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146th Rabindra Jayanti & His Gitanjali Inspired Asian Heritage Month

By

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Our homage to Dr. Rabindranath Tagore (1861 – 1941) & there is a tale of the Nobel Laureate great poet's two National Anthems of two countries. Recently, Indian and Bangladesh governments and social organizations at home and abroad bowed their heads in reverence to Nobel laureate and great poet Rabindranath Tagore. Without him, we would not have our national anthems in India and Bangladesh. It is most remarkable that Tagore and his Gitanjali, poems songs and essays have inspired South Asian psyche in distress and thrilled in happiness. In the Gitanjali Tagore writes, "Deliverance is not for me in renunciation. I feel the embrace of freedom in a thousand bonds of delight. Yes, all my illusions will burn into illumination of joy, and all my desires ripen into fruits of love." He added, "Yet stars will watch at night, and morning rise as before and hours heave like sea waves casting up pleasures and pains. The same stream of life that runs through my veins night and day runs through the world and dances in rhythmic measures."

We read in the Contact dated 10 Jan. to Jan. 16, 2007 entitled "Amitabh Bachchan's ode to Tagore." It is also most remarkable that Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore's two songs are national anthems of (1) India and (2) Bangladesh. History inspired us that Tagore, through his myriad creative and reflective works, has served as 'cultural icon' or paradigm among Bangla speaking people in South Asia.

Tagore writes, "Who are you, reader, reading my poems a hundred years hence? I can not send you one single flower from this wealth of the spring, one single streak of gold from yonder clouds./ Open your doors and look abroad." None in India or elsewhere could depict the Buddhist theme so beautifully and variedly as the genius of Tagore. Tagore said, "Buddha my Lord, My master thy birth place, truly here where cruel is the world of men, for thy mercy is to fill the blank of their utter failure, to help them who have lost their faith and betrayed their trust, to forget their malignant day. At the end of his austerities, the lord Buddha rose up and manifested himself to the world. In the glory of that manifestation, the true India was revealed. The light spread far beyond the geographical boundaries of India to eternalize his advent in the history of mankind."

The curse of tragedy of caste system and human rights which deep rooted in India's superstition as Hindu religion found a poignantly clear expression in his poems and songs. Tagore did never approve of any sort of slavery whether in religion, society and state. In his Gitanjali Tagore writes, "Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;/ Where knowledge is free; / Where the world has not been broken up into/ fragments by narrow domestic walls .../ Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit ... / Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake."

In 1919 following the Amritsar massacre in Punjab of 400 Indian demonstrators by British troops, Sir Tagore renounced his knighthood (title Sir). Tagore's creative output tells us a lot about renaissance man. The variety qualities and quantity are unbelievable. As a writer, Tagore primarily worked in Bengali, but after his success with Gitanjali, he translated many of his other works into English. Tagore writes, "I want just a small place where I shall try to build up a community of men and women who will recognize no geographical boundaries. They will know one country and that country will comprise the entire race." Tagore exemplifies the ideals important to us of Goodness.

It is also most remarkable that Rabindranath Tagore was very interested in Buddhism and prayed to the Buddha, "The world today is wild with the delirium of hatred,/ the conflicts are cruel and unceasing, / Crooked are its paths, tangled its meshes of greed./ All creatures are crying for a manifestation of thine eternal voice of hope./ Let love's lotus with its inexhaustible treasure of honey open its petals in thy light. / O Serene, O Free, in thy immeasurable mercy and goodness wipe away all dark stains from the heart of this Earth. Tagore added it is time, therefore, to remember the Buddha who sought to dissuade men from the folly of hoping to achieve success by violence and asked them to conquer anger by kindness."

When we remember Dr. Rabindranath Tagore's great role, our mind is filled with a sense glory and pride which we should cherish for all time to come. He is more alive today than ever before by his songs, essays, dramas, ideas and thoughts.

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