

Rabindranath Tagore and Buddhism: an analysis

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Rabindranath Tagore, the great poet enriched almost all of the facets of Bengali literature. It is well known that he was a poet of love and spread the message of universal brotherhood. He was a great thinker also and left the traces of his genuine concerns on the imminent political as well as socio-cultural crises by the use of the language of culture.

Lord Buddha's message of love and non-violence had a great impact on his thoughts. He tried to spread the messages through the medium of culture. It is well-accepted fact that the appeal of culture is universal. Therefore we note that the stories of the Jatakas, the memorable episodes in the life of the Buddha were a constant source of inspiration to him. He created popular dramas like 'Chandalika', 'Malini', poems like 'Pujarini', 'Abhisar', 'Nagarlakshmi' etc. thoughtful articles and memorable songs which exercise tremendous effect on the popular culture till this date.

In this paper an analytical discussion will be made on the writings mentioned above.

The objective of the paper is to examine how we, the people of South Asia can cope with the rising tide of Cultural challenges with the creations of Tagore. He showed the ways of how a popular religious tenet could be acceptable to the people belonging to other religions and how the age-old Philosophy comes to help to the breaking up of prejudices and superstitions. In a way Tagore showed the relevance of the Buddhism to the non-Buddhist world as well.

It is evident that culture reflects the aspirations of the age. India experienced the birth pangs of nationalism in the later half of the 19th century. The emerging idea of nation and search for a national hero found expression in his writings.

It is common that readings of history attain an exclusive dimension in the period of the emergence of nationalism. History interprets the contemporary period with the aid of the past and finds out the ways of deliverance. While India was passing through colonial extremities Tagore tried to study the situation with an inner eye into the historical tradition of the country. He was not a historian on the strict sense of the term yet tried to find out the logic of historical episodes. His investigations on the history of Buddhism marked a departure from the European historians since he studied history from the standpoint of the people of India. His search of an ideal hero led him to discover a saint- and social reformer within the Buddha. He appealed for his blessings in the war-torn world and prayed to him to purge the world 'Karunaghana dharanitalo karo kalankasunya'.

In conclusion it may be argued that despite being a literature Tagore made a solid contribution to the development of humanity and felt the tunes of unity among diversity which makes the writings relevant even today.

Key words: Rabindranath Tagore, Buddhism, Language of Culture, Message of Non-violence and Universal Love, Response to the Challenges of Colonialism

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