

CHAPTER - IV

Tagore's Ideas on 'Nationalism' and 'Internationalism'.

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I N T R O D U C T I O N

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), the youngest son of Maharshi (great Saint) Debendranath Tagore, the grandson of Prince Dwarkanath Tagore, was the brightest among the other brilliant members of this great family of Bengal, settled at Jorasanko in Calcutta, the capital of British India at that time, during a period of stress and strain after 1857, ⁽¹⁾ the first war of Indian independence.

The period in which Rabindranath was born, revealed the potentialities of the growth of political movements alongwith the advancement of 'political ideas' and organisation of 'Political associations'. The first half of the 19th century 'may justly be regarded as the greatest contribution of Bengal towards the freedom movement'. ⁽²⁾ The impact of British rule, the modern western culture was first felt in Bengal and produced an awakening known usually as 'Bengal Renaissance'. ⁽³⁾ The introduction and progress of the English education had cumulative effects in bringing about national consciousness never known before. ⁽⁴⁾ According to Andrews, 'into this rich heritage the young poet' (Rabindranath) entered, and he has done more than any one else to make this ideal a living inspiration in Bengal'; ⁽⁵⁾ in other words, he played an important role in arousing the feeling of nationalism through his writings.

Nationalism in India, like its counterparts in Europe in the 19th century, was an urban phenomenon. It came as a direct penetration of British political authority and political economy into the traditional economy of India giving birth to the cities like Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. The colonial experiments transformed this rudiment of a trading mart into the seat of political and economic power and the magnet of rural population. (6) The best index of social mobilisation is provided by the rate of urbanisation. (7) Rabindranath's Calcutta, at that time, brought about a new city-bred English-educated and professional elite which helped and expedited the process of social change, gave birth to what came to be known as the ideology of 'nationalism' in India. So Calcutta was the 'Centre of Bengal Renaissance', and Rabindranath was an eminent Calcuttan.

The main carriers of nationalist ideologies had always been the intelligentsia who formulated, analysed and criticised ideas of nationalism. In every country these intellectuals, through their literature, educational and cultural activities paved the way for the growth of nationalism. It was here that as an eminent intelligentsia, Rabindra Nath played an important role. In Bengal, two different trends had emerged on the scene before the advent of Tagore. The one was led by Rammohun Roy (1772-1833), David Hare (1775-1842), Dwarkanath Tagore (1794-1846), Debendranath Tagore (1817-1905), Akshay Kr. Datta (1920-86) and Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, to name a few, who were moderates in approach. However, they undertook sincerely socio-economic and political transformation

of the traditional Hindu Society in two ways, one, by the introduction of English education, and the other, by transmitting the past glory of India through the use of vernacular and press.

Another group, known as 'Young Bengal', more radical than the former, 'patterned themselves on the traditions of French Revolution and English radicalism'. The leader, an Anglo-Indian, Henry Louis Vivian Derozio (1890-31), included the protests against the treatment of labour in Mauritius, and wanted the inclusion, in the judicial system, of English as court language. Their organs were the 'Enquirer' and 'Jnananveshan' (Search after wisdom), 'The Bengal Spectator'. The prominent personalities were; Krishna Mohan Banerjee (1813-85), Ram Gopal Ghosh (1815-68), Rasik Krishna Mallick (1810-58), Peari Chand Mitra (1814-83), Rajendra Lal Mitra and others.

The second half of the century provided creative literature in the shape of the poetry of Madhusudan Datta, the drama of Dinabandhu Mitra and the works of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. Experiments were also made in popular styles in the literature of Kali Prasanna Sinha, Dwarkanath Bidyabhusan, Rajendra Lal Mitra and others. (8) Rabindranath was influenced by these groups and later reconciled these two different trends by providing a synthesis.

On the other hand, during the second half of the 19th century, the political pressure also gathered momentum. (9)

'British India Society' was formed in England, in July 1839 along

with the publication of a journal named 'British Indian Advocate'. 'Bengal British India Society' was formed in Calcutta. In 1851, on October 20, The British Indian Association was established amalgamating both the former associations. (10) Since this Association, aristocratic in composition could not keep pace with the growth of nationalism, the Indian League was established, reflecting, for the first time, the awakening of the people to political life. (11) The desire to form a strong public opinion, achieve unification of common political interests and attempt for Hindu Muslim unity led to the birth of the Indian Association in Calcutta in July 1876. The Indian Association met in Calcutta in 1883 and 1885 when the Congress was in session in Bombay. R. C. Majumdar, an eminent historian, sums up, 'The National Conference was the crowning glory of the Indian Association, and marked the climax of the political movement in Bengal, ... gave the first impulse and pattern for an All India Movement which took a concrete shape in the Indian National Congress'. (12) Rabindranath was 24 years of age when the Indian National Congress was established. The rise of nationalism in the 19th century Bengal had all those salient features which are required at the formative shape, such as, the formation of social groups of bourgeoisie and intelligentsia engaged in the search for national - identity. Furthermore, the rise and growth of political organisations also emerged on the scene. What Rabindranath represented was the demand of the situation.

The process of Renaissance found momentum in the

rise of a new economic class. Feudalism was being replaced by the emergence of a new class, the merchants, mainly responsible for financing social and nationalist movements of the period. The political and economic policies reflected the penetration of British Capitalism in three phases of trading, industrial and financial. The capitalist nation has a high sense of patriotism and nationalism. (13) It is a well-known fact that the first school where the bourgeoisie learned nationalism is the market.

The family background:

Dwarkanath Tagore, the grand father of Rabindranath, 'was the first commercial magnet of modern India to build up business enterprises on European lines. (14) He had helped Rammohun in his social reforms, spent a large sum for running press, the first Indian member of ^{the} Asiatic Society. There was no public institution or cause at that time for which Dwarkanath had not donated. Tagore's father, Debendranath, was truly a moral heir to Rammohun whose mission he continued to fulfil. He took initiative in publishing 'Tatwabodhini Patrika' in 1843, the first of its kind to express the glorious heritage of India (15) through vernacular.

Rabindranath, it is said, was more influenced by his father, but, even then, other members of the family had great influences on him, since most of them constituted a galaxy of intellectual stars of the 19th century Bengal. Good family background is useful but Rabindranath grew up in one house where all

the surging tides of Indian Renaissance might flow round his daily life. (16)

In his own words, 'The whole atmosphere of our home was permeated with the spirit of creation'. Furthermore, he expressed that 'many a foreign custom would appear to have gained entry into his family but at its heart flamed national pride.' (18)

The description of the use of 'Pyjama' and 'Achkan' by the male members revealed Mughal heritage, accompanied with European dress and furniture by prince Dwarkanath and Satyendranath (the first Indian I.C.S.) made the representation of ^{the} Hindu Muslim and English customs complete. (19)

As to the religious background, the story went that Muslims degraded their holy caste (Pir ali) Brahmin, and Christian their family tile (Thakur) which generated 'a fusion of three great strands of culture - Hindu, Muslim and Christian - which have made modern India what it is.' (20) The family represented the main ideology and contents of nationalism, such as cosmopolitanism, secularism accompanied with the synthesis of the East and West. This he inherited out of his family background as a child which was later on enriched.

I. Tagore's ideas on Nationalism:

A. Sociological Ideas on Nationalism:

Tagore, himself a product of Bengal Renaissance, was aware of the plight of the Indians. He had clear knowledge of the fact that India had ceased to be creative culturally and politically and was not concerned about the loss of her freedom. Religious movements such as 'Brahmo Samaj', as defence mechanism to revive and

reassert old cultures, was on the scene doing considerable cultural, humanitarian and social work in Bengal whose impact was also felt in other parts of India. It went to Tagore's credit that he supported this movement and was assigned an important role by his father to play in that movement. According to him, 'love of the country was not the characteristic of that time and the educated men then kept at arm's length both the language and thought of their native land.' (21) They, on the other hand, undermined the Indian heritage by remaining quite ignorant of their glorious past and also irresponsible to the people's cause. This led Tagore to search, and provide national identity and the process continued throughout his life.

His views on nationalism - a critique of three social groups:

In his account, he identified three social groups of persons; the Western educated political leaders; the Western educated intellectuals, and the Western oriented rulers, mostly Zamindars (Landlords), whose works were to serve their foreign masters. So he wrote; love of the country was not the concern of these sections of people. He criticised them in most of his writings because they managed to forget to take stock of the warmth of human relationship that existed in India. Criticising the attitude of these three groups of people he wrote many articles and poems to impress upon them the immediate need of the establishment of living linkage with the common people. Dr. Arobinda Poddar sums up that two main currents flew in his thinking, one against

those who follow and copy British political and social culture in India, and the other, the need of finding identity in the cultural heritage of India.' (22) According to Tagore, if 'we attach too much importance to the applause of the Britishmen, we shall have to get rid of much in us that is good, and to accept from them much that is bad'. (23) He was constantly addressed to provide national identity, the need of the hour and demand of the country. Whenever a dominant colonial system is imposed on a nation there arise conflicts in beliefs, roles, government and other activities. (24) The period which preceded Tagore in India, hugged the trappings of new servitude and culturally clung to the shackles of the old. When Tagore emerged on the scene, those who had gained Western education, were intoxicated by it and found fault with everything that was old. It was the 'age of toadies and reactionaries, those who aped on Western ways and those who sought consolation in the bondage of immemorial tradition and dogma. (25)

Leaders:

To him, the political leaders of the period failed to enthuse the people and their flattery of the British rule was out of the tune to the search of national identity. In an essay 'English vs. Indians' (26) he explained clearly how Indians were looked down upon by the Britishers and advised them to be one with the masses. In the year 1898, in an article, Mukherjee vs. Banerjee, (27) he exposed the competition among the landlords and political leaders in securing more favour by appeasement.

Later on, in his two poems, 'Vikhayang Naiba Naiba
(28) Cha' (No begging), and 'Unnatilakshan' (the sign of progress),
(29) he put forward the view that politicians should stop begging and
(30) instead should cultivate the popular support. His publications,
during the last quarter of the 19th century, exposed the hollow-
ness of these intellectuals on the ground that 'their way of life
was neither useful to them nor to the people'. This was the main
theme narrated in many articles but 'chechie Bola' (Shouting) (31) and
(32) 'Jihwa Asphalan (Lecturing) deserve special mention. In the
former he asked these leaders to measure the impact of their
'shouting' on the masses, since the masses did not take them to
be their own. In the 'lecturing', he reminded them that only
'lecturing' would not do and they should find access to the people.
His insistence that political leaders should represent the cause of
people, reflected the aspirations of the people even in the last
quarter of the 19th century when the ideology of nationalism was
yet to take off. This clearly indicated his basic adherence to
democracy. He believed in the supreme power of the people, mass
participation, and wanted their aspirations fulfilled. To be one
with mass, according to Tagore, should be the basic qualification
of Indian leadership.

In the year 1898, the meeting of the Bengal Provin-
cial Congress Committee was held in Dacca under the presidentship
of Rev. K. C. Banerjee. Rabindranath also attended the conference.
What dissatisfied him most was that the major concern of the
conference was over food and lodging of the delegates. They were

not serious in discussing the main problems and the deliberation was entirely in English. When he insisted over the use of 'Bengali' in the Provincial Conference he was rubuked for his weak English. However, in 1908 at Pabna Conference, he delivered his Presidential speech, for the first time in the history of Congress, in Bengali. (33) In the area of education, he emphasised the use of the mother-tongue and though a non-Hindi man, in a letter to Gandhi dated 18th February 1918 wrote, 'of course Hindi is the only possible national language for inter-provincial inter-course in India.' (34)

Rabindranath, right from the start, had never supported the agitational movement of the leaders. Najma Jasmin Chowdhury criticised him that for fighting imperialism such movement at the initial stage was useful and hence should not have been criticised by him. The Congress at that time, according to Chowdhury, was quasi-political and hence it was not possible to launch the mass movement. There are reasons which can be put forward in support of Tagore, since 1857 the anti-colonial movement was, in one form or the other, going on but without teeth. It was the demand of the situation which had been echoed in the writings of Tagore. Tagore's protest came on every crucial issue earlier than the other political leaders throughout his life. 'A Critique of Colonial India' by Sumit Sarkar, illustrates very many examples that the nationalist movement in the 19th century was not actually what we have been traditionally digesting. In

knowing the period, the writings of Tagore, criticising the then leadership strongly helped to grasp the then condition and also to some extent helped those leaders to stand on their feet. He taught his people to cherish and take pride in their own heritage and also encouraged them to break the fetters of tradition. (35)

Landlords as agents of British rule in India:

Tagore also criticised the landlords who accumulated wealth by exploiting common people and also compromised national interest by seeking favour from the British establishment. On 29th December, 1883, there was a meeting of the Zamindars in the Town-hall Calcutta. He published an article 'Town-haller Tamasha (Farce at Town-hall)'. (36) Quite a few Englishmen attended the meeting and the Zamindars danced to the tune of Englishmen's assurances, showed their teeth to British masters. In another satirical essay 'Rajtika', (37) (Royal Honour) he depicted the story of Nabendusekhar, the only son of an anglicised Zamindar, toeing the footsteps of his father in paying servitude to the British rule. Over-servitude made Nabendusekhar an object of big fun even before his sister-in-laws. On false pretext, he was sent to the District Magistrate by the in-laws. After, paying tips to the peon he entered the DM's office where D.M. addressed him 'You are a howling fool'. Even thereafter, he contributed to the Congress fund and hoped, that by remaining loyal to the authority, he would be awarded a title sometime in the future.

British Educated Youth:

Tagore's criticism of the English educated youth of that period occupied a prominent place in his search for national identity. Tagore's 'entire activity is permeated with the idea of national liberation, of the struggle for the spiritual and political liberation ...' (38)

He was very much against the copying of British style. In search of identity of the nation, he wrote as early as 1898, in his satirical essay 'Kot and Chapkan', (39) (Coat and Trousers), the need of wearing national dress. His elder brother, Jyotirindranath was very much occupied with search of an agreed national dress. In 'Kot and Chapkan', he questioned the progressiveness of Indian Sahibs while wearing the English dress but not allowing their wives to use the British dress. He rebuked them for being enslaved by British costumes and not being sincere to own culture. In the 1890s, he wrote a series of stories expressing his sympathy with the popular masses and hatred for the oppressors. In another essay, 'Nakaler Nakal', (40) (imitation for imitation), based on his visit to Darjeeling in 1901, he compared his Bengali bretheren in complete suit with clowns moving in the court of the king of mountains i.e. the Himalayas. To him, the imitation of British was negation of the national identity. Aurobindo Ghosh, in his 'Indu Prakash' magazine wrote an article 'New lamp for old' criticising favour seeker Indians. If we compare Tagore with Aurobindo, we find commonality in quality,

tone, and intensity in the search of national identity.

The establishment of the Indian National Congress in 1885 brought a change on the political scene. In the year 1886, his political work 'Kadi O Kamal', (Sharps and the flats), was published. In the volume he exposed fanaticism and proved that he was the master of the caustic irony, and his patriotic admonitions. In one poem 'Bangabhumi', (Bengal), he emphasised that the motherland should not expect anything from these English educated Indians because they had no love for the motherland and no preparations for making sacrifices to the cause of Swaraj. In another, 'Bengaler Prati', (Towards Bengal), he maintained that he would not sing because his brothers were slept and busy in merry-making. A song, 'Tabu parine Sapite Pran, (Still unable to sacrifice life), though we are insulted on every steps', became quite popular. (41)

His social view revealed that British rule in India was not in the interest of Indians and the social groups : Leaders, rulers and Western educated youth who were pro-establishment should address themselves to the demand of nation.

B. Political Ideas on Nationalism:

In the year 1893, in an article 'Engraj O Bharat Basi' ('English vs Indians') read under the Presidentship of Bankim Chandra at Chaitanya Library, Calcutta, he placed his account of nationalism. He expressed that the British had failed to make India their home, not learnt the language of the people

and as such were still foreigners. He pointed out the discourtesy shown to Indians in their behaviour. He always condemned the underrating of Indians i.e. racial discrimination. Arabinda Poddar mentioned, it is desirable that Rabindranath's condemnation of under rating Indians by the British Raj should also be taken into account. That criticism is quite elaborate embracing social, political, economic and cultural area. From another angle, it can be emphasised that undemocratic, unsecular, racial, anti-growth role of British raj working only for profit earning through their agents (i.e. zamindars, officials, pro-British elites) was the main concern of Tagore. The same view was ventilated time and again in his voluminous writings, speeches and activities. He was, thus, the vehement critic of British rule in India and wanted the end of the rule. He believed, the time had come when our leaders should declare that they were one with the masses and should cut off their relations with the ruling class as they were culprits. He could pinpoint the colonial rule in India as the root of all the degradations on all the fronts. Tagore loved humanity at large, so he could not digest the underrating of Indians by the Britishers. The racial discrimination and undemocratic behaviour found in Tagore a vehement critic of British rule in India. In this regard, he always impressed upon Indian leaders to give up Sycophancy of Britishers and instead establish living linkage with the common people of the motherland. He further held, everything British was not good from the pragmatic point of view too. It was essential to adopt 'Swadeshi' in

certain regards in the interest of the nation. Thus, Tagore produced a balanced political view where he recommended accepting everything good from any source but that would ultimately depend on the demand of the situation.

Dr. Arabinda Poddar observed that Tagore condemned the Indians who crossed the limit of praising the Britishers in social and political affairs, and instead suggested cultivation of love of nation and nationalism'.⁽⁴²⁾ His emphasis over the establishment of relationship directly with the people instead of sycophancy of ^{the} British put him in the forefront by the end of the nineteenth century for his contribution to the sound growth of nationalism. His evaluation of foreign rule in India was not to applause everything that was British because ⁱⁿ doing that one would have to accept many things that were bad. He supported the use of Bengali as the medium of instruction when Rammohun had emphasised the use of English,⁽⁴³⁾ which early put him as more progressive than even Rammohun. Rabindranath's lecture on 'Swadeshi Samaj', followed by his two other important articles, 'Safaltar Sadupay' (The Right way to success), 'Abastha O Vyahastha' (The condition and the remedial measures), revealed a most powerful mind at work. In his 'Swadeshi Samaj', he reiterated; 'we will not by choice use either foreign dress or foreign goods, not write letters to Bengalee in English, refrain from use of English food, English dress, English music and drinks on festive occasions. Tagore proposed all these in 1904. When Bengal was partitioned, the Swadeshi movement widened. Tagore had also

electrifying involvement in the movement though for a short period of roughly about three months. Right from the 'Bharati' days to 'Bangadarshan' he criticised these social groups.

He had been 'the most successful in spotting out the worst defects of British rule.'⁽⁴⁴⁾ However, the trend changed with the change in the national and international situation along with his age and experience. His early views were forcefully loaded with emotions and patriotic feelings. In the first poem of his life he hailed the victory of India 'Hok Bharater Joy' (worshipping India's victory) which reflected his adolescent patriotism. Three years later, at the age of 17, he recited a poem on 'Delhi Durbar' (Delhi-Court), criticising British rule for the oppression of Indians from Cape Comorin to the Himalayas. At the age of 18, he returned from England and remarked, what pained him most 'was the religious aberrations of Britain.'⁽⁴⁵⁾ In the second trip he found something lacking and hastened to return with remark, 'I am tired to this place, tired even of the beautiful faces. I have therefore decided to return.'⁽⁴⁶⁾

Another episode relates to 'Cuttack dinner' where he felt insulted. He remarked, 'I can not tell what a profound distress overpowered my heart. I seemed to be seated by the feet of my insulted motherland.'⁽⁴⁷⁾ Comparing Indian tradition he held: 'how richly true for us is our India of the ages; how cheap and false the hollow courtesies of an English dinner party'.⁽⁴⁸⁾ In a letter to Indira Debi, next day, he mentioned; 'I have not yet

forgotten the audacity of the Englishmen. These English people evacuated Red Indians from America, killed helpless Australians, even innocent Australian women like beasts. They kill innocent Indians and are not deemed guilty by their judges but preach sacredness of life and high standard of morals'. This reaction showed how seriously and sincerely he was a nationalist. He could not digest the insult and one month later wrote one article 'Rajnitir Dwidha,' (Dilemma of Politics) mentioning therein, they are not as much civilized outside Europe as inside their continent. They have reserved slaps for non-Christians, take possession of their holdings, forcibly cut their crops, milk their cows and kill their calves for their kitchen. (40) In a very hard tone and strong language he ridiculed the Britishers depicting their double personality in 'Rajnitir Dwisha' (Dilemma in Politics) in the year 1873. In another poem 'E. bar phirao more' (Turn me now again) he expressed his anger and hate against the British rule. Dr. Arambinda Poddar very rightly reminded us to Goethe's lines, to express Tagore's feelings 'And if man falls speechless in his torment, God give me to say what I suffer,' (50) and adds even any other poet of the calibre of Rabindranath or Goethe could have sung the same spirit of freedom from colonial rule.

In another article, 'Apamaner Pratikar' (51) (Redress to Insult), he advised the British to be vegetarian and follow the principle of 'Ahimsa Paramo Dharma', that non-violence is the best religion, because the character of non-vegetarians, responsible for eating by killing animals mercilessly and their histori-

cal background for killing even human beings, do not justify the preaching of non-violence. This process went on and on. In another article 'Prasangakatha', (the context story), ⁽⁵²⁾ he exposed the behaviour of ^{the} British that they did not behave with ^{the} Germans, Italians and other European people living in Britain on equal terms and hated the Jews. In another article, 'Raja O Praja', (The king and the subjects) he reiterated that how their civilization, based on force, would bring about destruction of the whole civilization. In 1898, the sedition Bill was passed to stop all nationalist agitation and Tilak was arrested. Tagore, the day before the Bill became an Act, read his famous paper, 'Kantharodh' (The Throttle) ⁽⁵³⁾ at a public meeting in Calcutta and condemned Puna killings. In another article, the same year in Bharati entitled 'Abdarer Ine' ⁽⁵⁴⁾ he vehemently criticised the increase in the import tax. Lord Curzon had arranged the Delhi Durbar to felicitate the emperor on his visit to this country. Tagore questioned the very justification of the occasion. ⁽⁵⁵⁾ However, during the 'Bangadarshan' days, a shift is marked from earlier 'Sadhana' and 'Bharati' publication days. In his three essays 'Rashtranity' and 'Dharmanity', (Politics and Religion), Rajakutumha, (the royal family), Ghusaghusi, (the boxing) he narrated, how the justice was denied to Indians. In his article 'Atukti' (excess) in 'Bangadarshan' and important periodical of the early 20th century he expressed that millions of Indians suffered from epidemic and famine and were denied even their basic rights.

Tagore's political view clearly reflected the dark-

side of the British rule in India. In the 'Diary of a Western Traveller', he clearly pointed out the character of the military rule of India, the exploitation of India in economic, and commercial terms without having care for food famine and epidemics. Therefore, according to Tagore, the real motive behind was making England wealthier by exploiting India. His political philosophy developed with age and experience, but constantly he was anti-colonial i.e. anti-imperialist, and wanted national freedom. His political analysis was full of such examples. In the prime of his poetic life, his overtones were emotional and patriotic. Though they changed later, what remained permanent was his evaluation of British rule in India responsible for Indian degradation. He never lost faith in the people, their language and their heritage. He equally advised the Britishers to remove their defects.

Towards the end of 1915, Mrs. Besant formed 'Home Rule League' in Madras and Tilak started 'National League in Bombay. The poet protested against the internment order against Mrs. Besant and wrote in an open letter. 'In this crisis the only European who shared our sorrow incurring the anger and decision of her countrymen, is Mrs. Besant who supported the self government'. In his article 'Kartar Ichhay Karma', (Work, as the Master wills), he pleaded that the contention 'only fit can rule' makes us to think no country in the world was fit for independence.

On the eve of the Montague Declaration, while

liberals were pleased to declare it as 'Magna Carta' for India, extremists took it to be totally unsatisfactory. Rabindranath held, though the declaration was no doubt a great one but that would not suffice, and instead favoured the struggle for attaining real independence.

Rowlatt Act and the episode of Jallianawalla Bagh massacre found in Tagore a profound fighter for the cause of the nation. On 12.4.1919, he wrote an open letter to Gandhiji which read 'I can tolerate the process of the heaven but no more I can tolerate the process of the earth. The Punjabi turmoil has burnt me within.' In a letter to Chelmsford, on the 30th May, 1919, he renounced the knighthood. The letter was a voice of protest before the world, showing the helplessness of India's British subjects, the disproportionate severity of punishment inflicted upon the unfortunate people of India. So he wrote that 'the time has come when badges of honour make our shame glaring ... and I on my part wish to stand shorn of all such distinctions. (57) Tagore's condemnation was not equally responded to by any of the contemporary leaders. He also addressed a letter to Jinnah on 13.4.20 on the episode on its anniversary. (58)

He condemned, the brutalities of the British authorities in Chittagong on / 30th August, 1931, and Hijli Jail in September 1931 where two prisoners were killed by guards. The poet sent an open letter to the press which was refused by 'The Statesman' but was published in 'The Amrita Bazar Patrika'.

pre-capitalist society, but in the direction not full-blooded bourgeoisie modernity, but a weak and distorted caricature of the same.' He further holds, 'this is not the conventionally accepted view of Rammohun, but this interpretation has been entirely based on published and fairly well known materials'.⁽⁶¹⁾ In case of Young Bengal Movement, the author holds, 'there is, first, the very obvious fact that the Derozians were never able to organise anything like a real campaign on any social reform issue'.⁽⁶²⁾ According to Sarkar 'the lack of integration between national and social discontent stands out in fact as the crucial structural limitations of the Swadeshi Movement'.⁽⁶³⁾ It further reveals, through analysis of social composition, the territorial aristocracy of Bengal formed a potent influence on the ruling side. 39% of Congress delegates were lawyers (1892-1909) and bankers and the /merchants also formed support.⁽⁶⁴⁾ The break-through towards a recognizably nationalist ideology through patriotic literature 'Hindu Mela', and economic analysis often went hand in hand with Hindu revivalism. Things changed radically for a few years with the 'Swadeshi Movement', though even here any complete identification of extremism with Hindu revivalism would be over⁽⁶⁵⁾ simplistic.

Tagore was a patriot who loved the country and the people. In the Brahmo Samaj Movement, he took active interest. His participation, however, was much more in the literary area, and as we have seen, a lot of articles were written to make western educated persons to think in terms of national identity. Leaders

were asked to grow contact with the masses. Sometimes, he actively participated in the popular movements such as 'Swadeshi Movement', also attended Congress meeting, and wrote a series of articles on political questions in 'Sadhana', 'Bharati', and 'Bangadarshan', magazines. His novels, dramas and poems always reflected such ideas which were quite conducive to the growth of Indian nationalism. His greatness is in the fact that his works reflected the moods and aspirations of millions of Indian peasants during the national liberation movement of the late 19th and the early 20th centuries. (66)

He had been the most successful in spotting the worst defects of ^{the} British rule. (67) He wrote a great deal on social and political questions. It would be desirable to compare him with Bankim Chandra, one of the first systematic expounders of the principles of nationalism. To Bankim, Indians lacked the natural desire of liberty; the lack of solidarity in Hindu Society, but from contacts with the British, they discovered the true basis of liberty and national solidarity. Rabindranath was a contemporary of Bankim Chandra but of course quite junior to him in age. His sociological thought is more modern than that of Bankim. He identified three groups as discussed above, and wanted that they should grow living linkage with the mass and was much more forceful in pointing out the defects of Britishers as well as British rule in India. In that sense, Tagore represents the next generation, and he has often wrote his indebtedness to the literary revolution of the period under Bankim's leadership. On the otherhand, Tagore's

nationalism was less aggressive and less communal than that of
(68)
Bankim.

Among the modern writers, he had an uncommon distinction, in the sense, that while sophisticated Bengali intellectuals delighted in his composition, the simple unlettered sang his song. The contemporary Renaissance in Indian languages is due largely to
(69)
his inspiration.

C. Secular Idea of Nationalism:

The idea that the rise of nationalism coincides with the decline in the hold of the religion is the prominent attribute of nationalism. This has been the case in Europe, 'where wars of religion gave way to the wars of nation'; it has now become more important that a man was a Frenchman or German than that he was a
(70)
Catholic or a Protestant. Emerson held that in none of the Western European countries, save perhaps Ireland, did religion appear
(71)
to be important in the formation of nation and state But in the Colonies, 'wherever the imperial West intruded, the Christianity of the Whiteman ... marked him off from the people among whom they
(72)
came and emphasised their own religion. In case of India, duality prevailed between the ruler and the ruled on one front and on the other, discrimination was observed in case of Hindus and Muslims in order to reap benefit out of the feud. Further, the rise of nationalism has been preceded by a revival and reformula-
(73)
tion of basic religious principles. This was the case in Europe and in India, challenged by the Christian British, Indians

undertook revivals of 'Hinduism' and 'Islam'.

Religion under feudal society always played an important part and in case of India, 'religion' and 'nationality' overlapped. This led to diversion of united struggle since communal disunity was looming large. (74) After the Mutiny of 1857, the British government in India made an attempt to suppress Muslim leaders in order to let the Muslims forget their past glory in order to make them servile to the British regime. After the Mutiny, for a long while, Muslims remained under the shadow, poor and discouraged community. (75) The clever and mischievous propaganda was started on these lines to create hostility between the Hindus and the Muslims. (76) For some decades the Muslims remained villainous, the Hindus pampered subject. After the advent of Indian National Congress, due to large scale Hindu participation in it, the emphasis changed. 'The Hindu became suspect and the Muslim loyalties were cultivated as a counterpoise. (77) Even Surendranath Banerjee held, 'our critics regarded the Indian National Congress as a Hindu organisation, (78) and the Muslim view was 'as to how Muslims can be expected to join in the activities of the Indian National Congress which was largely in the hands of Hindus of Bengal and Maharashtra'. (79)

Rabindranath, born in post-Mutiny years, could develop his ideas over Hindu-Muslim unity from the days of editorship of 'Sadhana' i.e. from quite early part of his life. He appeared on the scene with a clean slate. His approach was

between the infinite ideal of perfection and the eternal continuity to its realisation. (83) He never supported isolationism rather he preferred mutual intercourse between the different societies.

During the Middle Ages, the contribution of Muslims to India's culture was not negligible, according to Tagore. The Muslims had come to India from outside, laden with store of knowledge, and with the idea of religious democracy of Islam. In our music, our architecture, our picture and our literature the impact of Islam was in abundance. Tagore pointed out that those who had studied the lives and writings of our medieval saints, and all the great religious monuments that sprang up during the period, knew how deep was our debt to this foreign current that had so intimately mingled with our life. Further, he compared the values of both the religious societies and suggested that unity among Muslims was far superior to Hindus. In his words, 'there is unity in Moslem society as the religious teachings pervade it; there is inequality in Hindu society through the age-old injunctions. Moslem society is more consolidated than Hindu society. (84) A Hindu is known by convention while a Muslim is defined by his religion. Tagore produced a very realistic account of Hindu - Muslim relationship. Being a Hindu, he was more conscious of self-criticism than to find fault with Muslims. Tagore was equally conscious of the achievement and contribution of Muslims to Indian art, literature, music and architecture. He had all praise for the 'equality' and 'unity' of the Muslim society-a

human approach indeed. It could have been of greater service to the cause of national integration, if others could have joined him in producing such a reasonable picture.

Eminent thinker and literateur, Bankim Chandra, pointed out that the growth of Bengali culture took place under the Pathans but with the arrival of Akbar the growth ceased. He blamed the Mughals in general and Akbar in particular. Rabindranath referred to Akbar, time and again, for his achievement in general, and for Hindu-Muslim unity in particular. (85)

It is further encouraging to note that though Rabindranath had close contact with Rajnarayan Bose, one of the chief organisers of 'Hindu Mela', Bankim Chandra, the fiery exponent of Hindu nationalism, Debendranath Tagore, who wanted to place the purified Hinduism above all other religion. They could not check Rabindranath from having an independent view. His was the 'enlightened', 'realist' view which could only immediately revitalise the integrity and the unity of the nation. Probodh Sen rightly pointed out that the problem of Hindu-Muslim relation should be impartially and secularly discussed. It can be said that Rabindranath was the only exception to this. (86)

The philosophy behind the solution is a humanitarian one. The problem remained that man is different in colour, language, nature, behaviour, creed and religion but humanity is great in this diversity. Tagore held, 'whoever lives in India, whoever has come to India, we shall be one by accommodating all. This will

solve in India the great problem of the world'. In the same article, Rabindranath suggested, 'will the country by adopting welfare measures overcome the suspicion of these who suspect you, defeat the jealousy of those who are jealous of you? Strike at the bolted door again and again. Do not go away in independence, in sheer disdain, human heart can not refuse human heart all time to come.'⁽⁸⁷⁾

He prescribed that the spread of education could alone lead one to get rid of the prevailing situation. So Rabindranath was an exception to the rule, in combating communal problem. He cited the example of Europe, which emerged into the modern world out of the darkness of the medievalism with the extension of knowledge and devotion to truth. In the same way, Hindus and Muslims will have to break away from the limitations.

He did not like the ideas of those leaders, like Surendranath Banerjee and many others, who favoured amity and rapprochement only on political front. Rabindranath, digging deep into the problem, emphasised, 'mere political necessity was unimportant; it is for the sake of humanity, for the growth of our soul, that we should turn our mind towards the spiritual unity of men,'⁽⁸⁸⁾ not for entrenching ourselves behind barriers but for meeting in mutual understanding and trust on the common field of co-operation'. So writes Sachin Sen, Tagore's political biographer, 'the vision of India at peace, growing in fullness of heart but not crippled by any differences, was the contribution of Tagore.'⁽⁸⁹⁾

He pointed out, if there were real differences, they

could not be spirited away by jugglery if we ignored the facts the facts would ignore our convenience. We failed because we invited Muslims for serving a purpose, for alliance for immediate object of mutual self-interest, 'but these alliances like political alliances ... are only transitory but in constant danger of ending in violent reaction.'⁽⁹⁰⁾ Like Europe, he held, 'all the suffering that rise out in the breast of India ... are rooted in ignorance, caste distinction, religious animosity, lack of initiative and material weakness, all cling round lack of education.'⁽⁹¹⁾ In his words, 'I could never have believed that even within ten years time lakhs of people ... could not only be literate but given the dignity of manhood. Here they exert themselves as much for all other races as for their own.'⁽⁹²⁾ In the above mentioned views, it appeared that he wanted reconstruction of the society with the mass involvement so that like Russia India might contribute to the world 'with so many races, so many antagonistic religions at last I know that ours too could work.'⁽⁹³⁾ He was so encouraged that he held, 'I shall never believe in the formula of difficulties.'⁽⁹⁴⁾ So he declared, 'let us unite not inspite of differences, but through them, let all human races keep their own personalities, and yet come together, not in uniformity that is dead but in unity i.e. living. This is the global as well as national view of Tagore. In his words: 'We are all here to cooperate in the making of Greater India.'⁽⁹⁵⁾

Right from 'the Swadeshi' days, he advised that good relationship between the Hindus and Muslims could be established by

solving the problem, socially, culturally, economically and not only politically'. Wrote Nepal Mazumdar, ⁽⁹⁶⁾ the conflict between Hindus and Muslims which existed before the emergence of British power in India continued in larger proportion under the British rule and was there as still the major stress and strain of Indian polity. But the prescription offered by Tagore revealed certain everlasting panacea.

When Jadunath Sarkar, a great historian, observed that 'Shivaji has shown that the tree of Hinduism is not really dead, ... it can put forth new leaves and branches, it can again lift its head upto the skies,' ⁽⁹⁷⁾ Bankim found in Akbar not much for the growth of Bengal. Partition of Bengal came as a mark of separation between the two communities. Rabindranath marched ahead with the powerful logic that India was the land of those who lived here and the Muslims had also contributed very much to the growth of India. He also explained, side by side, that Hindu society had ceased culturally and infairness Muslims had much more at their command than the Hindus to offer. Hindus should get rid of casteism, and backwardness and should invite the Muslims to join mainstream in such a way so that they did not feel alienated.

He rightly observed that the liberation from colonial yoke would not solve communalism. So he preferred, 'as in Switzerland, the people of different stocks have forgotten their differences and united together, India would have to do the same.' ⁽⁹⁸⁾ Both Hindus and Muslims had been guided by their reli-

gions but more important, according to Tagore, was economic inequality the two communities faced. So he suggested, in the interest of India, not the union of both the communities, but also equality of status and of opportunity, i.e. not the equality of the Wrestlers, but social equality was essential. Interpreting 'Mopla' rebellion of Kerala, he held Nambudir Brahmins responsible for hating the Muslims and not vice-versa. The whole relationship was based on ignorance, which Indians according to Tagore, had made the King. He therefore, suggested that we should fight ignorance (99) unreal and the ghost unreasonable. On this line, Tagore wrote so many articles which increased the fund of friendship between the two communities. He took note of 'Divide and Rule' policy being followed by the British Government of India and always condemned the same.

Tagore was criticised for his secular views and interpretation of Indian history, even by his close friends like Pramatha Chowdhury and Shibnath Sastri, veteran leaders of Brahmo-Samaj. But Tagore emphasised not only the ways but also the means to gain considerable government posts for the Muslims. In his words, 'let us pray whole heartedly the favour we (Hindu) enjoyed be showered on the Muslims.' (100) The whole problem, he wanted to solve on humanitarian ground. In an essay Lokhit (Public welfare), he argued that "there lay difference between a man and man, between community and community but the common courtesy demands non-exposition of these differences uncompoundedly." (101) In his essay, 'Choto-O-Bado', (small or big), he asked each and everyone to remain peaceful. In 'Sadupay'

(honest means), he emphasised unity. In 'Banga Bibhag', (Bengal partition), 'Abastha O Vyavastha'⁽¹⁰²⁾, (Condition and remedies), he proposed for a Village Council to be equally represented by the Hindus and the Muslims, a democratic approach, suggested as early as 1905. His life was the best example of uniting both the communities.

D. Ideas on National Reconstruction:

The fundamental tenet of Tagore's political philosophy is self-reliance.⁽¹⁰³⁾ He was quite familiar with the problems of national life and 'had the vision of a statesman and in fact, was one of the greatest political philosophers of our age.'⁽¹⁰⁴⁾

Attaining political independence, as Tagore stressed time and again, would be a very important step but not the only step for the country to true freedom. He ascribed decisive significance to economic self-sufficiency, because India was plagued by famine, millions of Indians died in starvation. So he emphasised, in order to make political progress real, the underdogs of our society must be helped to become men.⁽¹⁰⁵⁾

When his father asked him to look after the interest of the estate (Zamindari), he came in direct contact with the peasants whom he described as patient, submissive, family-loving and eternally exploited, helpless, infantine children of providence. He could further mark, the increasing difference between the town and the village. All these led him to think in term of village-upliftment and as happened in most of the cases, his views on village

upliftment came quite earlier than any other politician of the period. In 1904, the complete scheme of reorganisation of villages, revival of cottage industry, popularly known as 'Swadeshi Samaj' was prepared by Tagore.

He established another institution, 'Sriniketan', near his Santiniketan, for rural upliftment in the area of agriculture and industry. His idea of national regeneration, through the comprehensive scheme of rural reconstruction, was undoubtedly his great contribution to constructive politics. (106) The background was that the Government was neither responsive to the needs of the people, nor the dependence on such agency would be desirable. So he proposed, 'each one of us shall, for every day of our life take up the burden of our country.' Only when India lost her glory the British could conquest, 'it made us aware - how wonderfully strong we had been and how miserably weak we have become'. (107) The true way to self-defence is to use our inherent powers. In the presidential address, at Pabna Congress in 1908, he placed the programme of national regeneration. In his talk to Governor, in China, he prescribed, 'when society is living it can adapt itself to new conditions, but when it is dead it merely copies its past and cannot build its future.' (108) He was, thus, very much addressed to the problem of national reconstruction.

When Tagore began the work at Surul, (Sriniketan), he did not think in terms of the whole country, rather, he wished to select one or two villages to set an example for the whole of

India. He was of the view that if help was rendered from outside such a help would not make them self-supporting. He wanted to help the village in digging up the wells for irrigating land. The response was 'we dig up wells and you go to heaven'. Tagore was in a fix. He made a club in cutchery (office), wanted to construct road but the response was not encouraging. Yet he joyfully strove for it despite initial hurdles, and ultimately got success. He revived many a village industry, improved agriculture, extended irrigation, organised co-operative societies, started day, as well as, night schools and above all, could infuse in his people the spirit of self-reliance. It could easily be marked when national leaders were yet to give shape to such ideas, Tagore had already started his experiments at Surul. Today 'we see Sriniketan as ideal institution' and there was scarcely any area of thought in which the poet was not far out advance of his fellow Indians'.

Tagore wrote numerous articles on social-reconstruction; however, his NEP scheme enunciated at Pabna Congress deserves mention. In a speech in 1918, at the Centre of Indian Culture, he hoped, it should also be the centre of economic life : it must cultivate land, breed cattle, feed itself and its students; it must produce all necessaries devising the best means and using the best materials, calling science to its aid'. Such an institution must group round all the villages, vitally write them with itself in all its economic endeavours. Gora, the hero of his famous novel, came across scenes of exploitation, epidemic, which gave birth to

the urge of spreading the ideals of 'Swadeshi Samaj'. As a poet he composed many poems to represent the misery and poverty of his age. His object was to try to flood the choked bed of village life with the stream of happiness. For this, he wanted the scholars, the poets, the musicians, ^{and} the artists to contribute. (114) Sriniketan sings the following song: 'our hands are strong, our hearts glad, as we ⁽¹¹⁵⁾ toil from morning till night to plough the land.'

It is really an example of ^{his} earnestness that he sent his only son, Rathindranath, to the University of Illinois, U.S.A. to learn agriculture and animal husbandry, and spent half of the amount of his Nobel-Prize for Sriniketan. In a letter, he wrote, 'you know my heart is with Surul ... you may be absolutely certain that it will be able to weather all storms and spread its branches wide.' (116) He himself read, farming, pottery, village economics, production of hides, manures, looms, tractors and so many other subjects concerned with rural reconstruction. Elmhirst, a friend of Tagore, helped him in this move.

However, the idea of Swadeshi Samaj remained an eminently inspiring idea. 'It could have led to a total revolution if implemented not as a separable but as an inseparable part of the struggle against imperialism.' (117)

E. Ideas on Socialism:

Tagore increasingly involved himself with the cause of oppressed humanity both at national and international levels. He always advocated in favour of the liberation of Afro-Asian countries. The socialists also fought for these causes. We might compare Tagore with Tolstoy. Tolstoy earned his views in favour of the good of the common people. In a Bengali book, Tolstoy, Gandhi and Rabindranath, ⁽¹¹⁸⁾ the writer, ~~Dr. Sashibhusan Dasgupta~~ Dr. Sashibhusan Dasgupta, regarded Rabindranath as a Hindu Tolstoy'. Dr. Dasgupta further referred to the influence of 'Anna Karenina's' lady character over Tagore and added that Rabindranath had confirmed that he had been influenced by the work of Tolstoy in spreading education in Russia and would like to follow his lesson. ⁽¹¹⁹⁾

Tagore can be compared even with Lenin, because both of them favoured the liberation of Afro-Asian countries from colonialism. Both of them were anti-colonial, anti-imperial and anti-racial. But there remained a great difference between the two. Tagore condemned them on ethical ground, and not on the class basis, as was done by Lenin. In condemnation of war and establishment of peace, he had more or less, the similar views being expressed by the socialists. His condemnation of fascism placed him in the front. In a message to Lesny, when Czechoslovakia was attacked by Hitler, he reiterated; 'I feel so keenly about the sufferings of your people as if I was one of

them'. He composed a poem 'Do not submit yourself to carry the burden of insult on your head, and dig not a trench with falsehood and cunning to build a shelter for your dishonoured manhood. Basically ^{he} / was an internationalist par excellence from the humanistic point of view, who could wish 'where the world is not fragmented in domestic walls.' ...

In an interview with a Chinese delegation in Tokyo in 1929, he held that it was the great multitude, the common people, who bore the burden of civilisation. We are the parasites whom they maintained with their own blood. The country could only be free when the common people became conscious of themselves. He held, 'it has become my life's work to try to restore the fullness of life to those of my race who have been deprived of their own proper share of physical and intellectual opportunities and open the inner path of communication with other nations for the purpose of establishing perfect human relationship which is the real goal of civilisation. (120) His estimate of the common people of the west reveals : in his words; 'In the West Political life is concentrated in a particular group of men or in some machine and its obligations are borne by some special group' and suggested, 'the time has come to renew the life of the people ... a new stream of (121) ideals must supply the people with a living purpose. Such expression clearly reflected his dissatisfaction with capitalist democracy where common men were yet to get their due.

It is the 'common people', the object of his scheme

of improvement and the common enemy a 'group of persons' responsible for exploitation both within the national society and outside it. However, his account of socialism grew richer, after his visit to Soviet Russia. After one year of his Soviet visit, he telegraphed Russians, 'your success is due to turning the tide of wealth from individual to collective humanity. Our obstacles are social and political insanity, bigotry and illiteracy.' (122) In Kalantar, published in 1933, he condemned mass-poverty and imperialism. In letters written to Amiya Chakraborty, he praised Soviet arrangement in food, education, medical treatment for all and asserted that non-capitalist should not be condemned because it is against capitalism. (123) When requested to revisit Soviet Russia, he replied, 'I have not lost my interest in Soviet Russia. If I get another chance of visiting Soviet Russia nothing would surpass the pleasure. My visit in 1930 has opened my eyes'. (124) In 1936, he composed 'Amrita'.

Before his visit to Soviet Russia, as early as 1919, he became signatory to ^{the} Clarte Dēclarations, full of socialistic contents. (125) In 1926, Tagore was in Vienna when the International Conference of Socialists was going on. In September, the same year, in Berlin, Tagore had regular visitors in Birendranath Chottopadhyaya and M. N. Roy. When in Hungary, he mentioned, 'I have a keen interest for the new world built by the Soviet Republic in the place of Czarist Empire i.e. why, I would have liked to examine Russia closely. (126)

But the fact remained, his world view always helped

him to find out the way for his own country. To him, ^{the} French Revolution was important because it signified 'liberty' 'equality' and 'fraternity', so was ^{the} Russian revolution. However, his visit to Russia emboldened him in advocating education and equality for Indians. He was perfectly aware of the defects of Western democracy. According to him, democracy becomes like an elephant whose one purpose in life is to give joy rides to the clever and to the rich. The organs of information and expression, through which opinions are manufactured, and the machinery of administration, are openly or secretly manipulated by the prosperous few. (127)

Thus Tagore was quite conscious of the state of affairs of different leading political ideologies. He always wanted to help humanity with moral overtones, the basis of man, society, nation and the world. Sri Samaresh Das, in his book 'Rabindranather Chintay Samajtantra', in Bengali i.e. (Socialism in the thinking of Tagore), has made a detailed study tracing firstly 'socialism', in the introduction of 'Europe Jatrir Diary' (125) (Europe Visitor's Diary) where he failed to grasp its real meaning. In a series of articles in Sadhana, 'Karmar Umedar' (aspirant for work), 'Stri Majur', (women labour) and 'Catholic Socialism' he attempted to explain but not so seriously. But the same got expression in another article 'socialism' in Sadhana, explaining the views of Bee Fort Bax (1954-1926) that rich were benefited under liberalism and not the common people'. In 'Chhinna Patrabali', time and again, he wrote, whether equal distribution of wealth would be possible or not, if not, only God can save the

poor peasants. S. Das, thus chronologically portrayed his account
(129)
of Tagore's socialism.

So, if we assess his ideas on political economy, we find that he was not a Marxist as he never believed in 'class struggle' or 'historical materialism' or 'dialectical materialism' for that matter. However, his sphere of action included such measures which stood for the interest of the down-trodden. Born in the lap of luxury, and brought up in comfort, he never looked down upon his fellow beings. The sphere of his activity included education and social reform. So Nehru was right when he called him an aristocrat turned into a democrat sympathising with the proletariat'.
(130) He also believed 'economic life of a nation is not isolated fact'
(131) and insisted that people must devote all their energies in constructive works. He was the poet of 'man' and the prophet of 'humanity' in life and deeds. He wanted the regeneration of Indian society. Taking in this light, his biographer Kripalani mentioned, the 'author of Gitanjali' could be 'as practical and down to earth as any American farmer or
(132) Bolshevich Manager of a collective farm'.

Tagore was deeply concerned for those who grew up with the least food, least clothes and least education. So he believed that it was as inevitable that the progress of civilisation could be maintained by improving their lot. In Soviet Russia, he expressed, 'what has pleased me here is the complete disappearance of the conceit of wealth. For this reason alone the self
(133) respect of the people has been restored.' He thus, stood

for economic equality/^{as}the basis of socialism. He talked of Indian heritage and pointed out that 'pride arising from the difference of wealth has come to our country from the west. Further, he held, 'French Revolution' was caused due to inequality and the curtain had changed that, ^{the} world stage, and now the suffering humanity had a nobler vision 'because all disharmony is opposed to the law of universe'. He did not find Indian tradition against adoption of 'socialism'. As an internationalist he found the national problem of today is part of the world problem'. This truth is implicit in the modern age and one must accept it.

So, he found pleasure in his visit to Soviet Russia where ~~she~~ had served the basic problems and suggested, the time has come for us to proclaim that there is no salvation for man if the power of the weak is not awakened at once. It was the suffering of the Indian Mass under British Colonial rule that engaged his attention and prompted him to pronounce moral non-Capitalist path for curing the prevailing/^{illness}of Indian society. In doing so, he seemed to herald, ^amoral, humanitarian and egalitarian social structure.

II

Tagore's Ideas on Internationalism:

Tagore's views on internationalism also began with the individual. He asked the individual to realise his kinship with others. Tagore held, 'when a man did not realise his kinship with the world he lived in prison-house, but 'when a man meets the eternal

spirit in all the objects he is emancipated, for, he discovers the fullest significance of the world in which he is born'.⁽¹³⁴⁾

According to Tagore, entire philosophy centred round 'man' and 'humanity'. 'Ettwa Masi,' 'That art thou' represented the basic tenet of the 'Upanishad'. There could be no liberation unless the soul realised that 'it is one with the infinite' love is the principle of spiritual unity which may be made concrete through service to the human being'.⁽¹³⁵⁾ The lure of the call of the infinite in man puts him as path finder.

Man continued, in his search, not for the satisfaction of his material needs, but in order to strive with all his might for the revelation of the 'universal man' in the world of man, to rescue his own innocent truth from the crude obstacles set up by himself.⁽¹³⁶⁾ Sachin Sen very aptly remarked, 'Tagore proclaimed the dignity of Man, the discovery of reality in the world of senses and colours and ridiculed the philosophy of escapism. He found God in Man, divinity in the lowliest of the low'.⁽¹³⁷⁾

His thinking on internationalism revealed that he seemed to have established an 'organic view' of the relationship that existed between the individual and the society. In his words, 'we have a greater body, which is social body. Society is an organisation of which we are parts'. He further added, 'He who is wise tries to harmonise the wishes that seek for self-gratification with the social good, and only thus can he realise his higher self'.⁽¹³⁸⁾ So he suggested that men should construct their paths

not for profit or for power but paths over which the hearts of men could go out to their brothers of different land. The goal of human life, according to Tagore, was to offer freedom and to be free. (139)

'Monism' was the key word with him. The ideas of humanity of God or the divinity of man was the heart of his political philosophy. Rabindranath will always be remembered as a poet, a product of integral humanism ... a philosopher whose main interest centred round man'. (140) Tagore was all along sustained by his robust faith in Man. In a message on the eighty first birth-day anniversary, he observed, "As I look around I see the crumbling ruins of a proud civilisation ... and yet I shall not commit the greivous sin of losing faith in Man." Tagore believed that mankind must be bound together by the inevitable faith in moral links which strengthened the fabric of civilisation. (141) Nation, like individual, should also assert its individual existence and should adopt the path of helping each other. The false pride should not erect the Chinese wall in their mutual relations. Furthermore, their relationship should not be and must not be based on pursuit of profit and power. In a letter to his friend, Andrews, he held, 'let us be rid of all false pride and rejoice at any lamp being lit in any corner of the world, knowing it is a part of the illumination of our own house'. (142) So what is true of individual in society is also true of nation in the international society.

A. Account of Imperialism:

It was one of the central points of Tagore's analysis

of contemporary international society that the world was dominated by the passion of greed and power in an organised way. This is what we term 'imperialism'. In his words, the international society was not social in character, but was based on 'utility'. The economic background of the second half of the 19th century showed how capitalism turned imperialist and how it became responsible for the outbreak of the World War I. Tagore was not an economist and did not belong to either Marxist or liberal background. But the taste of British Colonial rule in India, cultivated in him, the comprehension of hazards of imperialism in quite high dose. However, he was not so frequent in use of the term 'imperialism'. But the fact remained, he had been a protester throughout his life against the imperialistic exploitation in the form of anti-colonial, anti-racial and anti-communal terms. To him, war as well as peace came as important agenda, and as an internationalist, he was deeply addressed to these problems.

The First World War, 'came as a product of half a century of development of world capital and of its billions of thread and connections. (143) The Marxists looked upon the world not only as a fruitful field of capitalist expansion but also as a potential battlefield.' (144) Tagore saw that the dominant civilised nations were most inhumanly oppressing and exploiting the millions. Right from the beginning of the 20th century, as portrayed in his famous poem; 'The sun set of the century' ... about the unashamed exploitation of humanity, There was unbroken continuity in his expression on this theme. Sachin Sen aptly put forward, "He regu-

larly observed that the unashamed national glorification is inflicting heavy and fatal wounds on human conscience." (145)

Being the subject of the British colonial rule, it is natural that imperialism had been explained more in Indian context. This Tagore did, through the comparison with the Muslim rule and found that the British practised discrimination in dealings with the Indians. To him, Muslims made India their home while the British remained outsiders. Furthermore, he dealt with the whole gamut of Indian life i.e. economic, political, and cultural, which had been dominantly disturbed by the colonialism. He was again successful in distinguishing the British 'rulers' from British people and in finding some everlasting values lying in British philosophy and culture. He took the British as rulers, imperialist, responsible for exploitation not only in India but also abroad on a large scale. In addition to that, he found the British responsible for most of the troubles in the world. He also pointed out the ugly role of imperialist in waging war and the so-called establishment of peace. As a solution to all these prevailing problems, he assigned ^{an} important role to the 'individuals', in paving a moral path, which could only rid of the world out of the crisis. Thus, himself living under the colonial rule, he developed his awareness of exploitation of the Indians, denying them even the elementary needs of existence. To him, imperialism was the higher phase of colonialism. He felt disturbed by the role of the British statesmen acquiesced in the destruction of the Spanish Republic. (146)

He questioned the British intention in reply to Mrs. Rathbone's

letter and mentioned, the British hated the Nazis for merely challenging their world mastery and Mrs. Rathbone expected us to kiss the hands of her people in servility ..., they had betrayed the great trust and had sacrificed the happiness of millions in India to blast the pockets of a few capitalists at home'. He held, 'such is the tragic tale of the gradual loss of my faith in the claims of the European nations to civilisation.' (147) To the modern political scientists, Tagore might appear not using appropriate terminology, as Lenin did, in denoting imperialism-the highest phase of capitalism. However, his short account of imperialism proved beyond doubt the fact that it was responsible for colonising India, disturbing the life of Indians, economically, politically, and culturally. Further, as an imperialist nation, Britain was exploiting so many Asian and African countries. Britain was responsible for the most of the troubles in the world and was largely responsible for war. He was addressed to the agenda of Indian independence, so wanted the end of exploitation of millions in the interest of a few British capitalists. However, he did not lose faith in man and as such did not condemn all the Britishers even when he emphasised that not a single country in Asia looked to Europe without doubt.

Tagore was of the view that the Industrial Revolution had helped the British consolidate their sovereignty over the vast empire. But in India, the misfortune of being governed by a foreign race was daily brought home to us. British colonialism was no doubt a constant reminder to him for the freedom of India. In an article 'Asia O Europe', (Asia and Europe), he suggested that it

was very much real that those who were outside Europe had only relationships of exploitation with them. To-day, there is no single country in Asia which did not look Europe without doubt. Afro-Asian nations were being administered by pointed provoking needle like fish and were already in the net. (148) He further held, the powerful countries, by virtue of their control over media, crushed the voice of exploited, behind the pretext of infancy and disgrace.

Right from the 1890's, his comments on British rule in India and its exploitation, became his major concern. During the period, he also felt how 'imperialism' practising exploitation had engulfed the world. The instances of 'Boer War' in Africa and that of 'Boxer Revolution' in China led him to react in his characteristic way. He felt more and more concerned about the plight of common men throughout Afro-Asian countries, and could recognise that 'racialism' and 'communalism' were the ingredients of colonialism.

During the first decade of the present century, another movement ~~was~~ 'Asia is one' or 'Asian Federation', emerged on the scene. Within a very short period of Tagore's visit to China, Asiatic Association was formed in Sanghai. But it should be remembered, mentions Nepal Majumdar, Tagore and Jagadish Bose, great scientist of India, wanted to make an attempt to start one centre of 'Asian Affairs' at Santiniketan in 1903. After long 23 years, ^{the} Asian Conference took place in Delhi in 1947, and the Indian National Congress in Gaya put on the agenda. But what

the Congress put on agenda in 1924 in Gaya Congress, Tagore had made (149) move in that direction two decades earlier.

B. : Account of Asia:

Tagore, a product of Renaissance, a staunch fighter for the cause of Indian freedom, turned as a leading personality of Asia, performing the role of cultural ambassador of India to Asia and the world. His account of Asia formed the Central part of his thinking on internationalism. Being an Indian, he was obviously informed of the happenings of neighbouring countries and was in perfect knowledge of historical link of India with them. His concern for 'the opium war' in China and the victory of Japan over Russia had been nicely expressed. The common suffering of the natives under colonialism led him to widen his area of concern.

However, a new sight with the emergence of renaissance, growth of vernacular press, modern education and a bit of industrialisation engaged his attention. The re-awakening of Asia further proved that Europe had lost its position of respect in Asia and the national liberation movement started everywhere. Furthermore, the years following the First World War also convinced him that the European imperialist power, instead of decreasing, had already accelerated the process of exploitation, without taking any lesson out of the war. These trends added in him urgency to warn against the evil forces for restoration of sanity. He represented the voice of Indias as well as of other Asians intensely but nowhere propagated hatred against Europe. It was not cospiracy

scheme which he had preached, but an Asia united in a common purpose for the betterment of the condition of Asia, which would not isolate itself by an iron curtain from the rest of the world. (150)

His work 'Nationalism' contained three articles, namely, Nationalism in the west, Nationalism in Japan, Nationalism in India. The work was the compilation of his lectures delivered in Japan and the U.S.A. in the year, 1916 i.e. during the First World War. Another work of this period, based on his speeches in Japan, was published under the title 'Personality'. On 3rd May, 1916, during the period of the First World War, he sailed for Japan along with Andrews, Pearson, and Mukul De, in a Japanese ship with hospitality of the captain and the crew. He stayed there for three months. (151) (152)

His views on Japan:

Japan occupied a central place in his heart for many years. The victory of Japan over Russia in the year 1905 was celebrated in Santiniketan, as booster for Asian to proclaim their strength. (153) It was important, as his first visit to Asian country and to Japan, to receive enthusiastically one who brought honour to Asia in the shape of Nobel prize. (154) Tagore was equally happy to see the giant strides made by Japan and was happy to comment, Japan's greatness has been due not to imitation, (155) but to assimilation of the qualities of the East and the West - a dream to achieve'. To him, Japan was both old and new, because, 'She has her legacy of the ancient culture from the East and also

fearlessly claimed all the gifts of the modern age'.

His views on China:

During his visit to China, he recalled that once upon a time Eastern Asian countries were united from Burma to Japan with India having the closest ties. There was a living communication of hearts, a nervous system evolved through which messages ran between us about the deepest need of humanity. His speech always revealed organic unity both in respect of individual and the nation. His visit to China took place in the year 1924 which had been covered under the title 'Talks in China', containing the notes and reports published in Chinese news papers. Liang Chi Chao, President, Universities Association, regarded this visit as tremendously important in increasing the fund of friendship. The visit was much more intimate as both the countries were having the common suffering and this intimacy lasted till the last days of Tagore's life. While receiving Tagore, Liang held; 'Tagore has visited Europe, America and Japan, but to us he comes from the country which is our nearest and dearest brother. India was ahead of us and we the little brother followed behind.' Tagore was equally at his best in reply when he reiterated, 'I am reminded of the day when, India claimed you as brother and sent you love and the time has come when we shall be proud to belong to a continent which produces the light.' He advised the Chinese to know what was best in them and 'living out your light and lit to great festivals of lamps of the world culture.'

(157)

(158)

(159)

(160)

While on his way to Japan, as early as 1916, Tagore remarked, in Hongkong seeing such strength skin and joy of work thus concentrated in one place, 'I realised what an amount of power is being stored throughout the land in this great nation when such an immense power gets its modern vehicle' ... what power on earth will be able to offer its resistance. (161) It revealed the faculty of farsightedness of Tagore who could foretell long before the future strength of the Chinese.

Tagore maintained very cordial relations with China and regarded her liberation no less important. He was very much involved in sending a medical mission to China. He appealed for monetary help to China. His anxiety had been expressed when Tagore sent a letter to Marshall Chiang through Stafford Cripps, when the latter met him before leaving for China. The message, dated 26 December 1939, contained 'the victory will ever remain respondent in the moral field of human endeavour'.

The 'Cheena Bhawan' was opened in March 1937, which is still the best centre in ^{the} country of ^{the} Chinese study. The Chinese experts always visited Santiniketan. On his 80th birth day, General Chiang congratulated Tagore telegraphically, 'China has been struggling in defence of the civilisation of East Asia and for that I wish all the more to congratulate you for the longevity of your life, the heroic voice for which shall keep sounding like a bell all over the world, the spiritual significance of Eastern civilisation.' (162) Tagore, in reply, wished, 'May the innocent multitudes be spared from the dire calamity to find their lives in

(163)
peace'. This shows how much he was concerned with the calamitous effects of the World War II over the innocent multitude.

Apart from China and Japan, he visited Singapore, Malaya, Sumatra and Batavia in 1927. He visited Thailand, the next year, also toured Ceylon, Iran, Afghanistan and Egypt. The problems between the Arabs and the Jews also attracted his attention. However, unlike Gandhi and Nehru, he supported the settlement of the Jews which has become ground reality. He was deeply shocked by the death of Kemal Pasha and declared Viswa-Bharati closed on 18th November, 1938. Though disliked by Muslim fundamentalists in India, Tagore liked the Ataturk, most. Even today, after the gulf war of 1981, Tagore's prescription regarding the settlement of the Jews is still valued.

His account of Asian countries revealed that he suggested Afro-Asian people to be united and to launch liberation movement unitedly. He further insisted that the western countries should give up the path of exploitation and discrimination of the East. He warned East, not to reject the West but to gain from them their magnificent achievements in science and technology as well as from their spiritual attainments.

However, Rabindranath's message was identified frequently with certain pan-Asiatic overtones. But the fact remained that he never associated himself with Chauvinistic type of pan-Asianism, though his visit to far East, especially to China, created a good deal of mental unrest in Europe. (164) 'North China

Star', Peking, recorded Tagore as dangerous and poisonous as Karl Marx'. Andrews mentioned that Tagore's visit to Japan was propagated abroad, that such a pacifist teaching was dangerous in war time and the Indian poet represented a defeated nation. Hearing this, Tagore composed the 'Song of Defeat' :

'My master bids me to sing the song of defeat,
for that is the bride whom He Woes in the secret'. (165)

In 'The Crisis of Civilisation', Tagore mentioned, 'perhaps that dawn will come from this horizon from the East where the sun rises. A day will come when the unvanquished man will retrace his path of conquest, despite all barriers, to win back his lost human heritage. (166)

Tagore wrote 'Personality', which contained six discourses about the deepest problems of life, representing the clarion call to humanity to rise from competition to co-operation, from the oppression of cruel and greedy nationalism to world fraternity among the different races of the world. After Tagore, man came from the world of nature to the world of humanity, and, 'whatever hinders the life of the man from establishing perfect relationship with the moral world is an evil. It is death, a far greater death than the death of natural life, (167) and he hoped that the nations ought to behave likewise.

Rolland found that in 'Nationalism', 'a new voice had arisen in the East, proclaiming peace and goodwill to mankind and called upon, Europe to listen to it with humility.' (168) Through

this book, mentioned Andrews, the spiritual kinship between Rabindranath Tagore and Romain Rolland was established. So wrote Maitreyi Debi, 'the book stirred the emotion of the world and brought forth a variety of reactions and Tagore emerged out of this tour as the thinker who could show the world, right path of internationalism. (169) To Sastry, Tagore came as the 'prophet of the age.' (170)

Thus, Tagore emerged as anti-imperialist, anti-colonialist and associated the cause of all other Afro-Asian, Latin American colonies with a feeling of common suffering. The attachment based on spiritual bond between and among individuals on a global basis, was the corner stone of his thinking. As to the individuals, so to the nation applied the spiritual bond of unity. He wanted a nation to assert its individual existence and to contribute its share to the progress of humanity. All these reflected his desire that, India should learn from others what were good and to contribute to the world society what she could. During the Non-Cooperation Movement of 1921, he raised his voice against the burning of clothes and opined, blind English hatred and narrow patriotism should not be practised by India. He favoured that Indian national movement should be international in character based on non-hatred and truth-a lesson for the countries seeking liberation. (171) He has been 'a beacon light ever pointing to the finer aspects and never allowing us (Indians) to fall into ruts which kill individuality as well as nations.'

He found the anarchy of spirit in the modern civilization reflecting lust for power and profit. He wanted the complete elimination of the present ills. It was therefore, one of the central points of Tagore's internationalism that 'anarchy of spirit' in the modern civilization was responsible for the outbreak of social unrest in the world. This anarchy of the spirit of the modern civilisation reflected through organised passion of greed mainly manifested in European society. Tagore mentioned, therefore, it is not social in character but is based on utility', but 'the drama of our destiny to-day has the whole for its stage.' (172) He did not like the political tradition of nationalistic fanaticism but favoured the bridge between the East and West. When one nation loses its creative power, it is paralysed, so the health of the world depended on the fitness of each and every nation. His Viswa Bharati reflects a genuine collaboration based on definite pursuit of knowledge'. (173)

C. Sources of his Internationalist Thinking:

Tagore's world view is moulded by Indian reality, his home, and, the influences of persons like Rammohun, the pioneer internationalist of modern India. The other factor was English 'liberalism' in the crucial formative period of his life. In his own words, 'our direct contact with the modern world, the larger world of the men was linked up with the contemporary history of the English people ... through their mighty

literature ... impressed by the evidence of liberal humanity. ...
The large-hearted radical liberalism overflowing all narrow
national boundaries. (174)

Frequent wanderings in the world equipped him with
on-the-spot knowledge of various countries and different peoples
of the world. (175) The period between 1915 and 1941 gave him
the scope of touring most of the countries of ^{the} world. This
helped him in moulding his conception and in 'assimilating the
best of the world literature.' (176) It further provided us with
so many works such as, 'Nationalism', 'Personality', 'Creative
Unity', 'The Religion of Man', 'Letters from Russia,' 'The Modern
Age', 'Letters from Abroad', 'Letters to a Friend', 'Talks in
China', 'Lectures and Addresses, 'East and West'.

His acquaintance with a number of eminent scholars
all over the world, during their visit to Viswa Bharati, established
a living link.

But what influenced him most was his family and the
Indian background. To him, India put all emphasis on the harmony
that existed between the individual and the universal. (177) He
pointed out that the 'Upanishad' explained the harmony between the
individual and the universal. 'Gayatri' the text of meditation of
his family, pointed out the essential unity of the world with the
conscious soul of man. In his words, 'we learn 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

over minds with the light of the consciousness that moves and exists in unbroken continuity with the other world'.⁽¹⁷⁸⁾ Another source of influence was the Gita, In his words, 'we are advised to work disinterestedly abandoning all lust for the result'.⁽¹⁷⁹⁾ This is the central theme on which depends his advice to the individual as well as to the nation. Buddhist background also found support in him. To Tagore, 'with everything, whether it is above or below, remote or near, visible or invisible, thou shalt preserve a relation of love without any animosity or without a desire to kill which always proved his mainstay in accepting 'non-violence' and love for all.⁽¹⁸⁰⁾

Prof. Lesny, Czech critic and biographer of Tagore, very aptly remarked, 'the process of his development is in harmony with the tradition of Indian philosophy; from insight into the beauty of nature he arrived at a feeling of confidence into the destiny of mankind; from a conviction of the nobility of man's mission in the world he derives a wise philosophy which culminates in his unhesitatingly positive attitude towards life and in his later conception of the divine nature of mankind'. It is in this world that man's progress towards perfection must take place and therefore, life in this world is the object of his preoccupation.⁽¹⁸¹⁾

D. Tagore's Views on War:

Tagore witnessed the two world wars. But he had the first understanding of it from Boer War (1899-1902). He found

how the British captured gold mines and subjugated the Boer Republic. Tagore was further disturbed by the Boxer Revolution (1899-1901) in China where imperialist forces had thwarted the interest of the Chinese very inhumanly. His poem 'Sunset of the century' was published later on as an appendix to his 'Nationalism'. A very significant poem in which he denounced nationalism as the self love of the Nations', was written on the last day of the last century (182). His famous poem 'sun-set of the century' reflected ample disillusionment of Tagore caused by 'Boer War'. The Boer war deeply disillusioned him about the character of western democracies in which he saw its holocaust, the warning of the worse massacres to come in future. The naked passion of imperialist power in its drunken delirium of greed was found dancing, and added, 'awakening fear, the poet-mobs howl round, A chant of quarrelling curs on the burning ground' (183). He was very much disturbed by the international situation long before the First World War had started. He could read and foresee the future very promptly and correctly. Commenting on the Boxer Revolution, (184) he could comprehend well how Britain, France, Germany, Russia/Japan attacked and defeated China. He condemned war as it contained the barbarous attitude of the belligerent nations.

Imperialism the main cause of War:

In his famous poem, 'the Destroyer', he wrote, 'life sits in the chariot crowned by death', when the First World War started he wrote, 'Boatman' which expressed his views about the aggression on Belgium. The lady in the poem was Belgium as pointed

out to Andrews by the poet. (185) Another poem, 'Trumpet', claimed to be the best on war was followed by 'Oarsman'. All these three poems have the testimony to the fact that he was very much disturbed by the war and in protest through these poems, raised warning against the evil forces of history. He wrote 'Look, there comes all destroying. The flood of agony spreads out in a sea of pain, the thunder roars in the dark' and so on. In 'Trumpet', he wrote 'The trumpet lies in the dust. The wind is weary, the light is dead'. The poet was restless. He did not see it, writes Kripalani, as a European misfortune but as a wound in the breast of humanity, its pain and horror to be shared by all its limbs ...' (186)

He blamed everyone for the war, 'the sin is yours and mine', the catastrophe is not the revenge of a vindictive fate, it is a penance, an atonement which must bring redemption in the end. This was his belief that Man would have to change the course. His words : If death does not yield its deathless prize, its truth is not gained in battling with sorrow, if sin does not die in the shame of its exposure, if pride does not break under the weight of its intolerable pomp, then what hope sustains the hearts of these millions ...' (187) All these poems were published in 1916 in a slender volume, called 'Balaka' 'the Flight of Cranes' as one dedication to the world spirit.

During this period, he wrote three articles in 'Sabujpatra', a famous Bengali magazine, on war. All these were

originally letters to Pramatha Chowdhury, the editor. These letters were also published as 'Batayaniker Patra' in Kalantar in 1919. In these historical articles, Tagore took stock of the years of the world war in terms of loss of human beings, moral values and degradation. He observed that the imperialists wanted to increase their power and to achieve with the increase in military strength at the cost of other's property, life and moral values. They had no regard for 'truth', forgiveness, self-control and peace. And to achieve this end, they could use any means (188) including the secret diplomacy.

So Tagore wanted not to fear power, not to adore it, on the otherhand, he recommended to ignore the lust of power with fearlessness encouraged. (189) He criticised, in his third letter to Pramatha Chowdhury, the 'Mandatory Provisions' of the 'League of Nations' wherein the imperialists were busy in distribution of the share of the Chinese assets. When Tagore was condemning war, the then Congress President M. M. Malviya, was requesting Indians to rejoice at the victory of England in the First World War, writes Nepal Majumder. (190) But Tagore was the only exception in foreseeing even the tragedy of the Treaty of Versailles that no sacrifice was made by big powers there.

Condemnation of Indian support given during the First World War:

To Tagore, imperialism was the common enemy of mankind. In an article in 'Modern Review,' March, 1921, he even condemned the principles of Indian National Congress in forwarding

support to imperialists in war. To Tagore, it was the result of non-understanding on the part of the Congress of the intricacies of the problem of war. He wrote, "not very long ago, we said to our rulers, we are sacrificing our principles and to persuade our men to join in a battle about whose merit they have not the least notion; only in exchange, we shall claim your favour." (191)

He added, 'now we must acknowledge our responsibility - to the extent of our effort at recruiting, - for turning our men into a mercenary horde drenching the soil of Asia with brother's blood for the sake of the self-aggrandisement of a people wallowing in the mire of imperialism. It is an eye-opener even Gandhi was busy in recruiting men for war, which, of course, Gandhi later on repented. Thus, Tagore was a pioneer in condemning imperialist war fought in their (imperialist) interest and quite alert in reminding our leaders not to be utilised in their interest of war. To him, it was a humanitarian principle, and hence it should not be sacrificed.

The Cult of Nationalism as the other main cause of War:

According to Tagore, nationalism had been regarded as the main cause of the war. Nationalism bred patriotism which in turn stood for love of our country and hatred for others. He warned, 'nations who sedulously cultivate moral blindness as the cult of patriotism will end their existence in a sudden and violent death.' (192) The emergence of nations had brought forward a new set of relations. Nationalism had bred imperialism fighting for

economic profit. To him, nation was^a mechanical organisation of politics and commerce inculcating in people fear and panic through the medium of war. To him 'nations are like the pack of predatory creature ... that must have victims. He added, 'in fact, nations are fighting among themselves, for the extension of their victims and their reserve forests.'

Capitalism the other cause of War:

In an article, entitled 'Ladaier Mul' (The causes of war), he opined that the rule of the capitalist had become the order of the period. Earlier, he pointed out, they ruled over capital, now, with the help of capital, they are ruling over humanity. So, to him, the rule over humanity by the other was the main cause of war. In international society, they had established colonial rule remaining far away from the colony. He cited the example of Germany whose arrival was late as imperialist on the European scene, developed strained relationship among European powers. Territorial acquisition and commercial exploitation had become the order of the imperialists. He cited the example of the Poles and^{the} Finns. Though they were European nations, they were being compelled to surrender. Interpreting the genesis of the war, he was of the view that Europe had given good by to the ideals for which she stood. To him 'Europe has exhausted the oil that once lighted her lamps. The true cause lay in her own ideals which helped her to be great. He wrote, 'the veil has been raised and in this frightful war the West has stood face to face with her own creation to which she had offered her soul!'

Nation stands armed against nations and old liberal statemanship of the 19th century had given way to blind temper of competition.

Propaganda as an instrument of power of imperialists for War:

He was quite aware of the role of propaganda. He mentioned that the powerful nations controlled the instruments of propaganda and as such the grievances of the weak countries did not reach the ears of the world and all approach roads were closed for them. They were able to crush the races devoid of power behind the smoke-screen of infancy and disgrace. (195)

Views on War

To Tagore, war was inhuman. He believed in the inevitability of death, but the death caused by war of greed, was undesirable. The above-mentioned view was published in his article, 'Do not destroy'. (196) Another article 'Paper Marjana' (Remedies from Sin), (197) condemning the onslaught of war was published in the year 1914. He mentioned in 'Balaka' (Flight of the Crane) 'all the sorrows of the earth, all its sins and crimes, its heartbreak and its lust for violence have swelled like a tidal wave overleaping the banks, blaspheming the skies'. He was very much disturbed by war but it was his optimism, his faith in 'man' which could only remove war. So he composed

'Bow down your head, the sin is yours and mine,
It is the ulcer in the heart of time that has burst
at last'. (198)

So the war was the sign of the fact that civilisation was dead, nations feared each other, behaved like growling beasts of the night time, holding or maintaining their trade secrets, state secrets, secrets of their armaments. (199)

When 'Nationalism' was published, the whole world was in the throes of war and thousands of young men were dying in the battle. Pacifism was not the cup of the war-mongers. (200) So wrote Kripalani, the biographer of Tagore, 'the publication of 'Nationalism' was ill-timed' however 'he was right, prophetically right in what he said and must be admired for courting abuse.' This was his success that his voice against the war angered the war-mongers. But he also got the touching tribute from the mother of the young English poet, Wilfred Owen, who was killed in the war one week before the armistice day. She, in a letter to Tagore, enquired, 'would it be asking too much of you, to tell me what book I shall find the whole poem in'. (201) The young poet had taken some lines from Tagore in his note book. While idealist Green advanced reasons in favour of world peace; believed, war 'not absolutely necessary' but only 'relatively necessary'; Bentham interpreted war in terms of utility. To Tagore, war was neither necessary nor desirable. He was perfectly right in estimating imperialism, colonialism, capitalism, commercialism, racialism responsible for waging war. He was perfectly right, 'in his insistence, that the war was the necessary outcome of the homicide stage of things in which the whole of West was acquired. (202)

E. Views on Peace:

The First World War brought the problem of 'World Peace' on the world agenda. Tagore, who was very much disturbed by the loss of human lives and exploitation, felt deeply concerned with the problem of the establishment of the peace. His voluminous writings bore testimony to this. He also participated in peace movements and till the last advocated the cause of peace.

The philosophical basis of his account on 'peace' was also the 'individual'. According to him, the individual should be exalted for the good of the world because every seeker of harmony among the races and countries was the individual. In his words, 'we must know as, through science and commerce, the realisation of the unity of the material world gives us power, so the realisation of the unity of the great spiritual unity of Man can also give us peace. (203)

Tagore's ideas on peace was all-comprehensive. The total scheme was based on his Indian heritage. He advocated peace with the entire world of creation whether of man or animal or nature as incorporated in Aranyaka, (4th prasna). 'I will endeavour in such a way as to bring about peace, through striving for perfect peace in myself and with man as well as with animal'. Tagore was very much perturbed to find that genuine attempts were not being made under the League of Nations. He believed that so long there was greed there could be no peace. He held, machine might prepare so many things but the peace manufactured out of it might not last

long. In his words, 'The great powers of the West are seeking peace, not by curbing their greed, or by giving up their exclusive advantages'.⁽²⁰⁴⁾ The same view had been expressed, in another letter written to Pramatha Chowdhury, the editor of 'Sabujpatra', 'that peace can not be achieved without sacrifice, there can not be peace. In Paris talks, no sacrifice has been made by the great powers.' He could thus visualise the inherent dangers of the Treaty of Versailles, quite earlier.

Later on, in his poem, 'Atonement', before the start of the Second World War, he wrote, 'let the hediousness of the blood-soaked blasphemy divine anger heralding a heroic peace out of an awful retribution.'⁽²⁰⁵⁾ His attempts for maintenance of peace continued in two ways, firstly, by condemning aggression everywhere, and, secondly, by joining peace movements and supporting other such movements meant for the world peace and security. His understanding of the world problems which increased with his visit to other countries in general, and to Italy and Russia in particular, also helped him a lot in framing his independent views. His visit to Japan and U.S.A. brought him to the forefront of Peace movement. Romain Rolland sent him on 10th April, 1919, 'Declaration of Independence of Spirit'. Tagore felt very much encouraged after going through the 'declaration' against involvement in the war. It was found that Bipin Chandra Pal was also contacted for the same. However, Tagore joined this, along with famous intellectuals of the world.⁽²⁰⁶⁾

Tagore's visit to Italy, during January and February

1925, and again the next year during May 1926, helped him to present an account of the visit. According to Tagore, the social and administrative body fell down in Italy after the First World War. The common people in spite of weaknesses found in Mussolini a masterful personality who alone could bring back law and order. (207) But his assessment was criticised. To Rolland, 'Mussolini was the greatest menace to the whole of Europe.' (208) But Prof. Mrs. Signora Salvadori, exiled in Zurich, wrote to Tagore 'what makes us unhappy is that you have unintentionally helped to support fascism'. Tagore could know from her about the fascist atrocities and wrote, 'I wish, I had known for certain the dark deeds that were being done in Italy, ... then I could not have come to Italy.' (209) Further, it was Rolland, who wrote 'forgive me if my intervention has caused you some restless hours'. 'The future will show you that I have acted as your faithful and vigilant guide.' (210) As writes Nepal Majumder, 'this led to his added awareness of fascism and war. One year later, in an interview to 'Referee', in July 1928, Tagore gave a message which was published on 5th August, 1928. There he reported, 'In Italy the worship of unscrupulous force is the vehicle of nationalism, and this force keeps alive the fire of international jealousy'. In the same interview, he added, 'the methods and basic principles of fascism concern all humanity and it is absurd to imagine that I would ever support.' He declared again and again the aggressive spirit of nationalism and imperialism constituting the menace to the whole world. He condemned 'fascism' and fascist attack in clear terms. And again

he was ahead of the Indian National Congress in condemning ~~xxx~~ fascism. (211) When Italy attacked Ethiopia and the League of Nations failed to stop it, Tagore blamed Italy as an aggressor and wrote a letter to Andrews condemning it. After two years, he wrote a poem 'Africa' condemning the exploitation, atrocities on Blacks a masterpiece.

With man traps stole upon you those hunters whose fierceness was keener than the fangs of your wolves. Your finest trials became nuddy with tears and blood, while the nailed tools of the robless left their indelible prints along the history of your indignity'.

Einstein, Barbous, Rolland were continuing their movement against fascism and war in support of peace. In 1932 a Peace Conference was organised in Amsterdam followed by its observance throughout the world. Some intellectuals in Calcutta also observed the peace day, Arabinde Poddar held that, after a three years, on 20th November, 1935, 'There is a reference that Tagore was thanked for his joining the membership of the world-committee against the war.' (212)

Tagore's participation in the peace movement was highly acknowledged. In 1935, from the Internationalist Institute of Intellectual Co-operation, Gilbert Murray held Tagore as the 'most famous poet living in the world', and appealed, 'where nation stands armed against nation ... I need not appeal to you Tagore, to join in this quest; you already belong to it. I only ask you

to recognise the greatness of your own work for the intellectual union of the East and West. (213) Tagore in reply wrote, I do not see any solution of the intricate evils of disharmony between nations, nor can I point out any path which may lead us immediately to the levels of sanity.' But feeling the urgency of human co-operation, he wrote 'willingly, therefore, I harness myself in my advanced age at Santiniketan in a spirit of genuine collaboration. (214)

He preached extreme humanism. This has been expressed in an interesting and revealing poem. (215)

At the fag end of his life, the Second World War broke out. The First World War had already caused in him a great agony. His faith in the wisdom of Christianity was shattered. He had already censured the forces for waging war. One by one, he condemned each aggression, Japanese attack on Manchuria, Italy's on Ethiopia and at last the German attack on Sudetanland. He wished their defeat in his works, joined peace movements, condemned nationalism, fascism and imperialism very strongly. But 'the disillusionment was very painful and he gave vent to it in a poem, of which the last stanza he rendered into English on Christmas day in 1939: (216)

Condemning the Nazi aggression over Czechoslovakia, he wrote to Prof. Legny his helplessness but in the 'Atonement' he held,

But let us hope, for the sake of dignity of moral justice in the world,

That God will never suffer to be
cheated of His due,
By the miserly manipulation of a
diplomatic pity.

His biographer, Mukherjee, mentioned that with the advent of the Second World War, Tagore wrote to Amiya Chakraborty that he did not see any end to war and condemned it by calling it a civilization of Ronentia. (217) In another letter, he again mentioned his description of imperialism and proclaimed 'the wild dance of slaughter will go on without end.' Earlier, he was blamed for his weakness for / ^{Asia} but 'impartiality' was the hallmark of his international thinking. He loved Asian unity but strongly condemned Japanese imperialism. Japan captured Manchuria without heeding to world public opinion and condemnation by the League of Nations. When British intervened in China Tagore posed the question who snatched away Hongkong, from the Chinese and who used force first? Hongkong is yet under British control. Throughout India, 'China Day' was observed on first September, 1938. Tagore appealed for raising fund for the Chinese. During this period, he received two alluring invitations from Rash Behari Bose, an Indian revolutionary in exile in Japan, first, in the shape of a telegram requesting Tagore to stop Jawaharlal Nehru, from ^{criticising} Japan and second letter, (Sept. 1938) requesting Tagore to visit Japan with assurance of getting a lump sum for his Viswa-Bharati. He declined to accept both the offers.

Another painful exchange Tagore had with Yon Noguchi, a Japanese poet, an erstwhile friend and associate of Tagore. In a poem published in 'Hindusthan Standard' dated (218) October 26, 1938, he held,

He wished the defeat of Japan and victory to the Chinese. Noguchi, in his letter dated 23.7.1938 appealed 'Believe me it is war of Asia for Asia'. In reply on 1st September 1938, Tagore wrote, Japan's conception of Asia would be raised on a tower of skulls. He, not only, condemned but also warned Japan. (219)

He considered war as man's return to the laws of jungle and fascism and nazism as black spots of imperialism. He never lost faith in Man, so he hoped that a time would come when things would be corrected; because, in his words, 'by unrighteousness man prospers, gains what appears desirable, conquers enemies, but perishes at the root. (220) So he recommended that man should adopt good means to achieve good end. Running his mental eye almost over the whole of the world he looked for the better world and social strength of humanity to be used in extension of the hospitality to the world taking all risks, no matter numerous and grave they might be.

F. Conclusion:

Tagore had full faith in the solidarity of the human races but believed that it was the politicians who mishandled the world situation in their tradition of nationalist fanaticism.

Tagore did not like that political necessity should be regarded as the highest good. Rather, the spiritual unity of mankind was the ideal of internationalism. So he pleaded that every nation should behave like a member of the international society and submit whatever it had to the wealth of mankind. It was only through the good of the world that real progress could come to any nation. So, the use of nationalist feeling to further the interest of the party leaders was heinous offence. It was in this light that he supported the liberation of all the countries of the world. In Gitanjali he wrote, 'the same stream of life that runs through my veins night and day runs through the world and dances in rhythmic measures'.⁽²²¹⁾

Today, it is a fashion to be internationalist, when Tagore talked of the world, 'not broken into fragments by narrow domestic walls', he was ignored as a lone visionary. But the fact remains that he transmitted the understanding of the East to the West. He treated himself as a world-citizen, not because he became world-famous, but because he felt with the world. He made the world's destiny his own. The little school at Santiniketan became Viswa Bharati, (a world University) a seminary for Eastern studies, (yatra Viswam Bhabathieka nidam), where the world meets in one nest. Viswa Bharati acknowledges India's obligation to offer to others her best and to accept from other their best.⁽²²²⁾ Thus, Tagore fulfilled the task of international understanding. He came out of the ivory tower and took

(223)

upon himself the role of a teacher. In a letter, dated 11.10.17, he wrote to Andrews : 'widest possible outlook for the wide world should be created among the students.' (224) It is my fondest hope that gradually the world ideas would grow in strength until at last they have fulfilled their highest mission, the unification of mind', (225) wrote Tagore. It was a home for the spirit of India, for the spirit of all nations. (226) Tagore believed in the idea of the 'one world' long before it was made popular by American statesman Wendell Wilkie. It was to be founded on racial equality and social justice. It was to be a co-operative world in which the units were free and strong. (227)

We need Tagore, the great sentinel and the master architect, to be enriched by the splendour of his vision and the depths of his wisdom. (228) He was the propagator of religion of man, the renuc iator of base passions of cupidity and hartred. He merely emphasised certain basic truths which men of wisdom had known in all ages and could ignore at their own peril. (230) Let us hope, for the sake of dignity of moral justice in the world, Tagore will be remembered.

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215. I have no caste, no sacred chant,
My sufferings do not reach the deity
imprisoned in his temple.
The priest comes out and sakes smiling,
Have you been inside the temple?

No, I reply.

Dumbfounded he asks, 'Do not you
know it?

No I say.

Have you no caste ? he asks.

No ' ...

Ignored by the multitude, I have hungered for Man's

comradeship, Man round whose meeting place no walls are raised,
and no sentries stand on guard.

'I missed Man within enclosures and found him beyond
all frontiers that divide nation from nation, land from land.' So
writes Kripalani, 'he belongs to the tribe of spiritual outcastes'.

216. 'They call their soldiers,
'Kill, Kill' they sought.
In their roaring mingles,
The music of their hymns,
while the Son of Man, in his agony prays;
O God, fling, fling, far away
This cup filled with the bitterest of poisons'

217. Mukherjee P.K. op.cit., pp. 47-57.

218. Yone, we can no longer be friends ...
when I was young I used to Think, your poems,
delicate and true,
your sould a shy Hamings pink,
your mind a dimpling blue.
But I now clearly' see, instead,
The day of Song has passed you by,
Your colour and imperialist red,
Your poet's truth became a lie.
Your heart has lost its silent ruth,
Blood burns your poet's pen

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