individual and finite, where it considers its separateness as absolute; it is satyam where it recognises its essence in the universal and infinite."* So, what we have seen is that, primarily it was dualism but ultimately Tagore came to the unity. Though he said that natural world which is generally conceived as creation of *māyā* and the universal world both have the same reality but ultimately all become union by the love. All are connected since all are the creation of *Brahmā*, in other words everything in the world is the manifestation of the infinite love of *Brahmā*. So, all are connected by one harmony. (Tagore, 1915, p. 49) In order to show the harmony between the all in the world and makes them the part of ultimate reality, he attracted reader attention by giving the example of the Music. He said music has the many numbers of words with their own meaning, but until they combined, the complete song cannot be produced. So, when a music is revealed, it is nothing but the manifestation of its all parts as unity. similarly, the evolution of the world which science talked about is nothing but the unity of all its elements with the absolute. The world which we can perceive is profoundly one with ourselves. To support this point, he said;

*"man misses himself when isolated; he finds his own larger and truer self in his wide human relationship. His multicellular body is born and it dies; his multi-personal humanity is immortal. In this ideal of unity, he realizes the eternal in his life and the boundless in his love."* (Tagore, 1922a, p. 15)

So, it is unique about this material world in Tagore philosophy that the realisation of unity of all is not possible in transcendental world but in this natural world. This could be the most important reason for that, Tagore emphasised upon natural world, and believed in the reality of this world equally as he believed in the absolute reality. Many philosophers have expressed their appreciation for nature as a source of human needs, but Rabindranath Tagore's perspective is distinct. He viewed nature as a living entity, believing that every aspect of it reflects the entirety of existence and is a manifestation of divine love. Tagore established a profound connection between love for nature, spirituality, and human freedom. He intertwined the concepts of unity, love, and perfection as pathways to understanding the divine. In his view, achieving perfection involves experiencing love as a form of perfect oneness. This feeling opens the gateway to the Infinite, where unity among all beings reveals deeper truths. He articulated that this awareness leads to a recognition of the interconnectedness between our inner selves and the greater reality beyond us. Through love and sacrifice, we transcend the self, embracing loss as a pathway to greater fulfilment. In this journey, we discover the profound relationship between our individual existence and the universal whole. (Bandyopadhyay, 2019, p. 139)

At the beginning of the Tagore philosophy, we can see the clear dualism he described, but at the end he comes to the conclusion as all are one. Further support come from him, when he said *"The principle of unity is the mystery of all mysteries."* That means though we have seen the natural world and spiritual world are two different worlds, and creates the duality. But Tagore solved all the questions arises in our mind caused by the existence of

duality, he finds the solution in that One harmony of all. He also said that both worlds are one in essence which take us to the ultimate truth. So, the confusion is due to the many appearances of One. He said here, *"One appears as many, the appearance is the opposite of truth and yet is inseparably related to it."* (Tagore, 1915, p. 54)

### **5. The Implications of Nature on Human Consciousness;**

Our consciousness has a very strong connection with the external world. Development of our consciousness from the individual level to the universal level is considered as the aim of the man in Tagore philosophy. Only through the union with all, man could extend their consciousness to the world consciousness, and the unity will not be united without the nature. That is why Nature is the central theme of Tagore philosophy. In order to that he further said, *"According to the stage of our consciousness we have more or less been able to identify ourselves with this world, if not as a whole, at least in fragments; and our enjoyment dwells in that wherein we feel ourselves thus united. In art we express the delight of this unity by which this world is realized as humanly significant to us."* (Tagore, 1922a, p. 132) Tagore also said that *"whatever is vibrate with life, having come out from life."* So, anything is not separated from our life, that is why the truth is to be found not in different but in the unity. It is true that man used to take advantage of the natural sources for their own purpose, but that does not mean it is the only truth. The truth is that when we separate from nature due to individual desires and ignorance, the nature appear to us as alien. That time our egoistic desires possess our mind and creates the situation where we take machines and other methods to make the profit from the natural resources as much as possible. Even sometimes man themselves is been used as machine due the separation from the nature. This aspect of the truth cannot be ignored. So, without a doubt it is true that our consciousness of the material world as merely sum total of the substances is imperfect. But Tagore never suppress the value of the physical world to achieve the unity. In order to that statement he said,

*"it is perfect when our consciousness realise all things as spiritually one with it, and therefore capable of giving us joy. For us the highest purpose of this world is not merely living in it, knowing it and making use of it, but realising our own selves in it through expansion of sympathy; not alienating ourselves from it and dominating it, but comprehending and uniting it with ourselves in perfect union."* (Tagore, 1922b, pp. 48, 49)

Tagore in his philosophy expressed his immense love towards nature. He never considered the nature only as an unconscious matter but the perfect way to spirituality. As we convey our messages in the nature, it develops our world of personality. According to Tagore, our true personality makes every activity of our life in the harmony of unity. So, developing our personality is the essential things to realise ourself included in the harmony of unity. Natural world and our interaction with it help us lot to develop it. In order to this, in the book of *'Religion of Man'* Tagore said; *"I have expressed my belief that the first stage of my realization was through my feeling of intimacy with Nature- not that Nature which has its channel of information for our mind and physical relationship with our living body, but that which satisfies our personality with manifestations that make our life rich and stimulate our imagination in their harmony of forms, colours, sounds and movements."* (Tagore, 1922a, p. 18) Natural things have also two sides in it; one is merely material and other is spiritual. Even the physical sense organs are not having one function to gain information about the physical objects, but it also connects every other thing with us spiritually. One of the functions of nature is to develop

our consciousness to the universal level. That is why Tagore said that Nature is the most accurate place to the development of the human consciousness. In support to this he said;

*“from the higher vantage of our physical watch-tower we have gained our view, which is not merely information about the location of things but their inter-relation and their unity.”* (Tagore, 1922a, p. 53)

## 6. Conclusion:

In the exploration of the nature paradox inherent in Tagore's philosophy, we have found out that while Advaita Vedanta emphasised upon absolute non-dual reality as *Brahmā* and illusory nature of the physical world. But Tagore's view for nature is different, he encourages a rethinking of identity, where the individual's relationship with nature does not detract from spiritual aspirations but rather enhances them. This view of Tagore opens a new broad road for contemporary spiritual fields. Tagore believed our relationship with the environment as a means of achieving spiritual fulfilment. He emphasised upon the concept of liberation, lies not in detachment from nature, but in recognizing it as an integral of our existence. Tagore believes in two different types of existence. One type is focused on materialistic pleasure, where individuals are drawn to worldly objects to gain enjoyment from them. The other type is centred on love (*prema*), the sacrifice of worldly things, and the realization of unity with the absolute. This perspective emphasizes love for nature, understanding the principle of unity, and feeling a connection with everything in the world. This is known as the universal aspect of humanity. Because of this belief in the duality of man, we cannot fully classify Tagore as an Advaita philosopher. He states, *“There is a duality in man. Of the inner person, behind the outward current of thoughts, feelings and events, but little is known or recked; but for all that, he cannot be got rid of as a factor in life process.”* Although we have these two different aspects of life, there is a connection between them. Without communication between the inner and outer selves, realizing unity with all becomes impossible. Tagore's philosophy also shows that the infinite manifests within the finite. This interconnectedness is crucial; if we neglect one aspect, we risk falling into bondage and experiencing sorrow and pain. He said,

*“When the outward life fails to harmonise with inner life, the dweller within is hurt, and his pain manifests itself in the outer consciousness in a manner to which it is difficult to give a name, or even to describe, and of which the cry is more akin to an inarticulate wail than words with more precise meanings.”*<sup>9</sup>

Therefore, in conclusion, Tagore is not strictly an Advaita Vedāntin but he at the end come to the conclusion that resonate with non-dualism. Tagore's concept of unity from diversity emerges through his understanding of nature and its spiritual significance. He views the natural world as a direct expression of the divine, suggesting that every element in nature carries a fragment of the ultimate reality which makes the difference from Vedāntin. As like Tagore is not align strictly with the non-dualist, similarly he has also rejected a dualist perspective that treats the divine and the worldly as separate. So, Tagore does not believe in the rejection of the individual as Vedanta did. In his philosophy, the ultimate reality is one which include the intrinsic value of Nature and the world as a manifestation of the divine rather than an illusion to be transcended.

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<sup>9</sup> Tagore, R. (2023). *My reminiscences*. Maven Books, p. 200.

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