

The Cultural Fabric of Rabindranath Tagore's Philosophy of Cosmopolitanism

**Dr. Pius V Thomas
Bidyut Kanti Paul**

Abstract

The paper explores into the concept of cosmopolitanism in Rabindranath Tagore's Philosophy. Though Tagore couldn't travel fully with his critique of nationalism and the entire extent of the debate, which determined India's destiny later, the authenticity of Tagore's perspective foresaw the most decisive themes of coexistence of our times symptomatically for us, such as, the criticism of nationalism and transnationalism, religion as humanism, the idea of cosmopolitan freedom and education as encounter with nature etc. The paper argues that Tagore's concept of cosmopolitanism is composed of his philosophies of humanism, religion, art and aesthetics and the critique of nationalism. The discussion that is carried out in the paper though briefly examines some of the major works of Tagore. It looks at the theoretical engagements of some of the major contemporary thinkers made with Tagore's thought, especially with his idea of cosmopolitanism. The paper, as it affirms the contemporaneous nature of Tagore's concept of cosmopolitanism, however, suggests a new dimension that it adds to the philosophy of cosmopolitanism

Key Words: Cosmopolitanism, Nationalism, Humanism, Interculturality, Bounded Reason, Creativity, Literary-Aesthetic Cosmopolitanism, Religio-Spiritual Cosmopolitanism

Introduction

Rabindranath Tagore will be remembered as a litterateur, artist and philosopher, who has marked the Indian psyche in a unique way. Rabindranath Tagore's philosophy leaves behind a guiding vision that welds life with radical creativity. Tagore's philosophy, therefore, can be seen as continuing to ignite several dimensions of writing, creation and artistic activity which cut across all Indian languages and literary domains. The gentle and prophetic presence of Tagore's legacy still works as a creative amalgam of dialogical gist, deeply woven literary truths and the celebration of life as intercultural bonding¹. Tagore writings demand many a contemporary rereading from the perspectives and ideas Tagore originally raised in his times. Interculturality as a philosophical perspective becomes lively here in the context of addressing the philosophy of Tagore and seeks as well an anchorage from Tagore's engagements with philosophy and theory.

The Paper attempts at reinterpreting the important notions of Tagore's philosophy, i.e., Tagore's Humanism and the Critique of Nationalism from the perspective of cosmopolitanism. It simultaneously makes a theoretical effort towards forming a soft definitional framework of cosmopolitanism from Tagore's philosophy. The paper presumes that the ideas of dialogue at the centre of Tagore's Humanism and the Critique of Nationalism cannot be fully grounded unless they are aligned with and relocated in the recent ethical and communicative engagements informed by cosmopolitanism.

Cosmopolitanism and Tagore

Cosmopolitanism basically is a doctrine of world citizenship. It imagines that every human being is equally an object of moral concern. The word cosmopolitan is derived from the Greek word *kosmopolites*, which means, a citizen of the world². Cosmopolitanism is entangled with imperialism historically, as Roman Empire took it up from the Stoics who originally created the basic ethical idea of world citizenship to make it into a political idea of world citizenship under the Roman Empire. The major phase is associated with Immanuel Kant and his doctrine of *jus cosmopolitanicum* or cosmopolitan right/cosmopolitan law. Kantian project of cosmopolitanism recognizes related levels of rightful relations. Cosmopolitanism is the idea that all of humanity belongs to a single global community. In the twenty first century, cosmopolitanism suggests the establishment of peaceful global community is an important issue and cosmopolitanism is discussed in diverse social, political, economic, cultural, and ethical contexts. The term is similar to globalism and internationalism but qualitatively different in democratic and freedom emphasis.

Philosophical Cosmopolitans are moral universalists. This group believe that all humans come under the same moral standards. The boundaries between nations, states, cultures are therefore morally irrelevant. Some philosophers and social scholars argue that the objective and subjective conditions creates latest potential for the emergence of a cosmopolitan identity as global citizens and possible formation for a global citizens' movement. Cosmopolitans can be traced back to Diogenes of Sinope (c.412BC). It is said, "When he was asked where he came from, he answered 'I am a citizen of the world.'" This expresses the inner meaning shared by cosmopolitan thinkers that all human beings belong to a single community and the last units of

moral theoretical concern are human beings, and not the state or particular forms of human association. Rabindranath Tagore allies with cosmopolitanism when he took a challenge to overcome the uncritical loyalty to nationalism and to build a world not broken into parts.

Cosmopolitanism basically is a normative theory that promotes world citizenship and in latter face of political reasoning tends to mean that each person should be considered morally from an equal standpoint. Contemporary cosmopolitanism believe that every person has global aspect and as the last unit of moral concern where each person is an object to equal respect and consideration no matter what her citizenship status or other affiliations happen to be. From the standpoint of moral equality cosmopolitans believe not in local obligations but responsibilities to distant others. Moral cosmopolitanism says that there is an ethical sphere that rises above national or social limits and as result that ethical commitments have a global stature. Cosmopolitans insist on the responsibilities we have to those whom we do not know, but whose lives should be of concern to us. The essence of cosmopolitanism considered the ethics to be global in nature that extend responsibilities across borders. There are two types of cosmopolitanism: 1) Weak cosmopolitanism: that there are at least some global obligations that go beyond national borders. 2) Strong cosmopolitanism: holds that global sphere is the primary moral sphere. All duties of justice are motivated from a global view point and national and regional borders are considered to be morally and ethically important from a global perspective.

Rabindranath Tagore was one of the first intellectuals to argue for the importance of cosmopolitan education in the modern world. He wrote that now the issue before us is one nation, this earth, where races as people have to discover both their liberty of self-expression and their federation bond. Humanity must understand a unity that is broader in scope, deeper in feeling, greater in authority than ever before. For Tagore, the unity of mankind revolves on “differences in man that are real”, and at the same time on “consciousness of our unity”. He continues to mention that the “perfection of unity is not in uniformity, but in harmony”. In the context of certain modern philosophical issues, Tagore’s difference between the two types of unity can be explained. The postmodern challenge of modernity in latest theoretical developments is a well-known episode.

In the 1920s, much of the social philosophy of Tagore was developed in the cusp between the two world wars. He was also a significant actor in the decolonization process in India. Thus, his critique of nationalism should be understood in terms of the concrete manifestations of violence and domination. He argued in a series of lectures in Japan and the United Nations that the martial affects of nationalism can be checked through the re-privileging of other forms of human identity that can be found in civil life. It is in these other types of identity that overlapping patterns can be discovered—widely, cultural identity. In the early 20th century, Tagore and Gandhi warned us about the danger of developing a colonial mentality or mental colonization on the issue of modernity and Indian tradition of continuity. Tagore suggests that real modernism is liberty of mind, not slavery of taste, in those days. He noted, “You must apply your Eastern mind, your spiritual strength, your love of simplicity, your recognition of social obligations in order to cut out a new path for this great unworldly car of progress shrieking out its loud discards as it runs.”⁴ Tagore’s cosmopolitanism, therefore, the paper presumes that is the sum of what he always believed that cultural and political future of humanity is in the confluence of cultures and human unity. Tagore believed in the creation of bridges among different cultures for better understanding of human beings so that a big human unity could be established without ignoring their own culture and traditions. Tagore’s philosophy of humanism and his critique of nationalism construct his cosmopolitanism. The cosmopolitan attitude is not derived from a conception of reason. It is dependent upon reason’s articulation of the universal through an engagement with the local. “When we understand this truth in a disinterested spirit, it teaches us to respect all the differences in man that are real yet remain conscious of our oneness.”⁵ The main point of Tagore’s writings was to raise voice against violence which he thought was a crime committed against humanity and therefore his idea of humanism was not only based on universal notion of universal but it was also particular reasoning and for him both are complementary to each other.

Tagore’s Philosophy of Humanism

Tagore’s philosophy has its wings in both *Upanishadic Darshana* and modern western thought. But it goes beyond both. It draws the existential magnitude of the Renaissance man quite distinctively to make him the ‘angel of surpluses. The angel of surplus was not imagined

without a cultural and local identity and individuality. Instead, the ideal of ‘universal man’ has been installed at the heart of human endeavours to attain freedom that is beyond all the bondages. As popularly observed, Tagore's doctrine of universal humanity was to spread spiritual values among people and to create a new world culture out of multicultural reality and diversity, and tolerance. When Gandhi took care of the political sector by essentially being and representing everyman, Tagore served the spiritual and creative side of his countrymen and possibly the whole world.

Similarly, as Rabindranath Tagore had sensible and clearly articulated views about nationalism in the light of education for freedom of the mind, war and peace, the importance of reasonable criticism, the need for openness, he was undoubtedly a powerful critic of worshipping the Nation as God and was horrified by the crimes committed by modern nation-states. Therefore, it can be observed that Tagore’s critique as ‘civilizational’ dissents have ramified into many dimensions. However, its most visible manifestation can be seen in his critique of the fetish of nationalism. His critique of nationalism as the insightful caution against cultural nationalism, ethnocentric and racist ideologies inspired by the broader Indian creative traditions of diversity, not only enlivens his philosophical and creative vision but also adds to the spine of a group of radical Indian dissenters as Ashish Nandy pointed out in one of his major studies on Tagore and Nationalism⁶. Tagore’s scepticism against the dehumanizing regression built into nationalism that can blow out deeper values of friendship, social harmony and spiritual values/progress remains one of the major insights that determine contemporary discussions. Tagore’s Philosophy of Humanism engenders and accommodates his concept of religion, truth, modernity and creativity in a unique fashion.

The word ‘humanism’ has come to mean several things in the history of thought. But today as philosophy it means ‘any system of thought or action which assigns a predominant interest to the affairs of men as compared with the supernatural or the abstract’. Man and his world reached the apex of evolution and it resulted in the greatest mental and intellectual revolution European culture has ever witnessed. There were fast developments in the humanistic thinking and it took different shapes such as Marxism, Existentialism, Pragmatism and so on. The western mode of humanism influenced Indian humanism. According to Tagore, the spirit of humanism was present in the Eastern thought also. When the western humanists concentrate on

the materialistic welfare of man, Indian humanists focus on the spiritual and the ethical nature of man. Indian humanism, perhaps Tagore would say, had been rooted in the Upanishadic, Vaishnav and the Buddhist and many untold local traditions.

Though, Tagore acknowledges his indebtedness to the Upanishadic tradition, he gives much value to the view that truth which he has understood is not borrowed from any philosophy, but his concept of truth is the truth that he intuitively felt. Therefore, the essence of Tagore's humanism is his strong faith in infinite potential of human beings. Tagore's Humanism, based on many streams of thought makes for harmonious existence. Man is the centre of Tagore's humanism. And about his humanism we can say, Tagore's humanism which is spiritualistic in form no doubt influenced by Upanishad but his humanism is his own. Tagore was extremely influenced by the Saint poet Kabir (what attract Tagore in Kabir was his contempt for religious exclusivism), the elements of values of sacrifice, forgiveness, kindness, non-violence, compassion, love, universal, fraternity, unity, equality, peace, formation of characters of man as social being, morality, religion, humanity and faith associated with Buddhist teaching and culture, Christianity, Buddhism, Vaishnavism and the liberal humanism of Brahma Samaj and Bauls. However, the chapter supports the view that Tagore's humanism was not the echo of the above schools but his own. It seems that the writings of Rabindranath Tagore enable us to explore some of the criticism leveled against humanism more productively.

According to Tagore, the Universal man is in every individual person. He lives even in the humblest man. Therefore, we should not neglect even the most poor, illiterate and humble human being. Explaining the meaning of universal man Tagore said, "This personality which is the conscious principle of oneness, the centre of relationship is the reality – therefore, the ultimate object of attainment. I must emphasize the fact, that this world is real world only in its relation to content personality"⁷. The perfection what an individual attains is not his personal possession. It is also aimed at benefit of the society. So, selfish individualism is sacrificed at the altar of broader spiritual humanism. His perfection leads him to have a link with infinity.) Tagore's fundamental end of religion of man as 'divinity of man' and God's manifestation in humanity is established. Thus, Tagore's ideal of 'Universal Humanism' as derived from his religion of man, finally establishes man a comprehensive religious platform fostering a novel Humanism in the socio-cultural form, spelling out a new society for man, which is the spirit an

integral consciousness of man as man from different points of view expressing. Man's diversity of interests and prospects, This universal man is known by the individual not through direct realization. He says, "Reality in all its manifestation reveals itself in the emotional and imaginative background of our mind. We know it not because we think of it, but because we directly feel it. It is not vanished from our conscious mind"⁸. Tagore sees that the goal of religion is attaining union with the Infinite. Philosophy is concerned with the knowledge of reality, and the realization of reality is the concern of religion. Knowing reality implies an intellectual activity and its realization is religious activity; According to Tagore, reality cannot be known by the intellect. The Infinite has to be realized by the individual in his intuitive experience.

The perfection, potential in human nature, is recognized by Rabindranath as the power of surplus in human life. In different essays like 'The surplus – in Man', 'The Creative Spirit', 'Man's Universe', Rabindranath explains the history of the development of human nature which is the evolutionary progress of developing the power of surplus in human life. Human life comes along a long course of evolution, which, according to Tagore, is a gradual realization of his inner power of surplus in man which exceeds the narrowness or limitations of his life. Tagore explains, "... in order to know truly man in his religion cultivates the vision of Being who exceeds him in truth and with whom also he has his kinship"⁹. This idea of the creative power of surplus, is derived by Tagore, from the productive idea of *Uchista* in *Atharva Veda* that explains the completeness about the nature and existence of man. In the creative spirit, Tagore explains this constructive nature as – "Righteousness, truth, great endeavour, expire, religion, enterprise, heroism and prosperity, the past and the future, dwell in the surpassing strength of the surplus"¹⁰.

This power of the surplus in man urges him to realize the diverse aspect of life, which gradually inspires him to know and to realize the Ultimate Principle or Supreme value of life. The development of this supreme value in human existence as the realization of Ultimate Reality as Brahman, is nothing but the manifestation of perfection in man. Through this realization "He tries to sublimate his individual self into a manifestation which he believes to have the majesty of the ideal man." Thus, through this procedure, man, "becomes one with his God, for him, his God is nothing greater power"¹¹.

Tagore in his ideal of religion conceives of religion as something which ultimately makes man identical with God and this can be possible only through the complete realization of power or perfection in him. In fact, the humanism of Tagore is just the application of the belief that feeling anything as human – in the human way is a source of joy. It is the human mind that reveals the meaning and significance of things. He says, “It is almost a truism to say that the world is what we perceive it to be. We imagine that our mind is a mirror, that it is more or less accurately reflecting what is happening outside us”¹² The one effort of our personality is to transform everything with which we have any true concern into the human. For example, the description of the beauty of sunrise has its eternal interest in us because, in fact, it is not the sunrise that catches our interest, but the fact of sunrise in relation to our interest or aesthetic sense. In this connection Niradh C Choudhury makes an observation that “Tagore was a pantheist and deist, who sought self realization through “a closer contiguity with the world. Tagore’s God was both a transcendental and personal diety”¹³.

Tagore equates love with truth and truth with beauty. He says that it is only when one can detach from the narrow boundaries of selfishness, can one have true vision of the beauty, which is omnipresent and realize its everlasting relation with truth. This is the ultimate object on existence, that we must even know that ‘beauty is truth, truth is beauty ; we must realize the whole world in love, for loves give its birth, sustains it, and takes it back to the bosom. Tagore thinks that there is no other concept of truth, except human truth. The entire universe is linked up with us, and it indicates that the truth of the universe is human truth. According to Tagore, “when our universe is in harmony with man, the eternal, we know it as truth, we fell it as beauty”¹⁴. Intellect is insufficient to unravel truth. Truths are revealed in intuition. God or Brahman cannot be known by debates. Tagore explains this clearly in Sadhana: Intellectual knowledge is partial, because our intellect is an instrument, it is only a part of us, it can give us information about things which can be divided and analyzed, and whose properties can be classified, part by part. But Brahma is perfect, and knowledge which is partial can never be knowledge of him. But he can be known by joy, by love. For joy is knowledge in completeness, it is knowing by our whole being¹⁵. Tagore’s message of love and universal brotherhood, and his ideals of Universal Man and one world are expressions of his humanistic attitude. But the uniqueness of his humanism

consisted in raising humanity to the level of Ultimate Reality. He firmly held that all human concepts derive their meaning and significance only when they are related to human values.

Tagore's Critique of Nationalism

Tagore's legacy justifiably reminds us how the unique humanism that operates in Tagore's creative endeavours constantly problematizes the discourses on 'national/Indian and Asian identities', 'Trans-cultural and Intercultural understanding of culture', 'the interface between spirituality and religion', 'democracy and linguistic representation', and 'education and the idea of the university' etc. Consequently, Tagore's critique as 'civilizational' dissent has ramified into many dimensions. However, its most visible manifestation can be seen in his critique of the fetish of nationalism. His critique of nationalism which was inspired by the broader Indian creative traditions of diversity and as the insightful caution against cultural nationalism, ethnocentric and racist ideologies not only enlivens his philosophical and creative vision but also adds to the spine of a group of radical Indian dissenters as Ashish Nandy pointed out in one of his major studies on Tagore and Nationalism. As Tagore asks the Almighty in his song 'Bhuban Jora Ashankhani', his critique of narrow nationalism is a creative appeal "to the universal spirit to spread his seat of universality in the individual's heart":

Your universe-encompassing prayer mat

Spread it out in the core of my heart.

The night's stars, the day's sun, all the shades of darkness and light,

All your messages that fill the sky –

Let them find their abode in my heart.

May the lute of the universe

Fill the depths of my soul with all its tunes.

All the intensity of grief and joy, the flower's touch, the storm's touch –

Let your compassionate, auspicious, generous hands

Bring into the core of my heart.

Tagore's political thought may be described as cosmopolitan Universal humanism. Tagore pleads for internationalism. Pointing out to internationalism as the need of our time, Tagore maintained that for its own safety, each nation should work for universal welfare. According to Tagore, the human world is also the woman's world. Woman should extend their radiance beyond the boundaries of the family. Tagore held that freedom was the pre-condition for life progress according to him, "real freedom is of the mind and the spirit. It can never come to us from outside". He only has freedom who ideally loves freedom himself and is glad to extend it to others. Tagore understood freedom in political, social, cultural, metaphysical, artistic terms. Tagore's message of love and universal brotherhood, and his ideals of Universal Man and one world are expressions of his humanistic attitude. But the uniqueness of his humanism consisted in raising humanity to the level of Ultimate Reality.

As an internationalist Tagore critiqued the narrowly defined concepts of nationalism and patriotism. This desire was closely related to the program of education. The educational experiment promoted by Tagore sought to empower students, arouse their natural curiosity, expose them to many world cultures, encourage respect for the wellsprings of traditional culture, introduce art, music, theatre and dance to all aspects of education. Tagore was a worshiper of nature, and in profound kinship with nature. Rabindranath Tagore had deep reservations about Gandhi's emphasis on nationalism. The chapter looks into Gandhi-Tagore debate on Nationalism.

As Tagore cannot be confined or defined by the narrow boundaries of nationalism and his greatness lies in acceptance, recognition and respect of each and every culture of the world, he believed in openness and mutual acceptance as an approach to bring together the distinct cultures of the world to a point of convergence. According Tagore, humanity is indivisible and societies such as Indian's could redeem themselves. According to Tagore, Nationalism is a source of war and carnage, death, destruction and divisiveness rather than international solidarity and that induces a larger, more expansive vision of the world. The dangers of nationalism had become evident to Tagore in the wake of the First World War. Tagore expressed these ideas in his essays "Nationalism in the west", "Nationalism in Japan", "Nationalism in India", collected in his book,

Nationalism (1916), based on his lectures in west and Japan. His Novel mainly, *The Home and the world* and *Four chapters*, carry the same ideas. According to him, Nationalism is a political and commercial union of a group of people formed to advance their material benefits. It is based on organized self-interested and not altruism, which, therefore detracts from humanity and the spiritual nature of man. Tagore dismissed such nationalism as ‘The organized self-interest of a people,’ which is “least human and least spiritual.” He saw it as a constant threat to humanity. The Chapter aims to show that Tagore’s views on nationalism are formulated from the point of view of Indian civilizational values: freedom and unity of mankind.

According to Tagore, the western concept of nation is not applicable to Indian soil and climate. Nationalism is a political concept, is entirely a new phenomenon. It is the necessary consequences of the modern nation state system. Tagore called nationalism a great menace; stating that he was ‘not against one nation in particular, but against the general idea of all nations. Tagore’s critique of nationalism deserves a place of honour in a global tradition that includes such modern intellectual titans as Nietzsche and Russell. In fact, a comparison with Nietzsche redounds to Tagore’s credit. A critique of this political philosophy also emerged through the work of Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore. Tagore undoubtedly was a powerful critique of worshipping the nation as God and was horrified by the crimes committed by modern nation-state.

Tagore’s scepticism against the dehumanizing regression built into nationalism that can blow out deeper values of friendship, social harmony and spiritual values/progress remains one of the major insights that determine contemporary discussions on human freedom and creativity. Gurudev presents us here a unique cosmopolitanism in the contemporary context of understanding human beings, life and dialogicality. It can be undoubtedly stated that Tagore’s philosophical insights are capable enough to offer one of the important alternative frameworks that the hermeneutic-critical-deconstructive intent traces out of the postcolonial meta-theoretical approaches to situate the Indian intellectual engagements. Moreover, the burgeoning cognitive and theoretically challenging atmosphere that Tagore’s philosophy puts forward articulates the endeavours to understand cultural critique and the multicultural reality of India --in the Indian context- more meaningfully.

Tagore's Cosmopolitanism: Contemporary Readings

Contemporary political and social readings of Tagore's concept of cosmopolitanism are rich and nuanced. Thinkers like Martha C. Nussbaum, Amartya Sen, Isaiah Berlin, Ashis Nandi and Sarindranath Tagore are the major interlocutors among many others in engaging with the Tagorean idea of cosmopolitanism. Martha Nussbaum, has elaborately argued that Rabindranath Tagore's political thinking can be best captured by the philosophical discourse of cosmopolitanism¹⁶. Martha Nussbaum's critique of patriotism and her attendant defense of cosmopolitanism argue that Tagore's understanding of universality is not of an abstract stoic Kantian sort, but assures that understanding and morality relating to other based on particular cultural tradition¹⁷. Martha Nussbaum argues that in Nikhilesh's character in *Home and the World*, Tagore's world charts a position where the absolute privilege of national identity is morally blameworthy at the expense of broader forms of identity. Nussbaum, reads Tagore's political stance as cosmopolitanism, as Sarindranath Tagore says, '...though (Nussbaum) summoning(s) Tagore's ideas concerning cosmopolitanism, especially as evinced by the character of Nikhil in the novel *The Home and the World*, is more generally interested in producing a philosophical critique of patriotism¹⁸. In fact, Martha Nussbaum claims that narrow nationalism undermines the very virtues which unite a country: "I believe that Tagore sees deeply when he observes that, at bottom, nationalism and ethnocentric particularism are not alien to one another, but akin – that to give support to nationalist sentiments subverts, ultimately, even the values that hold a nation together, because it substitutes a colorful idol for the substantive universal values of justice and right"¹⁹. Nussbaum links Tagore's idea of cosmopolitanism with the tradition of cosmopolitanism which starts from the Stoics 'who developed The image of the kosmopolitēs, or world citizen, more fully, arguing that each of us dwells, in effect, in two communities—the local community of our birth, and the community of human argument and aspiration that "is truly great and truly common" It is the latter community that is, most fundamentally, the source of our moral and social obligations. With respect to fundamental moral values such as justice, "we should regard all human beings as our fellow citizens and local residents"²⁰.

Criticizing Nussbaum's idea of Tagore's cosmopolitanism which is conceptually thin as its conception of reason is western enlightenment centred, Sarindraath Tagore argues that 'cosmopolitan sensibility can emerge with requisite thickness if a more nuanced reading of reason is produced' and claims that 'Tagore's thinking has the resources for sustaining such a thicker version of cosmopolitanism'²¹.

According to Sarindranath Tagore, Rabindranath Tagore's bounded and tradition embedded reason...

...cuts through the binary of the bounded and the detached conceptions, resonating respectively with Lyotardian and Kantian insights, and aspires to weave together the local and the universal in a single strategic sweep. The goal of universal reason to seek unity, which is the cosmopolitan idea of humanity, supervenes on the negotiation of difference through adjustments. While it is not entirely clear what the mechanisms of these adjustments are, it is plain enough that any such 'adjustments,' either social or individual, must be tuned to the details of the local. The cosmopolitan attitude here is not derived from a conception of reason that in its universality always tends toward abstractions; rather, it is dependent upon reason's articulation of the universal through an engagement with the local. In other words, reason can make it possible for one tradition to converse with another; it is possible to widen my own tradition by importing elements into it from another. Otherness, in this view, is not a fixed universal artifact open to the gaze of abstract reason partly constitutive of Orientalist discourse (cf. Said). The other in the Tagorean view is transportable

across cultures. There is every reason to suppose that my tradition can expand to include elements from other traditions in the flow of cultural history²².

Sarindranath Tagore invites us to look at the birth and evolution of Hindustani music as an example of cross-cultural reason that creates qualified cosmopolitanism, 'which is a great collaborative effort between Hindu and Muslim cultures. This means that the identities of traditions are malleable, and it is precisely the property of malleability that makes the adoption of the cosmopolitan attitude an exciting possibility'²³.

The present paper again resorts to Sarindranath Tagore's reconstructive understanding of Tagore's cosmopolitan reason which tells us further that ...

Thus for Tagore, cosmopolitanism does not derive its justification through the theoretical contemplation of abstractions, as the Stoic or the Kantian approach would suggest; rather, the motivation to be a cosmopolitan is ultimately grounded in an existential orientation, a way of being in the world. The Tagorean conception of rationality does not merely yield postmodern toleration of alterity, but aspires to dissolve instances of otherness altogether by enriching one's own tradition through hermeneutic absorption and assimilation. It is from this substantive account of otherness that Tagore's pivotal statement of what I take to be his cosmopolitan attitude is to be understood: '[W]hatever we understand and enjoy in human products instantly become ours, wherever they might have their origin. I am proud of my humanity, when I can acknowledge the poets and artists of other countries as my own' (Letters to a Friend 111, emphasis added). For Tagore, the cosmopolitan attachment to the ideal of humanity is also facilitated by

the aesthetic category of enjoyment. A response to alterity that is built on interpretive strategies will have to presuppose a tradition that can act as an anchor to interpretation. Moreover, such acts of interpretation enrich the self by continuously interrogating alterity by widening the scope of tradition²⁴.

Tagore's cosmopolitanism, Sarindranath Tagore continues to ask us to understand that it '...is also in part a consequence of his philosophical and historiographical conviction that social life cannot be reductively captured by statist conceptions of history. Indeed, not just history but all determinations of the human condition, for Tagore will suffer impoverishment, if seen through 'statist blinkers.' The logic of the nation, Tagore claimed in his great lectures on nationalism 'will never heed the voice of truth and goodness. It will go on its ring-dance of moral corruption, linking steel unto steel, and machine unto machine; trampling under its tread all the sweet flowers of simple faith and the living ideals of man' (Nationalism 24)²⁵. Sarindranath Tagore adds to the above that 'While political identities are exclusive, cultural identities are not. In this sense of Tagore's critique of the state, his understanding of cosmopolitan capacities becomes intelligible: reason can be used to not only tolerate otherness but – by questioning the boundaries between the home and the world – it can expand the reach of tradition'²⁶.

In this context it would be interesting to be reminded of another major observation of Martha Nussbaum that Rabindranath Tagore 'implements a new religion' which is the religiosity of popular music, adds to his conception of cosmopolitanism. Nussbaum writes, 'So Tagore has made not just pluralism, harmony, and mutual respect but also made... dissent and critical thinking objects of passionate devotion'²⁷. Tagore's aesthetics basically conforms to Indian's view on art: where strong sense of humanism and realism apparently manifested on the short

stories he has written and artistically woven with evident lyricism. His ideal of creativity and freedom, two ideas of the same coin to him, was confined only to artistic matters. Tagore believed that creative freedom percolates through social and political freedom.

The Inter-cultural Texture of Tagore's Cosmopolitanism

As Ashish Nandy has pointed out Tagore was a patriot who thought India was a country of communities²⁸. He adds to it that while patriotism is a natural sentiment, nationalism is an ideology²⁹. Tagore was philosophically alien to such ideology. As Tagore writes, the principle of creative unity mingles the one in him with the universe of the many. As Tagore says, 'This One in me is creative. Its creations are a pastime, through which it gives expression to an ideal of unity in its endless show of variety. Such are its pictures, poems, music, in which it finds joy only because they reveal the perfect forms of an inherent unity'.

In his 'Religion of an Artist and Religion of Man' Tagore declares that he does not believe in any borrowed religion. He calls his religion "a poet's religion." Religion, for him is the essence of human being. Tagore sees the beauty of this universe in the harmonious relationship in the face of diversity. Communal disharmony and religious divisions are the result of our limited vision which does not penetrate into the harmonious relationship of the world, but settles for usefulness and efficiency. Tagore's thought on religion starts with the Upanishads which he inherited, and then he takes a long root to finish with The Religion of Man. On the way he takes ideas from different religions and sects: from Buddhism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, including Saiva tradition, Bhakti tradition, the Sufi tradition, the Sant tradition of mediaeval India, Sahajiya and Bauls of Bengal, getting inspiration from a variety of texts, such as Gita, Ramayana, Mahabharata, etc. In the present age what one needs is a spiritual religion that will be able to unveil human personalities adding new meaning to one's life and produce a world-harmony. Rabindranath Tagore's *The Religion of Man* can truly fulfill the need of modern man which has all above-mentioned qualities for a true religion of the twentieth century. In the field of international relation, his message of unity and educational and cultural intercourse between different countries can make a happy world. In this age people talk about world brotherhood, cosmopolitanism, and international citizenship. Today they understand the evils of

wars and in every corner of the world men's sense of good are working which wants peace and international brotherhood. Rabindranath Tagore's ideal of human unity, universal peace and internationalism should be the ideal of all races of all countries.

Tagore's novel *Gora*, written more than hundred years ago, at a very crucial period of time in Indian history, contextualizes and challenges the construction of India as a nation on the basis of authoritative national identity. Though *Gora* as the novel or work of art is a complex one and it was studied and interpreted in different levels, the core of its message is interculturality of life, the study presumes. The different ideas that the novel depicts like friendship, motherhood, love, caste, discrimination, women, emancipation, nation and nationalism, religion, spirituality, time and space provide a deep view of Tagore's vision of interculturality. *The Home and the World*, in the original Bengali, *Ghore Baire* or *Ghare Baire*, 1916 novel by Rabindranath Tagore, as many commentators have pointed out, illustrates the battle Tagore had with himself, between the ideas of Western culture and revolution against the Western culture. The study argues that the novel is the literary demonstration of cross-cultural struggles in search of an intercultural edifice for cultural progress. Tagore's *Gitanjali (Song Offerings)* presents poems (103 in number) which manifest divinity in all objects and the aspects of the Universe. Though these poems are on themes like God, Love, Nature, Children, Love of the world and humanity and so on what Tagore seems to be achieving or creating the literary intercultural genre which brings together many a strands of poetic imagination, ideas and lyricism to include the influence of the Upanishads, The Vaishnava Poets, The folk songs of Bengal and the vivid style of Kalidas.

The paper, therefore, registers its concluding statement that Tagore's cosmopolitanism adds to the models of ethical and political cosmopolitanism as a principle of coexistence, a literary-aesthetic and religio-spiritual dimension of cosmopolitanism, which is informed by unity attained through creativity and mutual self-understanding. Tagore's vernacular cosmopolitanism informed by his literary-aesthetic and religio-spiritual cosmopolitanism reflectively precipitates a literary, religio-spiritual mode of inter-cross-cultural praxis as well.

Notes and Reference:

¹ Pius V Thomas. 'Tagore's Concept of Cosmopolitanism and Interculturality'. Unpublished paper; and Rabindranath Tagore's Legacy: Remembering Tagore, Editorial Page Article, Eastern Chronicle, (Daily-Silchar Edition). 9th May, 2017. 6

² Common and Popular Sources including Net Resources.

³

⁴ Rabindranath Tagore. **The English Writings of Tagore, Vol.III.** edited by Sisir Kumar Das. 1996. 368

⁵ Rabindranath Tagore. **Creative Unity.** 1922, 171-172

⁶ Ashish Nandy. **The Illegitimacy of Nationalism : Rabindranath Tagore and the Politics of Self.** New Delhi. Oxford University Press. 153. Nandi claims that Tagore and Gandhi – as with all other 'Afro-Asian reformers' – had tried to grapple with and reconcile 'Three basic sets of Contradictions or oppositions: that between the East and the West; that between tradition and modernity; and that between the past and present.'

⁷ Tagore, *Amar Dharma* (Bengali), 2016, 4

⁸ Rabindranath Tagore. **The Religion of Man.** 1931 / 1958. 130

⁹ Ibid. 38

¹⁰ Ibid. 27

¹¹ Ibid. 35

¹² Ibid. 47

¹³ N. C. Choudhury. **Thy Hand, Great Anarch.** London .Addison Wesley.1987. 615

¹⁴ Quoted from "Conversation and Interviews: Einstein and Tagore", in the English writings of **Rabindranath Tagore, Vol.3,** by Sisir Kr. Das New Delhi Sahitya Akademi, 2008, 911. Tagore believes that Truth and beauty are also dependent upon man.

¹⁵ Tagore. **Sadhana: The Realization of Life.**1st Edition (1913). 1957. 295

¹⁶ Martha C. Nussbaum. **For Love of Country: Debating the Limits of Patriotism.** Edited by Joshua Cohen. Boston. Beacon Press. 1996. 3-17

¹⁷ Ibid. 8-16

¹⁸ Sarindranath Tagore. "Tagore's conception of cosmopolitanism: a reconstruction". In **University of Toronto Quarterly,** volume 77, number 4, fall 2008.

¹⁹ Martha Nussbaum, **For Love of Country: Debating the Limits of Patriotism,** Edited by Joshua Cohen. Boston. Beacon Press 1996. 5

²⁰ Nussbaum, Martha C. **Cultivating Humanity.** Harvard. Harvard University Press. 1998. 52. (Kindle Edition).

²¹ Sarindranath Tagore. "Tagore's conception of cosmopolitanism: a reconstruction". In **University of Toronto Quarterly,** volume 77, number 4, fall 2008. 1077

²² Ibid. 1077

²³ Ibid. 1077

²⁴ Ibid. 1077-78

²⁵ Ibid. 1080

²⁶ Ibid. 1080

²⁷ Martha C. Nussbaum. **Political Emotions.** Harvard. Harvard University Press. 2013. 104

²⁸ Ashish Nandy, 'Tagore on Nationalism: Conversation with Ashish Nady'. Interviewed by N Goplakrishnanan. www. Sahapedia.org

²⁹ Ibid

Dr. Pius V Thomas is Faculty, Department of Philosophy, Assam University, Silchar.

Bidyut Kanti Paul is Research Scholar, Department of Philosophy, Assam University, Silchar