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INVOCATION

We are fighting for a righteous cause – our right to live with honour and in peace – are not for the sake of self-glory or to rule over others.

- Guru Hargobind Singh

* * * * *

Let us be silent, that we may hear the whisper of God.

- Emerson

* * * * *

It is good, too, that we sometimes suffer opposition, and that men think ill of us and misjudge us, even when we do and mean well. Such things are an aid to humility, and preserve us from pride and vainglory. For we more readily turn to God as our inward witness, when men despise us and think no good of us.

- Thomas à Kempis

Editorial

In the ancient past, the Indian subcontinent was governed by Republics, named after the settlements called 'Janapadas'. It was not a democracy in its truest sense, but the leader was a person chosen by his peers and the position was akin to a kingship that was either usurped by forcibly nor came through inheritance. Even the archaeological sites of the Indus Valley Civilisation do not show any palace that could have housed a monarch. This is in sharp contrast to the unearthed royal palaces and burials of the contemporary civilisations of Egypt and Mesopotamia, which had close interaction with the Indus valley people. Even when this political scenario changed with the emergence of kingdoms and monarchs, the local governance was always in the hands of the village elders. The central authority never meddled with the local guilds of craftsmen, agriculturists, traders or the village councils. Ashokan edicts show that his orders were more advisory and seldom monarchic impositions. If he did interfere in every aspect of life then he would not have erected the tablets and pillars with the teachings of non-violence. He would have directly forced his subjects to conform to the norms. So, all in all, this decentralisation of governance and empowerment of local bodies of citizens had been the tradition of this huge geographical entity, that had otherwise been very loosely bound together, if at all. The concept of a unique culture and polity had always been a foreign idea to this landmass which thrived under its pluralistic traditions, handed down since time immemorial.

The concept of India as a nation is rather new. When our forefathers dreamt of a reawakened India, it was more of a multicultural identity striving to coexist together in a modern ecosphere, ready to compete with the outside world as a united people living in the subcontinent. It was not an idea confined by sectarian, ultra-nationalistic thoughts, but a more universal, humane concept that could place the nation on a firmer footing in the contemporary world. It was an inclusive idea, not an exclusionary perception.

Unfortunately, the struggles for political freedom from a colonising power, struck at the very base of this lofty ideal and the sub-continent got partitioned into two political identities when the British played the card of 'divide and rule' effectively and many fell prey to it. In spite of this tragic bifurcation, the new-born nation of India, adhered to a path of tolerance and adopted a constitution that supported its multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-faith ideals that the leaders of modern India held dear. India became the largest democracy of the world and showed how it could be run democratically, in spite of its innumerable problems. It was because the people believed in the power of democratic principles. The greatest victory was the exercise of universal, adult franchise ushered in the country way back in 1950. The entire world admired the success of this gigantic mission.

Today, the power of this democracy is being eroded. Its greatest strength, the election process, is under question as last month four states of this country went to polls in spite of disenfranchising lakhs of its citizens, barring them from their legitimate right to casting their votes. It is a greater tragedy that the system failed to render justice to these deprived electorates. If all the citizens of a nation cannot be guaranteed of their right, if justice fails to render redressal to those affected by a faulty system, then our democracy will become a mockery.

This brings to our mind the burning question - is it the duty of the government alone to ensure justice? Is it not the combined responsibility of all the citizens to insist that justice is done to their brethren? It is time for us to rekindle our democratic spirit and make the voice of the free citizens heard. There was a time when the colonised nation could rise against the oppressors. Today we are the free citizens of an independent nation. Where is our independent spirit and sovereign voice?

While we think over this unfortunate situation let us also focus on an article entitled 'Tagore – A Saint or A Sage' by Amitava Khastgir that debates on the critical idea whether Tagore, who was one of the greatest advocates of universalism and inclusion, was a sage or a saint. A sage is one who has profound wisdom, insight and understanding of life, while a saint is a person of extreme holiness, virtue who is in a special relationship with the divine. Tagore had a deep understanding of the spirit of India as enshrined in the spirit of our constitution. He could place his homeland in relation with the world order. We end by paying tribute to Bhakta Kabi Madhusudan Rao by Prithwijit Das.

Tagore: A Saint or A Sage?

Dr. Amitava Khastagir

Can Tagore be called a Saint or a Sage? Can he be juxtaposed with Buddha, Samkara, Chaitanya, Kabir, Ramakrishna, Aurobindo? His sovereignty as our greatest poet is beyond dispute, but was he a 'Sadhak' or at any rate a philosopher with a genuine spiritual insight? This issue is crucially important for Brahmos for it is Tagore with his nectar ('amrita') oozing songs, also with his religious sermons, who has kept alive the now-moribund Brahmo Samaj. His vast output, so complex, so multilayered and multifaceted, makes it almost impossible to arrive at a unanimous verdict. Buddhadeb Bose, a great admirer and a perceptive critic of Tagore, makes the following contradictory assessments, curiously in the same treatise.

- 1) 'Whatever else may be, Rabindranath is not a philosopher-poet. One does not need to be initiated in any esoteric theory in order to appreciate him.'
- 2) An analysis of Rabindranath's philosophy of life yields many tenets: the viewpoints of the Upanishadas as also of the bauls and the 'Vaishnavas', dualism and non-dualism, nineteenth century Western humanism. He travels incessantly between the One and the Many, between 'Rupa' and 'Arupa'.

(Kabi Rabindranath; translation by author.)

If his philosophy of life comprises so many philosophical tenets, if Nature, in Buddhadeb Bose's own wonderful description, becomes to him 'the many-splendoured beam of Eternity, the glow of an 'ineffable immanent God', then can he be designated as a mere poet?

Let us consider Tagore's self-assessment in this respect. 'I never regard myself as a **Sadhaka**. I know as certainty that I have no claim as a **Sadhaka** striving for spiritual realization. All my experience in life has been my poetic temperament. I have less proficiency in philosophy than that of an average student...My religion is a poet's religion, all that I feel about it is from vision and not from knowledge. I frankly say that I cannot satisfactorily answer questions about the problem of evil or about what happens after death. And yet, there have come moments when my soul has touched the infinite and has become intensely conscious of it through the illumination of joy.' (Letter to Dilip Kumar Roy, Religion of an Artist.)

Elsewhere he speaks of two selves within each individual; the smaller self or the meaner self (**Chhoto Ami**) and the greater, nobler self (**Baro Ami**). Liberation consists banishing the meaner

self and merging oneself in the greater, nobler self. We the common men and women are all conscious of the co-existence and the conflict of these two selves within us. So, Rabindranath's words ring a bell within us. Rabindranath tells us of his constant endeavor to detach his own true self from the darker, meaner self. 'The individual you call Rabindranath Tagore is very insignificant. He is subject to all the meaner passions, he is a very ordinary person, swayed by every mundane trifle. But my true self disowns him. The 'True I' transcends all those mundane trifles. I see myself merged in the Eternal, the Infinite. My litany (Mantra) is the Upanishadic *Shantam*'.

Tagore expresses this philosophy of his *Sadhana* in an exquisite song which I take the liberty of transcribing in the original (Bengali):

যে আমি ওই ভেসে চলে কালের ঢেউয়ে
আকাশতলে
ওরই পানে দেখছি আমি চেয়ে
ধুলার সাথে, জলের সাথে ফুলের সাথে,
ফলের সাথে
সবার সাথে চলছে ও যে ধৈয়ে ।।
যে যে সদাই বাইরে আছে, দুঃখে সুখে নিত্য
নাচে-
ঢেউ দিয়ে যায়, দোলে যে ঢেউ খেয়ে

একটু ক্ষয়ে ক্ষতি লাগে, একটু ঘায়ে ক্ষত
জাগে -

ওরই পানে দেখছি আমি চেয়ে ।।

যে আমি যায় কেঁদে হেসে তাল দিতেছে

মৃদঙ্গে সে,

অন্য আমি উঠতেছি গান গেয়ে

ও যে সচল ছবির মতো, আমি নীরব কবির

মতো -

ওরই পানে দেখছি আমি চেয়ে ।

এই যে আমি ওই আমি নই, আপন-মাঝে

আপনি যে রই,

যাই নে ভেসে মরণধারা বেয়ে-

মুক্ত আমি, তৃপ্ত আমি, শান্ত আমি, দীপ্ত আমি

ওরই পানে দেখছি আমি চেয়ে ।।

This beautiful song reiterates the well-known Upanishadic image of two birds sitting on a branch; one bird pecking at a luscious fruit, the other bird gazes at it, keeping himself starved.

The word 'reiterates' is to be noted. Tagore was saturated with the spiritual realization of the *Rishis* of the Upanishadas. His own creed was based on the great central tenet of the Vedanta, viz – the oneness of all that is real. But it was with Tagore, a poetic vision rather than a wooden reproduction of a philosophical system. This spiritual realization presented itself to his vision in

the trailing draperies of poetry rather than in the tight-fitting garment of philosophy. ‘The Man, whose inner vision is bathed in an illumination of his consciousness... at once realizes the spiritual unity reigning supreme over all differences... the I am in me realizes its own extension, its own infinity whenever it truly realizes something else ... the fact that *‘we exist’* has its truth in the fact that everything exists and *‘I am’* in me crosses the finite whenever it deeply realizes itself in the *‘Thou art’* limitation of the unlimited ic Personality. God is personal whenever he creates. (Ibid)

This is basically the Vishishtadvaita Vedanta in a nutshell expressed, mutatis mutandis, in Tagore’s poetic vision. Here we should recall the wonderful remark of the great American philosopher William James, who was a great man as well. ‘A man’s vision is the great fact about him. Who cares for Carlyle’s reasons or Schopenhauer’s, or Spencer’s? A philosophy is the expression of a man’s intimate character and all definitions of the universe are but deliberately adopted reactions of human character.’ (A Pluralistic Universe).

The series of sermons compiled as ‘Santiniketan’, the semi-philosophical treatises ‘Sadhana’ and last but not least the trilogy comprising ‘Gitanjali’, ‘Gitimalya’ and ‘Gitali’, represent the golden harvest of Tagore’s middle age. God in this phase, is intensely personal,

the supreme beloved one. A sermon in the ‘Santiniketan’ series begins with the invocation ‘O Lord, demolish all obstacles in the way of love’ (নাথ হে, প্রেমপথে সব বাধা ভাঙ্গিয়া দাও।) All his ways converged in the belief in this beloved Personal God. ‘His emphasis upon activity and personality... the necessity of metaphysical basis for morality... the crown of life is ultimately in affirmation rather than in negation...and that abiding sources of joy are to be found in the communication of the free spirit with the eternal love of God manifested in and through actual experiences of our everyday life... The influence on him of the concrete and positive pantheism of India is greater than that of the negative phase... It is transformation of ordinary values of all values in the interest of spirituality and is not a denial.’ (W.S.Urquhart: Pantheism and the Value of Life.)

Where does Tagore stand vis-à-vis his distinguished contemporary Swami Vivekananda? The query is not irrelevant as Vivekananda has been acclaimed as a Saint as well as a Sage, besides being an Advaita-Vedantist, a propagator of ‘Practical Vedanta’. In contradiction to Tagore, he has been eulogized as someone who ‘lived what he preached.’

It is interesting as well as illuminating to know how Tagore himself viewed the issue. Answering a question by Romain

Rolland, Tagore said: ‘So far as I can make out Vivekananda’s idea was that we must rise higher in our spiritual experience in the domain where neither good nor evil exists. It was because he tried to go beyond good and evil that he could tolerate many religious habits and customs which have nothing spiritual about them. My attitude towards truth is different. Truth cannot afford to be tolerant where it faces positive evil; it is like sunlight which makes the existence of evil germs impossible. Today Indian religious life suffers from the lack of a wholesome spirit of intolerance which is characteristic of creative religion.’ (Rolland and Tagore: Edited by Alex Aronson and Krishna Kripalani.)

Anticipating this point of view, W.S. Urquhart observed (eleven years before Tagore made his standpoint known). ‘We have passed far beyond the doctrine of Vivekananda, according to which good and evil are but obverse and reverse of the same coin. We are no longer asked to admit that the quantities of good and evil are equal and that every increase of good means a corresponding increase in the evil. ... We no longer look upon unrestrained activity as in itself a means of liberation. Sir Rabindranath tells us, as Vivekananda, in consistency, ought also to have told us that “where there is madness of license, the soul ceases to be free. (Ibid)

Can Tagore be called a humanist? The answer to this question depends on whether we identify humanism with the crude pedestrian humanism or ‘positivism’ of August Comte. If we do, the answer would emphatically be in the negative. Repudiating both theology and metaphysics as outdated superstitions – as both have to do with a transcendent reality which is a figment of imagination – Comte offers us, as a proper object of worship, a mirror in which we view the collective image of ourselves!! It is ‘Man’ which is to be adored (with a big capital M!) because there is nothing higher than Man. Tagore’s humanism, if it can be so called, is poles apart from this crude and silly construct. It has been most vividly expressed in the following poem:

ভাব পেতে চায় রূপের মাঝারে অঙ্গ
 রূপ পেতে চায় ভাবের মাঝারে ছাড়া
 অসীম সে চাহে সীমার নিবিড় সঙ্গ
 সীমা হতে চায় অসীমের মাঝে হারা
 প্রলয় সৃজন না জানি এ কার মুক্তি
 ভবে হ’তে রূপে অবিরাম যাওয়া আসা
 বন্ধ ফিরিছে খুঁজিয়া আপন মুক্তি
 মুক্তি মাগিছে বাঁধনের মাঝে বাসা। (আবর্তন)

Even in the final phase of his life (1931-1941), when his religious faith had been severely dented by contemporary social

and political events, Rabindranath never lost his moorings in Upanishadas. The sublime litany which constitutes our *Aradhana* viz *Satyam Jnanam Anantam Brahma*, was not merely meditated upon for him, it had to be assimilated in life through *sadhana*. What was the *sadhana*? To remove the obstacle which stands between the Eternal, the infinite, and our finite selves:

এ আমার আবরণ সহজে স্থলিত হয়ে যাক
চৈতন্যের শুভ্রজ্যোতি

ভেদ করি কুহেলিকা
সত্যের অমৃতরূপ করুক প্রকাশ
সর্ব মানুষের মাঝে
এক চিরমানবের আনন্দকিরণ
চিন্তে মর হোক বিকীরিত

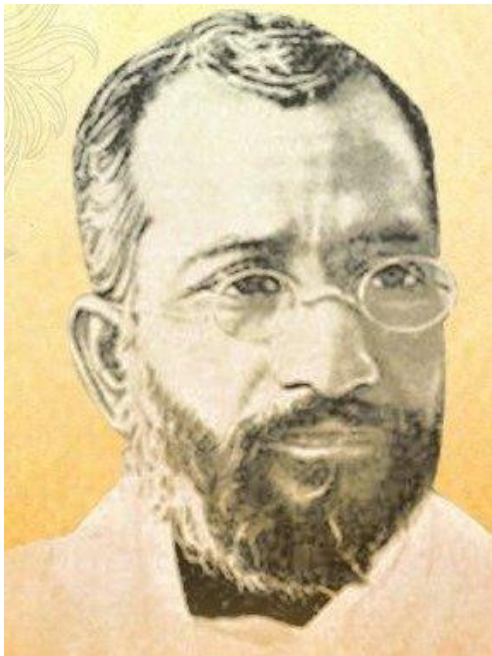
To echo the words of the Bengali doctor in the English version of Gitanjali: He (Rabindranath) is the first among our saints who has not refused to live.

Tribute to Bhakta Kabi Madhusudan Rao

By
Prithwijit Das

Madhusudan Rao, was born on January 29, 1853, in the undivided Puri District of erstwhile Orissa, to Bhagirathi Sing and Ambika Devi, who belonged to the Bratya Marhatta community.

The Puri District School was his alma mater where he began his early education. Here he was influenced by his teacher Radhanath Roy. Under the inspiration of Radhanath Roy and Fakir



Mohan Senapati, who were poets, Madhusudan's poetic inclinations flowered. His early writings featured in Utkal Darpan, a literary magazine

published from Balasore under the patronage of Prince Baikuntha Nath De. Madhusudan Rao was called 'Bhakta Kabi'. His most notable book is 'Chhabila Madhu Barnabodh'. His poem 'Rusi Chitra' had profound influence on Rabindranath Tagore who appreciated the same in his magazine 'Sadhana.' It also marked the beginning of a beautiful bond between them which was based on mutual respect and admiration.

After clearing his Matriculation Examination in 1869, Madhusudan passed his First Arts (FA) in 1871 with First Class distinction marks from Cuttack College. He dedicated his career to education, beginning his professional life as the Head master of Jajpur Middle School. Later, on 29th October, 1869, he joined Baleshwar District School as the second teacher. From 1876 he served as the assistant teacher in Cuttack Collegiate School, finally rising through the ranks to occupy the positions of the Deputy Inspector of Schools, the Head Master of Cuttack Training School in 1893 and Addition Inspector of Schools in 1909.

He embraced Bhrahmoism and was the main strength in propagating the faith in Orissa. He made immense efforts to make Brahmo dharma reach every corner of the country. His efforts in Kolkata particularly bore fruits.

Madhusudan Rao's children were married into reputed families of Bengal. His eldest daughter Basanti Rao was married to Bijay Chandra Majumdar who was a very learned man, whom Madhusudan Rao had invited to work as Headmaster of the school founded by him. Later on, Bijoy Chandra Majumdar went on to become a reputed lawyer in Sambalpur district of Odisha. Many kings and rulers of Orissa (now Odisha) used to seek his advice on various legal matters. He was also well known for his research on Pali, Prakrit, Oriya and Bengali scripts/languages as well as some international ones. Due to Glaucoma however, he lost vision in both eyes and as such decided to return to

Kolkata. He was nevertheless invited by Calcutta University thereafter to teach Bengali and 'History of Literature' to M.A students which he continued for 12 long years despite being blind.

Madhusudan Rao's son Jayanta Rao was a doctor and was married to writer Sukhalata Rao. She was the daughter of Upendra Kishore Ray Chowdury, who apart from being a famous writer and artist was one of the first persons in Kolkata to own a publishing house.

Madhusudan Rao's daughter Abanti Devi was married to the renowned Brahmo patriarch and leader Shivnath Shastri's son Priyanath Bhattacharya. His other son Sukanta Rao was also married to Shivnath Shastri's neice Karuna Devi.

Madhusudan Rao was invited to preside over the All India Theistic Conferences held at Mandhraj, Varanasi and Bankipur but due to failing health he could not attend any of them. He passed away on 28th December 1912.

Brahmo Samaj

254th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Raja Rammohun Roy

The 254th birth anniversary of Raja Rammohun Roy, the maker of modern India and the pioneer of the Indian Renaissance, was solemnly observed on 22nd May 2026 at the foot of his statue on the Maidan, with due reverence and dignity. Floral tributes were offered on behalf of Brahmo Balika Shikshalaya, Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, Bharatbarshiya Brahmo Mandir, Brahmo Sammilan Samaj, Konnagar Brahmo Samaj, Harinavi Brahmo Samaj, Adi Brahmo Samaj, as well as various colleges and other institutions established by the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj.

Students of the Montessori section of Brahmo Balika Shikshalaya rendered songs on the occasion. The divine service was conducted by Sri Amit Das.

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Acknowledgement
For the month of May, 2026
Donation

DN/GL No.	Donor's Name	Occasion	Purpose	Amount (₹)
DN/a - 087	Asish Roy Chowdhury	On the occasion of Late Sutapa Roy Chowdhury Adya Sraddha	Mahila Bhavan Fund	15,000
GL - 1392	Aruni Roy Chowdhury	On the occasion of Adya Sraddha of his mother Late Sutapa Roy Chowdhury	General Fund	30,000
GL- 1393	Dipti Nath, Arimdam Nath , Bidisha Nath	On the Occasion of 3rd death anniversary of Late Dr. Nirmalendu Nath		5,000
GL - 1394	Dhritabrata Bose & Tamali Bose		Jaistha Utsav Fund 2026	1,000
GL - 1395	Sanjib Mookerji		General Fund	1,000
GL - 1396	Sanjib Mookerji		Jaistha Utsav Fund 2026	400
GL - 1397	Biswajit Roy		Jaistha Utsav Fund 2026	1,000
GL - 1399	Subrata Kumar Datta & Surupa Datta		Jaistha Utsav Fund 2026	1,000
GL - 1400	Bijeta Chatterjee on behalf of Late Dipali Halder		General Fund	25,000
DO	Bijeta Chatterjee on behalf of Late Dipali Halder		Brahmo Balika Shikshalaya Development Fund	25,000

136th Session of The Brahmo Conference
Organised By: Darjeeling Brahmo Samaj
Draft Programme Schedule

Date	Programme (*)
Friday 23rd Oct 2026	Registration
	Upasana & Hymns
	Welcome Address: President of 136th All India Brahmo Conference, Address of the Chief Guest Chairman of the Reception Committee
	Break
	Discourse – History of the Darjeeling BS followed by discussion on future development
	Cultural Program
	Dinner
Saturday, 24th Oct 2026	Sankirtan
	Breakfast followed by travel to venue
	Upasana & Hymns
	Break
	Open Forum for participating Brahmo Samajes
	Speech by Kamrul Islam, Bangladesh
	Lunch
	Annual General Meeting of Brahmo Conference (Members Only)
	Annual General Meeting of Brahmo Conference (Members Only)
	Discourse: followed by Q&A
	Tea Break
	Discourse – 2 followed by Q&A
	Vote of Thanks
	Prayer
	Break
	Cultural Programme
	Dinner
Sunday 26th Oct 2026	Sight Seeing followed by a drop to NJP Railway station

* Programmes are subject to changes

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We look forward for your continuing co-operation and support.

Yours truly,

Secretary

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