

**TAGOR'S CONVICTION OF NATIONALISM TOWARDS NATION AND SOCIETY IN
POST INDEPENDENCE INDIA**

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Abstract:

The discussion about the nation and nationalism of Rabindranath Tagore acquires quite different meaning. Lot of debates has been done among the academicians and scholars. Various belief are there about Tagore's nationalism which would be only understood closely only after examining his holistic approach to humanity. The article attempts to show how Tagore stand against the dirty politics of caste & religion for the development of India The article asserts that Tagore's harangue averse nationalist in a recurrent monogram in his lectures as well as writings. According to Tagore the nation peculiarly and entirely Western. Article also discussed his alternative conception of modernity which would take into statements inclusive and symbiotic interaction between culture that can take the word towards harmony and universal fellowship. The articles will try to scrutinize Tagore's nationalism and his different components of the culture, history, idea of nationhood, language and society.

Keywords - Interaction, symbiotic, harangue, holistic, nationhood

Introduction:

It is undeniable that Indianness, embodying some unique qualities, was precious to Tagore, whether it is called love of homeland or local attachment. He ascribed at times very noble features to the sub continent, which it should be remembered became three nations. For instance, he wrote in the *Swadeshi Sama* (circa 1904) that the 'realisation of the one in many, attaining unity in diversity- this is the inherent quality of Bharatvarsha'. This India never equated difference with animosity, did not deem aliens to be enemies. Because of this it aspires to accommodate everybody within a wide system, mindful of the importance of each in its assigned place:

"Since India possesses this quality, we will never imagine any society to be our enemy and be fearful. With ever new conflicts we will aspire for the expansion of ourselves. Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, Christians will not die fighting each other in the case of India - here they will discover a harmony. This harmony will not be non Hindu; in fact it will be Hindu in its essential sense. The limbs and organs of this harmony may come also from alien countries; however its life and soul shall be Indian."

This love for a homeland is considered to be an ethical concept fundamental to all nationalism. It is significant that love acquires a universal character in Tagore. It is of course evident that it does not allow any scope for chauvinism; overzealous patriots by trying to cite it for their benefit will inevitably cause the vandalism of the entire idea. But it still remains that Tagore cherished a regional-national sentiment, which has elsewhere been defined as 'conducive to nationalism of a defensive and intensive rather than of an aggressive and extensive nature', and an idea that 'in regions of mixed nationality...may serve as a unifying element for rival nationalities and also as a check on the development of a conscious and too ardent nationalism. Rabindranath Tagore was prominent in introducing Indian culture to the West and vice versa, and he is generally regarded as the outstanding creative artist of early 20th-century India. He composed the National Anthem of India and won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913 and became the first non- European to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature. Apart from *Jana Gana Mana* (the National Anthem of India), his composition "*Amar Shonar Bangla*" was adopted as the National Anthem of Bangladesh and the National Anthem of Sri Lanka was inspired by one of his works. With an idea of establishing an experimental school he shifted to Santiniketan from Kolkata in 1901 and founded an ashram there and followed the traditional Guru-Shishya method of teaching. Rabindranath Tagore hoped that the revival of this ancient method of teaching would prove beneficial when compared to the modernized method.

The question of Rabindranath Tagore and nationalism has been a much debated one among historians, scholars and academicians. The various opinions about Tagore's 'anti-nationalism', internationalism, ambivalent nationalism' could be understood through a closer observation of Tagore's understanding of the history of Indian society and civilization at large, as also his holistic approach to humanity. (Chakraborti, 2019)

Tagore Assessment of Nationalism

Nationalism was an important book by Rabindranath Tagore. Nationalism was translated into English from the Bengali by Tagore himself and the first volume included three lectures delivered in Japan, in 1916. It was first published in 1917 from Macmillan in United States, New York. The book includes three lectures by Tagore "Nationalism in the West", "Nationalism in Japan" and the third and final- "Nationalism in India". The volume concludes with the Tagore poem - "The Sunset of the Century" - written on the last day of last century, meaning the eve of 1900 or 1899 evening. Tagore wanted to dedicate the 1917 edition to then US President Woodro Wilson, but was not allowed to, as he was then thought of "being involved in anti-British plots hatched by Indian revolutionaries in America". Tagore's perception of the dual role, one positive, "the spirit of the West" and the other negative, "the nation of the West" was the starting point of his analysis of nationalism as it developed in the West. (Bhattacharay, 1997) He praised the West in the field of literature and art which he described as

"Titanic in its uniting power, sweeping the height and the depth of the universe"

and also mentioned the presence of outstanding individuals fighting for the cause of humanity. However, behind this motivation also lay the awful aspect,

"using all her power of greatness for ends, which are against the infinite and eternal in Man" (Tagore, 1917)

Like the notion of true freedom. Tagore found the idea of nationalism equally misleading and counter-productive to the realization of true freedom by individuals all over the world. In the backdrop of the rise of militant and aggressive nationalistic aspirations in certain countries of Europe during first half of the twentieth century. Tagore wanted to explain the birth of the idea of nationalism as a product of modern science and technological advancements in that continent.

In the wake of rapid advancements in the field of science and technology, the resultant industrial revolution motivated people to join hand together to seemingly maximize the benefits accruing from this invention. (Rai, 2019) He insisted that such mechanical coming together of people without any moral or social considerations ingrained dehumanizing tendencies in them, as a result of which their nationalism became frightening and aggressive in nature the process of evolution of nationalism in Europe for political and economic purposes inherently carried within it the characteristics of morally unacceptable, politically aggressive and economically insatiable form of nationalism whose impact on the world would invariably be inimical to the larger interests of humanity. In final analysis, when the lust for power and money takes a concentrated form, it creates an urge for unusual organisation of people to make their forays outside their place to explore and exploit the material resources of that region. Thus, nationalism ordinarily boils down to colonialism and fierce wars between two or more than two nations to secure a strong foothold in lucrative colonies.

Depicting examples from British imperialism. Tagore explained the various dehumanizing and exploitative features of colonialism in India, the most disgraceful of which happens to be the transformation of the personality of man from being his own to become that of the colonizers. Nationalism in the form of imperialism and colonialism, Tagore calls it the 'spirit of the West'. The spirit of the West, in fact, lies in providing the rest of world the values like freedom, equality, fraternity and remarkable creativity in the field of art and literature. The rise of nationalism, on the other hand, was conditioned by the nation of the West' by which Tagore meant an entity least human and least spiritual, as its focus remained centred on expanding the tentacles of nationalism through scourges of war, weapons and violence. Tagore, therefore, emphasized the existence of the two seemingly antithetical notions in the forms of the spirit of the West and the nation of the West. (Rai,

2019). The strong criticism of certain aspects of the Indian national movement by Tagore put him in an uncomfortable position when a number of nationalists in the country were fighting for the cause of India's independence. They pointed out the futility of the notion of nationalism advocated by Tagore in case of India on the plea that Indian nationalism was rooted in the consciousness of the people's distinct aspiration of getting independence from the yoke of British colonialism. Tagore strongly declares in his first lecture that "*We are no nation ourselves!*" He was not agreeing with the western concept of the nation, which holds that,

"A nation, in the sense of political and economic union of the people, is that aspect which a whole population assumes when organised for a mechanical purpose. Society as such has no hidden purpose. It is an end in itself. It is a spontaneous expression of man as a social being. It is a natural regulation of human relationships, so that men can develop ideas of life in cooperation with one another. It has also political side, but this is only for a special purpose. It is for self-preservation "

According to him a naturally-built human society is more human than the so-called artificially created nationhood. He calls the present-day nationhood is an "evil". In the words of Tagore.

"When this organisation of politics and commerce, whose other name is Nation, becomes all powerful at the cost of the harmony of the higher social life, then it is an evil day for humanity."

In this nation, "Punishments are meted out leaving a trail of miseries across a large bleeding tract of the human heart." Taking the example of the British nation whose government as a nation, he rules that it is

"Organised self-interest of a whole people, where it is least human and least spiritual". He emphasizes that "this nationalism is a cruel epidemic of evil that is sweeping over human world of the present age, eating into its moral vitality".(Chakraborti, 2019)

In between the World War I and World War II the extreme nationalism of Hitler and Mussolini was responsible for more than 10 million deaths. That was the reason why Tagore warned of nationalism as an "evil epidemic". He says:

"The nation is the greatest evil for the Nation, that all its precautions are against it, and any new birth of its fellow in the world is always followed in its mind by the dread of a new peril!"

His poem the Sunset of the Century attacked on the notion of nationalism.

He wrote, "The last sun of the century sets amidst the blood red clouds of the West and the whirlwind of hatred. The naked passion of self love of Nations, in its drunken delirium of greed is dancing to the clash of steel and the howling verses of vengeance. The hungry self of the Nation shall burst in a violence of fury from its own. shameless feeding. For it has made the world its food. And licking it, crunching it, and swallowing it in big morsels, It swells and swells Till in the midst of its unholy feast descends the sudden heaven piercing its heart of grossness."

An anti-nationalitarian tendency is very evident from these words of the pm.

In fact, Tagore's greatest legacy lies in the fact that three nation-states of the world today - namely. India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, owe their national anthems to this anti-nationalitarian brain. And this poses a serious challenge in the study of Tagore's ideas on nation and nationalism. Tagore was opposed to the concept of nationalism in its military or aggressive sense. He termed it as hyper-nationalism. He was a strong believer of an inter-active world, a world of dialogue among civilizations and societies. The feeling of nationalism being the root cause of war, aggression and death remains at the core of Tagore's teachings. Yet, he is considered as the greatest nationalist during the Bengali renaissance. Tagore pleaded for an inter-civilization alliance- a synthesis of the East and the West, and a symbiosis of all world civilization in the larger context. He was unhappy with the colonial powers in their colonies in the pursuit of their own political and economic interests. (Chakrabarty, Bidyut & Rajenda Kumar Pandey, 2009)

Tagore's Nation and Nationalism

Tagore was very clear about his idea of nation. According to Tagore a nation is "A political and economic union of people" and "is that aspect which a whole population assumes when organised for a mechanical purpose".

For Tagore, the institution of the nation is essentially modern and western. The "mechanical purpose" of the nation state is reflected in its political form. This nation has a purpose - the purpose of self determination and enforcement in the human civilization and fulfilment of its political and economic interests-and this is ensured by the institution of the State.

Tagore's conceptualization of nationalism is very similar to that of Earnest Gellner (anthropologist) who emphasizes on an ideology of nationalism which creates nations rather than preexisting nations developing nationalism. Tagore says that when this organisation of politics and commerce becomes all powerful at the cost of the higher social life, then it is an evil day for humanity. Tagore denounces the dehumanized and mechanical Western civilization and the nation that developed out of it to the indigenous societal groups in India. According to Tagore. "Nationalism" is the organised self interest of a people, where it is least human and least spiritual. Tagore saw nationalism as a threat to humanity, because with its tendency for the material and the rational, it flattened over the human spirit, human morality and human emotion. obscuring his human side under the shadow of soulless organisation. Tagore was of the opinion that nationalism is only an organization of politics and commerce, which brings and harvests of wealth by spreading greedy, selfishness, power and prosperity. Nationalism, according to Tagore, is not-a spontaneous self expression of man as social being. where human relationships are naturally regulated, so that men can develop ideals of life in cooperation with one another, but rather a political and commercial union of a group of people, in which they congregate to maximise their profit, progress and Power.

Tagore gave the greatest example of the perverted Nation in the British colonialism in India. The British colonialism found its moral justification on the grounds of nationalism. The colonizers justified their colonial adventures and exploits as the white man's burden to spread civilization to the rest of the world. However the developing countries were only turned into 'hunting grounds' for mere self interests of the colonising nation. Tagore says that all the problems in colonial India are rooted in one simple fact that is the abstract being, the Nation [the English nation] is ruling India. Nationalism, thus, as Tagore points out is a great menace; it is the particular thing which for years had been at the bottom of India's troubles. He gave more importance to freedom and wanted the realization of freedom to start flowing from the individual to community and then from community to universe, ultimately it will reach from the universe to infinity (Urwin 1968).

Tagore's Nationalism in India an Interactional Issue

Tagore criticised the concept of a nation state, but he was even more opposed to India as a society joining this League of Nations and carriage of nationalism. In the word of Tagore, "We, in India, must make up our minds that we cannot borrow other people's history, and that if we stifle our own we are committing suicide. When you borrow things that do not belong to your life, they only serve to crush your life... I believe that it does India no good to compete with Western civilization in its own field.... India is no beggar of the West. Our real problem in India is not political. It is social".

In his opinion the West has seen exclusive domination of politics on social ideals - and this is what India is, very wrongly trying to imitate. The very foundations of civilisations in the West and in India was based on completely different circumstances, challenged and supported by completely different and innumerable factors. Civilizations in the West or Europe were founded under circumstances of racial unity and limited natural resources. In this regard, communities within the Western civilization very naturally inclined to political and commercial aggressiveness uniting amongst themselves on the basis of their common identity to secure resources that were deemed essential for quotidian survival. And this spirit of nationalism continued to the colonial period - where nation-states organised and engaged in exploiting the whole world. The Indian civilization, on the other hand, came into being under entirely opposite circumstances. India had the very big problem of race that was continually posed to her different stages of history. This does not mean that India was the only nation to witness the problem of race. America also witnessed it, where it systematically eliminated the natives Red

Indians. The problem of race that had been posed before India has never been dealt with a violent extermination of minorities.

According to Tagore, India has never had a real sense of nationalism. Indians educated in Western history and borrowed it from the west. This would do no good to the Indian civilization. Indians must understand that the history of Man is the history of both the East and the West. India must not consider herself merely as a 'beggar of the West'. India too has her own contribution to make in the history of civilizations.

Tagore is of the opinion that this basis of unity in India has come forth through the saints like Kabir, Nanak and Chaitanya, who preached one God to all races in the subcontinent. Commercial and aggressive nationalism as it developed in the West would be serious for India to borrow. Tagore emphasized on the geographical vastness of the country and the social diversity that is present in it. In his opinion India is many countries packed in one geographical receptacle. It is contrary to Europe and really is-one country made into many. According to Tagore aggressive inilitant nationalism would politically break up the already socially divided India.

Tagore named Gandhi as the Mahatma for the first time, and in reciprocation, Gandhi conferred Tagore with the title of Gurudev. But their political and social ideas were different. Tagore never believed in Gandhi's nationalist movement against the British. He rather argued for eradicating the caste system, fostering religious unity through education and social empowerment. Tagore actively participated in the Swadeshi movement of 1905 by delivering lectures and composing patriotic songs. In fact, the movement started from the edge of the Tagore house with Tagore singing his song - Ogo maa tomal dekhe dekhe ankhi na fiire [My eyes are never satisfied enough beholding your sight, my motherland). The best example of Tagore's idea of nationalism can be derived from his participation in Bengal's Swadeshi movement. Although Tagore was apolitical, he saw no harm in the Swadeshi movement following the partition of Bengal in 1905. (Tagore, 1917) Tagore found that this movement was full of blind national smugness and anti-west outlook. Though he participated in the Swadeshi movement but the burning of foreign cloth seemed insane to him. He said the poor of Bengal could not afford the more expensive home made products. He was also unhappy with the rise of extremist groups in Bengal like the Anusilan Samiti, who wanted to liberate India from the clutches of foreign by resorting to violence. When in 1908 Khudiram Bose thrown a bomb killing two innocent British civilians, Tagore withdrew himself from the Swadeshi movement. This sudden withdrawal of Tagore was criticized by many nationalists as an act of betrayal. In response to this criticism, he wrote the novels Ghore Baire [The Home and The World] and Gora, where makes clear on how exploitation, violence and killing become ritual in the name of nationalism. He advocates the importance of the national movement (which might as well transcend into the international) but one with a constructive ideal at its core, rather than a 'spirit of violence which lay dormant in the 'psychology of the West' and has finally roused itself and desecrated the spirit of Man. (Rabindranath Tagore's last public address in Santiniketan on his eighteenth birthday, 1941)

Gora: Nationalism as Civil Culture Broadness

Gora is an symbol of Indian nationalism, representing Tagore's own view where by religious division is replaced by worship of India's natural and cultural diversity. This highlights the crisis of personal identity. Gora brings out this crisis of identity as a result of the East-West encounter. The novel was written in the backdrop of the Sepoy Mutiny in 1857, when discontent against oppressive British rule was rising. In Gora. Tagore explains on the civilizational aspects of nationalism that is needed in a multicultural, multiethnic and multireligious country like India. The idea of Bharatvarsha is a key concept in Gora. It is not merely a geographical area; it is identified with faith, religion, tradition, customs and the indigenous values of the subcontinent. Bharatvarsha is a mystical- entity that encompasses time itself, appropriating the distant past and the even farther future, while weaving a particular thread in a particular pattern in the vast destiny of mankind. For Gora. Hinduism was synonymous with India - he grows up to become a militant Hindu. Gora finds his culture threatened

by British colonialism, missionaries and non-Hindu Indians. He is at once lost and found. He loses his caste but finds himself as an Indian, above caste, creed and religion, forging new bonds of love and mutual respect. At the end of the novel Gora asks to be taught the mantra of that deity who belongs to all-Hindu, Muslim, Khrishtan, Brahma - the doors of whose temple are never closed to any person of any caste or race - the deity not only of the Hindus but of Bharatvarsha. The novel thus is not just a search for self-identity but for secularism that is -inclusive and indigenous at the same time. His aggressive nationalism is directed particularly against the Brahma Movement.

Ghore Baire (Home and the World): An open response to Tagore's "nationalist" critics: It was believed that the west was materially superior while the east was spiritually superior. The sciences of the West can be adopted while retaining the spirituality of Eastern culture. Tagore's Ghore Baire (Home and the World) is a product of the modernization and self-identity crisis of that time. Continued colonial rule created a sense of inferiority among the Bengali male folk. That was the reason a desire for freedom from the colonial yoke became imminent. This produced an unstable relationship not only between ruler and ruled but among the subjects themselves. Caste, class and religious groups set out to acquire new identities. The modernization programme of the British was supported by the wife and the growing middle class who saw western education and industrialization as a means to move up socially and secure economic benefits. The introduction of women's education and social reform movements brought colonial rule into households. The desire for political and social autonomy clearly infected the family relationships. In "Home and the World" Tagore, through the political dynamics created, articulates a nationalism that is humane and in which all Indians could participate as equals, where men and women would be tied together by trust, truth and love. In this way, Tagore was striving to dissociate himself from the general belief of nationalism and trying to associate it with ideas such as peace, harmony and welfare. He argues further that if anyway India decides to contribute the world; it should be only in the form of humanity. (Ravande) He opined that the very idea of nationalism is non- Indian or anti-Indian. He saw the seed of nationalism in India as an onslaught against Indian civilization which was religiously and culturally plural in nature. The story of 'Ghore Baire demonstrates how nationalism led to disruption and decay of community life. (Nandy, 2006)

Tagore's Unconventional Construction to Nation

Tagore attempted to suggest a societal fabric that is best suited to the Indian scenario. While he criticizes the Nation-State as "An economic or political union of a people" which a whole population assumes when organized for a mechanical purpose, he sees the concept of "Samaj" [society].

The institution of society is a spontaneous self expression of man as a social being. It is the only natural regulation of human relationships, where men can develop ideals of life in cooperation with one another. It has also a political side, but this is only for a special purpose. It is for self preservation. Tagore, therefore, clearly argues for a natural form of society for India, devoid of the Western institution of nation-state and the notion of political nationalism. The absence of the psychological feeling of nationalism would ensure the absence of extremist identity based nationalism. The freedom of mind & spirit, self-realization, and live together with Harmony is the main pillars of Tagore's education in which every learner is unique and possesses some unique qualities; through this unique traits one can handle the hurdles of life and achieve success in life. Tagore believes that, one of the main aims of education is to prepare the individual for the service of the nation and education stands for human regeneration, cultural representation, harmony and intellectualism. Educational institutions should build on the power of thinking and imagination in an individual and help turn herself / himself into a self-sustained building block of human society and a creative canvas of nation on the whole, (Sridevi, 2022) He said that if we look at the historical journey of different civilizations, it was the political and not social system which was predominant. However, in the case of India and China, the society took the dominant position and political system was subservient to it. Both these two countries flourished through the collective role of society.

(Rabindranath Tagore, 2005) He emphasized the fact that it should be the society and not lust for power, resources, and colony that a nation should aspire for. Here Tagore noticeably indicates that India should restore its spiritual genius and should not run madly after the material things. (R. 2015)

Conclusion:

It was Tagore's belief that to be truly modern, we need to liberate ourselves from the constraints of nationalist ideology so that we can express ourselves freely in the process of becoming full spiritual beings. This alternative vision of peace, harmony and the spiritual unity of humankind seems more relevant now than ever before. Tagore determinedly emphasizes on racial and religious unity. He urges all Indians to unite across race, class and religion, losing their difference, and standing above the dusty politics, to unite in the constructive progress of their motherland. Tagore maintained that India's immediate problems were social and cultural and not political. India must constantly strive to resolve her burden of heterogeneity. by evolving out of these contradictions, which would be a great synthesis of all. In this process, India must address the caste issue. The caste system has become too rigid and taken a magnetic hold on the minds of the people; what was once meant to introduce a social order by accommodating the various racial groups in India, has now become a gigantic system of coldblooded repression. India ought to come out of this social stagnation by educating the people, only when the immovable walls of society were removed, or made flexible, will India regain her vitality and dynamism as a society and find true freedom. What is the purpose of political freedom when the elites in society are exploiting the lower classes, especially the untouchables so ruthlessly? Tagore was of the view that such unity and plurality of consciousness could be achieved only through proper education of the people, eradication of poverty through modernisation and cultivation of freedom of thought and imagination. Tagore was constant envisioning a free India-free from the fetters of materialism, nationalism as well as religious and racial orthodoxy actively seeking a common destiny with the rest of mankind and constantly evolving towards a global society.

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15. Tagore, 'Swadeshi Samaj' in Rabindra Rachanabali, Kolkata: Visva Bharati Granthan Bibhag, 125th anniversary edition, 1986, p. 640.
16. Tagore, Nationalism, p. 80. Goethe had similarly asked Luden during the German uprising: 'But is the people really awake? Does it know what it wants and what it can achieve? And is every movement an uprising? Does he arise who is forcibly stirred up? ...You say Freedom. Perhaps it would be better if you were to call it liberation...'. See Rudolph Rocker, Nationalism and Culture, (tr.) Ray E. Chase, California: Rocker Publications Committee, 1937, p. 204.

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