Introduction

The initial idea for this enquiry germinated from Benedict Anderson’s book *Imagined Communities*. His discussions in the book in which he focused on the emergence of ‘nation’ during the era of what he calls ‘Print Capitalism’ have inspired me to take up themes like ‘nationalism’ ‘nationalist imaginings’ and novelistic manifestations of them in a text. By isolating two of his key ideas, i.e. nation as an imagined community and the simultaneity of the rise of the modern national consciousness and the novel we can say that these ideas are drawing a fair bit of attention from critical quarters for some years now. Research is conducted about the role of fiction, especially novels, in national imaginings and also about the other closely-related corollary theme – the nature of encodings of nationalist discourse in the novels. In my research I take up these two themes, in the context of postcolonial India. I have chosen Rabindranath Tagore’s prose fiction, his novels and short stories, as my primary material in order to explore the complex relationships between Indian nationalist discourse and fictional representation of nationalist concerns. However, before elaborating the reasons behind my choice of texts and the precise role of postcolonial theories in this investigation or methodology to be adopted in my research, it is necessary to focus on the close and intricate relationships that recent critical exercises have traced between the ‘nation’ and the novel.

During the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century, Europe witnessed the phenomenal rise of the European vernaculars during the new age of ‘Print Capitalism’, their establishment as languages of state after 1820 as well as the independent growth European literature as a number of ‘national’ literatures. Therefore, the formulation of the discourse of ‘nation’, ‘nationalism’ ‘nation-state’, ‘citizen subject’ and the birth of the idea of ‘national’ literatures have a curious simultaneity about them. As a possible analysis of this, loosely following Benedict Anderson’s notion of ‘nation an imagined community’ we can say that nations are imaginary constructs that depend for their existence on an apparatus of cultural fictions. The imaginative literature, especially the novel, plays a decisive role in this. The rise of European nationalism coincided especially with one form of literature – the novel. Timothy Brennan in his essay ‘The National Longing for Form’ writes, ‘It was the novel that historically accompanied the rise of nations by
objectifying the ‘one, yet many’ of national life, and by mimicking the structure of the nation, a clearly bordered jumble of languages and styles. Deploying the theories of Benedict Anderson, Erich Auerbach, Walter Benjamin and others Brennan highlights the peculiar flexibility of the novel as a genre to incorporate within its sphere heterogeneous experiences of the nation, the polyglot world. This can be done primarily by reproducing ostensibly separate ‘levels of style’ corresponding to different social classes; a jumble of poetry, drama, newspaper report, memoir and speech and also by a mixture of the jargons of race and ethnicity. The rise of the novel brought changes in the concept of ‘realism’. Within realism’s new ‘national’ framework the novel brought together the ‘high’ and the ‘low’ spheres of the nation’s cultural horizon for specific national reasons. This new framework came to involve, ‘The serious treatment of everyday reality, the rise of more extensive and socially inferior human groups to the position of subject-matter for problematic existential representation.’

There is another feature of the novel which is very significant for my thesis. It is about the unique nature of the novel-reading experience which turned an essentially isolated and private experience into something which assumes communal dimensions. It is necessary to quote Brennan, at length, here:

‘Print-capitalism’, according to Anderson, meant ideological insemination on a large scale, and created the conditions where people could begin to think of themselves as a nation. The novel’s created world allowed for multitudinous actions occurring simultaneously within a single, definable community, filled with ‘calendrical coincidences’ and what Anderson calls (after Benjamin) ‘traverse, cross-time’. Read in isolation, the novel was nevertheless a mass ceremony; one could read alone with the conviction that millions of others were doing the same at the same time.

This communal dimension ingrained in the novel-reading experience has its corollary – the emergence of the ‘nation-space’ within the spatio-temporal matrix of the novel. If the worldly becomes textual, in this way, within the novel it is important that we look closely at the poetics of the novelistic genre and its power to reproduce the ‘nation’ with all its spatial palpability and temporal simultaneity.
In the context of literary articulations in colonized countries, critics are sharply divided over the degree of the importance of nationalistic concerns in the literature of many countries which have been colonies in the past. The ‘Fredric Jameson – Aijaz Ahmad’ debate has drawn enormous attention from postcolonial studies-circles, both in Western and Third World academics. While Jameson develops his all-encompassing category of ‘national allegory’ for all Third World texts, Ahmad goes for larger less restrictive category of ‘collectivity’. Ahmad also highlights the process of separation of the ‘public’ and the ‘private’ – the necessary fall-out of capitalistic system of production ingrained in the literary efforts of the Third World. My readings would emphasize a more temperate alternative. In this context, it is worth recalling Neil Lazarus’s elaboration in his essay ‘National Consciousness and the Specificity of (Post) colonial Intellectualism’. Lazarus writes, ‘(For) it seems to me that “a certain nationalism” is fundamental in the ‘Third World”. It is fundamental, arguably because it is only on the terrain of the nation that an articulation between cosmopolitan intellectualism and popular consciousness can be forged.

A fundamental premise for my understanding is that the ‘nation’ provides some kind of a matrix for the enunciation of a nationalist discourse, be it imaginative literature and genres like novel or other non-literary texts. My purpose here is to explore the problematic relationship that exists between nationalism as a concept and the novelistic portrayal of it. I would like to clarify here that ‘nationalism’ has turned out to be one of the chief concerns of the postcolonial theorists whether they belong to the domain of psychoanalysis, social sciences or cultural history or even literary criticism. Theoreticians from diverse disciplines and different ideological standpoints such as Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Homi K. Bhabha, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Partha Chatterjee, Tanika Sarkar, Ashis Nandy et al. have all grappled with the problematic of nationalism and postcoloniality.

Rabindranath Tagore, however, took the position of a non-conformist when, during his life-time, the official nationalist discourse was taking its shape. In a letter, dated 8 March 1921, to Jagadananda Roy, one among the first group of teachers to join Visva-Bharati, he refers to ‘nationalism’ as a bhoulolik apadebata, a territorial demon. Tagore carried on his strife against this demon till the very end of his life. Tagore believed in freedom, individual freedom and freedom for the oppressed.
Tagore also believed in the uniqueness of every individual. These beliefs of Tagore led him to protest against any kind of systematic standardisation of human endeavours. From his strong dislike for the aims and objectives of colonial education system, programmed to produce clerks, to his protest against Mahatma Gandhi’s creed of the charkha, a mass of people blindly following a unitary principle; from his championing the cause of awakening atmashakti to his trenchant critique of the use of violence in achieving political independence – Tagore the polemicist as well as Tagore the activist always stood firm in his faith that each single individual is a unique creation of the Almighty.

To him, it is for the best possible interest of all concerned that the individuality of each human being must not be curbed or moulded into a predetermined pattern but be given adequate opportunity to flourish to his full potential. It is this faith in the inscrutable marvel called ‘man’ that, like a common thread, binds many varied ideas and activities of Tagore. Among them are his foregrounding of samaj in the nation-building project during the imperial rule, his experiments in a holistic system of education through the establishment and development of Visva-Bharati, his theories and practice in rural reconstruction and most importantly his continuous attempts to outgrow any form of parochialism, be it nationalist or of other types. His ultimate goal was to arrive at an inclusionist cosmopolitanism, a scheme of things in which the best and the greatest thoughts and achievements of both the 'East' and the 'West' be offered to the welfare of humanity.

In his long career as an artist and a polemicist Tagore continued to grapple with the issue of ‘nationalism’, which he thought of as a western import and, therefore, had no future of an organic growth on Indian soil. He almost incessantly wrote about ‘nationalism’ and its contemporary theories; in his autobiographical writings and his writings on education, in lectures, in letters and articles and creative writings. The search for an answer to the problems facing his country, social, political, psychological and even economic, and the possible role of ‘nationalism’ in solving the problems, ultimately takes the shape of his last novel, Char adhyay. This novel which, for me, is Tagore's tour de force critique of the dehumanising tendencies inherent in a violent struggle for independence is a clear testimony of the inability of ‘nationalism’ to solve the problems. It, as a matter of fact, compounds the problems further as, for Tagore it has the potential to desensitize and to corrupt human souls.
He would rather make a journey which would take him to, to borrow Frantz Fanon’s ideas, from a location of ‘national consciousness’ to ‘international consciousness’, the final destination. I think it will not be out of place to quote Fanon at length here, although his words are spoken in evidently African contexts:

The consciousness of self is not the closing of a door to communication. Philosopchic thought teaches us, on the contrary, that it is its guarantee. National consciousness, which is not nationalism, is the only thing that will give us an international dimension. . .

The building of a nation is of necessity accompanied by the discovery and encouragement of universalizing values. Far from keeping aloof from other nations, therefore, it is national liberation which leads the nation to play its part on the stage of history. It is at the heart of national consciousness that international consciousness lives and grows. . .

To know the specific nature of Tagore’s inclusionist internationalism, or as the term ‘cosmopolitanism’ in such contexts, it is important that we look at cultural and familial heritage from which Tagore continued to draw upon throughout his creative career. In his Introduction to the Penguin edition of Tagore's Nationalism, Ramachandra Guha comments that Tagore’s cosmopolitanism was, to a great extent, a product of his family background. He quotes a letter that Tagore wrote to his friend Pramatha Chaudhuri in January 1885 in which he spoke of the tension in his own mind between the contending forces of East and West. Tagore writes:

‘I sometimes detect in myself . . . a background where two opposing forces are constantly in action, one beckoning me to peace and cessation of all strife, the other egging me on to battle. It is though the restless energy and the will to action of the West were perpetually assaulting the citadel of my Indian placidity. Hence this swing of the pendulum between passionate pain and calm detachment, between lyrical abandon and philosophising between love of my country and mockery of patriotism, between an itch to enter the lists and a longing to wrapt in thought.‘

This ambivalence in Tagore's mind gets a rather refracted manifestation during the heydays of Swadeshi Movement. Tagore's participation in the movement in its initial phase was whole-hearted, to say the least. Poems and songs poured out from his pen.
It is this productive period of his patriotic phase in his poetic career that made critics comment that Tagore sang India into a nation. But he withdrew himself completely from the movement when it took a rather violent turn and the key players of the movement failed to involve all classes and religious groups into it. Tagore became especially upset when in the name of boycotting foreign goods the leaders indulged in oppressing poor, Muslim peasants and small-time traders. After 1907 Tagore not only stopped participating in any political event; but he also started to spend most of his days in Bolpur, devoting himself completely to the cause of the development of his dream institution, Visva-Bharati.

After his series of lectures published as *Nationalism* in 1917 Tagore published *The Centre of Indian Culture* in 1919, his major treatise on the ideal kind of education for students of India. For him India was a country plagued not only by an oppressive foreign rule but also by various other kinds of social evil. It is no mere accidental coincidence that when Tagore decided to leave active politics he primarily concentrated on issues related to education: and that his two major English publications, *Nationalism* and *The Centre of Indian Culture* followed one another.

In his famous Bangla essay *Swadeshi Samaj* he discussed in great detail why the 'Indian samaj' (not identical with the western notion of 'society') should be made into the primary building-block of India– the nation, and how it should once again be turned into a self-sufficient, self-governed unit. He even sketched somewhat of a constitution for this rejuvenated *swadeshi samaj* as to how this should be governed. He knew that the story of political subjugation for this country will one day end but trouble will not be over for the poor, hapless people of this country until we turn our attention to the problems which neither the British rulers nor the nationalist leaders had so far taken concrete steps to eradicate. In a letter to the *Manchester Guardian* dated 2 October 1936 Tagore writes, ‘The chronic want of food and water, the lack of sanitation and medical help, the neglect of means of communication, the poverty of educational provision, the all-pervading spirit of depression that I have myself seen prevail in our villages after over a hundred years of British rule make me despair. . .’

Tagore's experience as a zamindar in Shelaidoho and Potisar in present-day Bangladesh gave him enough opportunity to witness these evils from very close quarters.
Uma Das Gupta in her introductory note to the last section of the anthology of Tagore’s writings on education and nationalism, ‘A Self-respecting Nationalism as Our Salvation’, writes:

Tagore's position on nationalism was under attack from the Indian nationalist leadership with the exception of Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru who valued and adopted Tagore's world-embracing and inclusive nationalism for India's future as a liberal, secular democracy. Tagore posited the idea that the history of the growth of freedom is the history of the perfection of human relationships.¹¹

The idea ‘growth of freedom’ has as its corollary in the idea, ‘individuality of the self’. Bikash Chakravarty in his essay, ‘Swadeshi Samaj: Rabindranath and the Nation’, writes, ‘. . . he (Tagore) urges, much in the manner of Gandhi, that this should be done through an absolute commitment to the cultivation of love and neighbourliness, restraint and sacrifice, self-help and hard labour – through the full realisation of what he called “atmashakti”’.¹² The discussion of ideas like ‘self’ and ‘atmashakti’ would take us to issues like the adoption of strategies of non-co-operation or of violence by freedom-fighters who had to blindly follow the path shown by the leaders, even if their individual natures refused to subscribe to the dominant views of freedom movement. Tagore was particularly averse to the use of violence by the extremist groups. The question always plagued him whether violence, as a principle, could be a moral means even to just ends. He writes in his essay ‘Chhoto o Baro’, ‘. . . Since the days of Swadeshi excitement I have been writing against the extremist movement. I have kept on saying that the reward that one gets by doing a wrong will never be at an affordable price; only the debt of the wrong will become terribly heavy. . . ’¹³ In Char adhyay we see how choosing the path of violence ultimately destroys the moral fibre of selfless revolutionaries like Indranath and turns Atindranath, an individual with fine poetic sensibility, swadharma bhrashto and swabhabchyuto. Char adhyay is Tagore's most memorable indictment against man resorting to violence against other men. This novel, along with many of his other polemical writings makes Tagore our contemporary more than ever, when the most of the world is trying to find answer as to how to put a stop to the endless bloodbath that is raging all across the globe. Tagore's stance against violence links him with Walter Benjamin, his contemporary. Benjamin’s short yet extremely dense essay, ‘Critique of
Violence', included in One-way Street and Other Writings, is one of the most potent examinations of violence in the twentieth century. Tagore’s deep concern about violence and its unholy alliance with nationalism and nationalist self-fashioning is something that continues to plague intellectuals even in the twenty-first century; like, Amartya Sen and Slavoz Zizek, among many others. (Mario Vargas Llosa, the Nobel Prize winner for literature in 2010, is another prominent creative artist of our time who has been consistently portraying how the unholy alliance between power and violence is depriving men of their individual rights and freedom; things that Tagore, above everything else, always stood for.)

Thus, it becomes fairly evident that during his long career as an artist and a polemicist Tagore, intellectually, was not only trying to outgrow the discursive liminality of official nationalism but he also was trying to formulate his own theories of nation-building project, the ideal kind of national self and the like. He was aiming for something much greater in significance than mere political independence. For him, he writes in Creative Unity, ‘When freedom is not an inner idea which imparts strength to our activities and breadth to our creations, when it is entirely a thing of external circumstance, it is like an open space to one who is blindfolded.’ He envisaged that following ideas like ‘nationalism’ or ‘nation-state’, in a blindfolded manner, is not likely to lead the Indians to freedom; freedom which would give them ‘breadth to their creations’: but, rather, as Martha Nussbaum points out:

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 colourful idol for the substantive universal values of justice and right. . .

What Martha Nussbaum calls ‘a colourful idol’ figures prominently in the ‘idea-worlds’ of a number of important characters in Tagore’s fiction. Nationalism also functions as an important agency in the dialogic world of all his major novels. ‘Nation and the self’, ‘nation and its women’ are some central motifs in the novels. In my research, therefore, I shall take up Rabindranath’s prose fiction as my primary material in order to explore the problematic relationship between Tagore and the contemporary ideas of nation as it is encoded in the texts. I have, therefore, titled the
Before proceeding further, apart from the theoretical framework that the study of Tagore’s fiction from the point of view of nationalism and nationalist discourse may provide, I need to discuss reasons; reasons of some other kind, behind my choice of subject. In this connection, it is worthwhile to begin with observations by Meenakshi Mukherjee in her ‘Introduction’ to Sujit Mukherjee’s translation of Rabindranath’s *Gora* in 1997:

> The debate about the cultural identity of India and the place if religion, caste and class in it, which Rabindranath’s novel *Gora* (1909) had initiated at the beginning of the century, seems nowhere near a resolution even at its very end . . . This novel of colonial India continues to retain its relevance in our postcolonial days – acquiring surprising fresh refractions in the light of recent events in India and the worldwide theoretical discourses on the nation. (Italics mine)

As Meenakshi Mukherjee pointed out, *Gora* as novel remains significant even today because of its complex representation of caste, class, race and religious issues. The same can be said about Tagore’s other major novels and a number of his short stories, with different degrees of intensity. Nation is, in fact, one overriding concern, not only in Tagore’s imaginative writings but also in a number of his essays. I am convinced that the study of his prose fiction can throw significant light into the evolving relationship between nationalist, anti-nationalist and post-colonial experience in the experiential world of our country; an experiential world to which I belong. To the educated Bengali texts like *Gora, Home and the World* and *Four Chapters* have remained, till today, an important part of his self-understanding. These are texts against which the Bengali intellectual impulse would constantly test itself. These texts of Tagore, by all means, are very much like important literary milestones in the incessant process of ‘national imagining’. The texts, therefore, help us comprehend the role of the intellectual within the ‘collectivity’ of nation-building. Moreover, in these texts Tagore, with a high degree of regularity, addresses problems of hybridity and bilingualism which are as much a part of our postcolonial present. The texts help us to realise how for the colonized, there can be no return to a pure, pristine past. It is my contention that although the texts are written in Bengali, the
crucial socio-historical dimensions of the texts are not lost in the translations. In fact, Tagore’s novels and short stories provide us keys to an understanding of the complex nature of Indian postcoloniality. Moreover, these texts provide rich materials for engaging in a critical analysis of the textual strategies involved in narrating the nation; a major concern for many current postcolonial critics. On a more personal level, as a bilingual educated youth, the problem that haunts me, like many others, is how to relate myself with the heterogeneous population of the country. Tagore’s fiction interests me in that respect too. A study of his prose fiction may provide me answers to some of the questions that plague a western-educated subject like me in a country with a colonial past.

Discussions of Tagore’s longest novel, Gora, will occupy major portions of my research. It is largely because the text encapsulates almost all the significant issues related to the idea of the nation; issues which were of the burning kind during the years in which it was written. Therefore, a few details about the history of its composition would not be out of place here. Rabindranath began writing Gora in 1907. The serial publication of the novel began in the month of Bhadra (August-September) of the Bengali year 1314 (A.D. 1907) in the Bengali magazine Prabashi and was completed in the Phalgun (February-March) issue of the magazine in 1316 (A.D. 1909). The novel was first published in book form in 1910.20 According to Prabhat Kumar Mukhopadhyay, the background of the novel is the last quarter in the nineteenth century. The story covers a period which spanned between the years 1882 and 1883. Gora’s birth is recorded in the novel as taking place in the year of the ‘Great Mutiny’. Rabindranath tried to depict the picture of Calcutta when he was twenty/twenty-one years old. Rabindranath was forty-nine years old when he completed the novel.21 He telescopes events in order to deal with a time-frame of thirty years. It is very important to note that in the Indian context the anti-colonial national consciousness gradually began to form during the second half of the nineteenth century. The nationalist discourse, which was essentially a male discourse, started to take shape as the century drew to a close. It finally got its shape in the beginning of the twentieth century. During the ‘Swadeshi Movement’ the nationalist discourse which showed its capacity to appropriate discordant, marginal and critical voices ultimately took the form of a master-narrative. Rules were set to fight against the mighty colonial ruler; it was to be fought exclusively in ‘nationalist’ terms.22
Thus, the emergence of the national consciousness was synchronous with the temporal frame of the novel and the nationalist upsurge during the *Swadeshi* period and the compositional years of *Gora* are almost the same. *Gora* is an important artifact of the politico-cultural whirlpool of the educated Bengali mentalité during an important phase of the nationalist struggle in that respect. Despite grievous personal tragedies, Rabindranath remained so engrossed with this project that he continued and completed the writing. So intense was his involvement with some of the raging issues of the time that they were dealt with at length in many of his writings of this period. *Gora* marks a significant moment in the development of Tagore’s polemical self. But this dissertation is not about the nature of Tagore’s long and problematical relationship with ‘nationalism’ as projected by the mainstream Indian politics. This relationship has a very long history. Several texts of Tagore reflect on this relationship. More importantly, Tagore’s views about ‘nationalism’, ‘nation’, ‘race’ underwent major changes during his long career as a polemicist and creative writer.

What I am going to focus on here is the particular nature of the synchronicity that exists between the emerging nationalist consciousness and texts like *Gora* and *Home and the World*. For me, these texts are very important texts of Tagore, which have their autonomous artistic existence and the polemicist-self of Tagore could never fully overshadow the artistic demands and constraints of these literary texts. What I am interested in is the precise nature of the artistic encodings, slippages, ruptures, reflections, refractions of the discourses of emerging national consciousness of the Indian intelligentsia in Tagore’s prose fiction during some important phases of anti-colonial struggle. This dissertation does not claim to explore the author’s psyche with regard to his political prerogatives. Rather, this is about the process of complex mediations between the social discourses at the macro-level and the literary articulations at the micro-level in particular texts. The schematic divisions of my dissertation focus on three basic tenets of nationalism – ‘nationalist self-formation’, ‘women’s question’ and articulation of ‘nation as an organic community’ and attempt to analyse their artistic codifications in the text in three separate chapters:

1. Representation of the Nationalist ‘Self’ — Novelistic Portrayal of a New Cultural Identity in Tagore’s Fiction

2. Female Voice, Male Discourse and the Nation; Dissent, Mergers and Silences
In all three chapters I shall first present the precise nature of nationalist discourse, focussing on one particular theme with the help of secondary literature and then I shall go on to analyse the textual encodings of the theme critically in Tagore’s novels and short stories.

It is my contention that social scientists who have theorized on nationalism and postcoloniality have often used texts to illustrate their points without adequately paying attention to the independent nature of textuality itself. I shall make use of M. Bakhtin’s concepts of ‘dialogism’, ‘heteroglossia’ and ‘chronotope’ in my analysis.

My reason for using Bakhtin’s ideas is that I believe that his concepts of ‘dialogic principle’ and ‘heteroglossia’ offer us a very dynamic model for criticism. Bakhtin’s notion of ‘dialogised heteroglossia’ – reveals a constant conflict between ‘centripetal’ and ‘centrifugal’ forces that operate within the matrix of a ‘national’ language. Bakhtin’s strategies for understanding the tussle between ‘monologic’ and ‘dialogic’ tendencies that exists within discourses can serve a useful purpose in analysing texts that embody so many dimensions of colonial hegemony and anti-colonial ‘resistance’. It is more so when the attempt is made to decode artistic encodings of discursive concerns in a particular arrested historical moment of an emerging nation. In this context it is worth noting that Raymond Williams’s concept of ‘the structure of feeling’ is more of a diachronic analysis of the dynamism involved in cultural formation – covering an era or at least decades. Bakhtin’s ‘dialogic principle’, on the other hand, gives us opportunities to look at both the diachronic and synchronic dimensions ingrained in any cultural formation. The dynamism involved in ‘heteroglossia’ is immensely helpful for unraveling fissures and dissents, in the Indian contexts, within the discourse of official nationalism, encoded in the artistic articulations. Regarding the more overtly postcolonial concerns, Bakhtinian notion of ‘chronotope’ – the ‘spatio-temporal matrix’ of the novel – helps enormously to open up strategies of ‘narrating the nation’ within a fictional plane. In the last chapter of my dissertation I have undertaken a study of and Tagore’s Gora and ‘Hungry Stone’ from the Bakhtinian ‘chronotopic’ perspective in order to show how the ideological standpoints of the project of ‘narrating the nation’ choose suitable chronotopic forms for their particular novelistic exercises. In Gora Tagore’s nationalistic concerns influence him to choose a particular chronotope based largely on dialogues. But in
‘Hungry Stone’ he chooses the ‘gothic’ chronotope in order to tell the untold story of the nation. I am certain that reading Gora alongside ‘Hungry Stone’ from such a perspective will definitely throw new lights on the role of ideological compulsions behind the artistic shapings up of novelistic forms that directly or tangentially engage in the project of ‘narrating the nation’. In the concluding section of my thesis, however, I shall try to look at Shey, a piece of fantasy literature, one of Tagore’s last works, as a text where the desire to outgrow the nationalists’ concerns for ‘narrating the nation’ takes a different artistic shape. Tagore’s cosmopolitanism clashes directly with ‘the political’ in this text. The text, for alert readers, may provide artistic solutions for reaching a position which modern-day theoreticians would call a post-historicist, post-nation one.

However, in keeping with the extremely eclectic nature of postcolonial criticism, I shall also juxtapose critical strategies employed by critics like Piérre Macherey, Fredric Jameson, Raymond Williams and others to intensify the focus of the enquiry. Macherey’s theory about the role of ‘silences’ present in the text and Bhabha’s theory about the act of ‘mimicry’ involved in the colonized discourses are to be of great help for my present study; filling in gaps for me in looking at elements of ‘heteroglossia’ ingrained in Tagore’s texts.

Finally, let me say a few words about the translated versions of Gora and the other prose works of Tagore that I have made use of in my thesis. There are two different English translations of Gora available. One is published anonymously and the other is done by Sujit Mukherjee.29 In all probability the first one was done by W. W. Pearson.30 I have decided to use Pearson’s translation principally because of two reasons. Firstly, this translation was published and reprinted a number of times during Rabindranath’s own lifetime. Rabindranath’s disagreements with Pearson are documented by Prashanta Kumar Pal in Rabijibani:

. . . He [Rabindranath] wrote a letter Pearson on this day itself. Pearson was translating the novel Gora into English. Knowing that he (Pearson) wanted to publish it serially in Modern Review he (Rabindranath) wrote to him to begin publishing after completing at least half the book lest any episode missed the deadline. Besides he (Rabindranath) gave suggestion to take help from any Bengali from Santiniketan rather than from Delhi-based Anil Kumar Mitra as regards to translating the intimate picture of Bengali life. It
seemed to Pearson that Rabindranath was not approving his translation. But, according to him (Rabindranath) some parts of this text should be omitted in the translation, ‘for I find that English readers have very little patience for scenes and sentiments which are foreign to them; . . . *Gora* was written when Swadeshi movement in Bengal was at its height and therefore a great part of it may only have topical interest.’ Pearson did not agree with this opinion of Rabindranath. He wrote in 15 June, ‘I fear that your careful abridgement is nearly always more correctly described as “ruthless pruning” ’. He requested Rabindranath that whatever was to be done in Macmillan Reader, his translation should be published in *Modern Review* unabridged. *Gora* translated by Pearson was serially published and concluded in December 1923 issue of *Modern Review*, having commenced in January 1923 issue. But Pearson died before that.

Perhaps for these differences of opinion, Pearson’s name does not appear as the translator in the Macmillan Edition. My second reason for choosing this translation, done by a Westerner, is related to the fact that it can be considered as an interesting case of cultural meeting-point, ripe enough for postcolonial enquiries. Sujit Mukherjee’s translation, moreover, is the 1941 *version* of *Gora* and appears in that respect truer to the original with less chance of throwing up instances of cultural cross-over at the level of linguistic transfers. The earlier text follows the 1910 version of the novel. I have chosen this version because it was produced in a specific political climate. I have also consistently followed the Macmillan Edition in respect of spellings of names of characters and places (for example, Lolita, Bordashundari, Anandamoyi etc.). For *Ghare Baire* I have used the Surendranath Tagore translation which was published by Macmillan in 1919; a translation which in all probability underwent careful editing by the novelist himself. Till today this translation, with a title which differs significantly from the Bangla original (the heavily nuanced title in Bangla, *Ghare Baire* is given a rather flat and one-dimensional title in English; *The Home and the World*) is the standard text that is used in many colleges and universities in India. Even ‘Worldview’, famous for publishing critical editions of college-level text-books uses the translation done by Surendranath Tagore. For *Chokher bali* I have used Krishna Kripalani’s translation. This translation, with a title, that again differs a lot from the original is published by Sahitya Akademi. It has the
For *Chaturanga* I have used the Ashok Mitra translation; a translation which bears the same title as the original and it is also published by Sahitya Akademi. For *Jogajog* and *Char adhyay* I have used two fairly recent translations. The first one is done by Supriya Chaudhuri, with a title *Relationships* and is published by Oxford India and the second one is done by Rimli Bhattacharyya, with a title *Four Chapters*. In my thesis I have had to use innumerable quotations form Tagore’s essays, letters, lectures, poems. Whenever the need arose I have taken the liberty of translating from the Bangla originals. For ‘Khudhito Paashaan’ I have used the Amitav Ghosh translation. It has the title ‘Hungry Stone’. For *Shey* I have used Aparna Chaudhuri’s translation.

---

**NOTES**


3 Ibid, p.49.


Ahmad picks out Jameson’s theory of ‘national allegory’ for his attack. Jameson writes:

All third-world texts are necessarily, I want to argue, allegorical, and in a very specific way; they are to be read as what I call national allegories, even when, or perhaps I should say, particularly when their forms develop out of predominantly western machineries of representation, such as the novel.

See Fredric Jameson, ‘Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism’, *Social Text* 15, Fall: p.69. Ahmad opposes to statements like the above-quoted one, mainly on two grounds. He, firstly, questions the validity of such sweeping generalisation like ‘All third-world texts’, pointing out that the western academic world can be acquainted with only a small fraction of the large amount of literary outputs coming out of the so-called ‘third-world’. Secondly, he objects on a more serious ideological level. He writes: ‘I find it significant that First and Second Worlds are defined in terms of their production systems (capitalism and socialism respectively), whereas the third category – the Third World – is defined purely in terms of an ‘experience’ of externally inserted phenomena’. See Aijaz


16 See Rabindranath Tagore, Creative Unity, p.133 quoted in The Oxford India Tagore: Selected Writings on Education and Nationalism, p.296


18 The legitimacy of the term ‘postcolonial’ has been hotly debated since perhaps the time of its inception. For a thorough discussion of the debates See Ania Loomba, Colonialism / Postcolonialism, the New Critical Idiom, London: Routledge, 1998, Elleke Boehmer, Colonialism and Postcolonial Literature, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1995, and Leela Gandhi, Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999. While some critics have questioned the temporal dimension of the term – whether the postcolonial era begins with the start of colonisation or after the end of colonial history for a particular nation – others have raised objections about using the term only in the contexts of the colonized countries as if the colonising nations remained unscathed in terms of the paradigmatic experiential changes due to the act of colonisation. Some others have objected to widespread use of western ‘High Theories’ of poststructuralism in postcolonial studies – theories of Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida and Jacques Lacan. According to them, while trying to unearth the grains of colonial discourse, the natures of its hegemony, the act of ‘resistance’ by the colonized nations and their anti-colonial discourses, postcolonial studies have been entrapped in the jargon-infested abstruse theoretical discourses of the critics, placed in various western academies. For an erudite discussion of the nature of ‘fissures’ between so-called postcolonial ‘High’ theories and postcolonial criticism, see Bart Moore-Gilbert, Postcolonial Theory: Contexts, Practices, Politics, London and New York: Verso, 1997. Indian postcolonial critics have raised questions about the nature of representation of subaltern voices in the postcolonial discourses and have asked whether these discourses prefigure only the responses of the elite and bourgeois classes of the colonized countries against the colonial hegemony. For critiques of the prevalent use of the term ‘postcolonial’ see essays by Meenakshi Mukherjee, Arun P. Mukherjee and Harish Trivedi in Harish Trivedi, Meenakshi Mukherjee (eds.) Interrogating Post-colonialism, Theory, Text and Context, Shimla:
Institute of Advanced Study, 1996. My use of the term ‘postcolonial’ has been more to indicate the area of study rather than any particular theoretical standpoint. As it must be stated clearly that while analysing the bulk of secondary literatures contemporary to the novel under scrutiny – the macro level of nationalist discourse – my approach has remained largely eclectic throughout. Dipesh Chakrabarty’s project of ‘provincializing Europe’ has found place alongside Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s notion of ‘self consolidating Other’, Fanon’s programmatic journey from ‘nationalism to nationalist consciousness’ is posited alongside Nandy’s theory of ‘positive androgyny’ in the process of ‘self’ fashioning by the colonized subjects.

It is worthwhile to mention here that Debesh Roy, the eminent Bengali novelist has selected Gora as the greatest Bengali novel of the past century in his essay, ‘Gora, chirakaler samakal’. Such is the kind of iconic attention that the novel continues to receive almost a century after its publication. See Desh 23 January, 1999, pp.25-31.


See Jyotirmoy Ghosh, Nayaker sandhane Rabindranath, p.56. Rabindranath suffered the loss of his youngest son during the composition of Gora.

Tagore, in a number of essays of Atmashakti (1905), Bharatvarsha (1906), Swadesh o samaj (1909), Kalantar (1937), deals extensively with these themes. In fictional format Rabindranath returned to the issues, most overtly, in Ghare Baire (1916) and Char adhyay (1934). There are innumerable songs and poems of this most prolific composer which can properly be termed as ‘nationalistic’. A lot of critical attention has been focussed on Rabindranath’s political ideas and their reflections on his writings. Ashis Nandy’s book, The Illegitimacy of Nationalism; Rabindranath Tagore and the Politics of Self, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994. In spite of its strong psychoanalytic bias, is an important work in this respect. See especially sections ‘Nationalism versus Patriotism’ and ‘Tagore’s Nationalism’ in the first chapter, titled ‘The Ideology’.

My effort is, hopefully, to be posited somewhere in between the thematic of criticism as exemplified by Raymond Williams:

We should study, in the greatest literature, the organizing categories, the essential structures, which give such works their unity, their specific aesthetic characters, their strictly literary quality; and which at the same time reveal to us the maximum possible consciousness of the social group – in real terms the social class – which finally created them, in and through their individual author (Italics mine)

See Raymond Williams, ‘Literature and Society’ in Problems in Materialism and Culture, London: Verso, 1980, p.24 and the problematic of the particular Indian contexts of emerging (‘constructed’) nationalism as put forward by Partha Chatterjee:

Nationalist texts were addressed both to ‘the people’ who were said to constitute the nation and the colonial masters whose claim to rule nationalism questioned. To both, nationalism sought to demonstrate the falsity of the colonial claim that the backward people were culturally incapable of ruling themselves in the conditions of the modern world. Nationalism
denied the alleged inferiority of the colonized people; it also asserted that a backward nation could ‘modernize’ itself while retaining its cultural identity. It thus produced a discourse in which, even as it challenged the colonial claim to political domination it also accepted the very intellectual premises of ‘modernity’ on which colonial domination was based. How are we to sort out these contradictory elements in nationalist discourse? (italics mine)

(See Partha Chatterjee, Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?) p.30.


27 All these concepts are introduced and elaborated in Bakhtin’s major text, The Dialogic Imagination, Michael Holquist (ed.) Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (trans.) Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1981. It is pertinent to mention here that Meenakshi Mukherjee in her ‘Introduction’ to Sujit Mukherjee’s translation has used the terms ‘dialogic’ and ‘dialogical’ at least on two occasions, without really building up any argument with these critical concepts or even acknowledging them as quintessentially Bakhtinian concepts. See ‘Introduction’; Gora, Sujit Mukherjee (trans.) pp. xi, xxi.


29 The one translated by Sujit Mukherjee was first published by Sahitya Akademi in 1997 from New Delhi. The other was first published by Macmillan & Co. from London in January 1924. It has since then been reprinted periodically. From 1980 onwards it was reissued by Macmillan India Ltd. in the Macmillan Pocket Tagore Edition. The Edition I am using for my research is a reprint of 1999.

30 Sujit Mukherjee in his ‘Translator’s Notes’ writes:

The identity of this translator remains a matter of conjecture. In the brochure of the Tagore Centenary Exhibition 1961 produced by the Lalit Kala Akademi, there is a bibliography where it is unequivocally stated that Gora was translated into English by its author. However, the Bibliography appended to the special Tagore Number (Vol. 4, 1961) of the Sahitya Akademi journal Indian Literature names W. W. Pearson as the translator and it is corroborated by the relevant entry in Sahitya Akademi’s A Centenary Edition: Rabindranath Tagore (1961).

See Sujit Mukherjee (trans.) Gora, p.478.


32 It is pertinent to mention here that there are certain very conspicuous cases of abridgement in the Macmillan Edition. For example, chapter XXIII of that book begins with the sentence, ‘For several days Sucharita spent much time at her prayers’ thereby, omitting almost fifty lines from the original Bengali text where occur certain important sentences, elaborating the budding of emotional bonding between Gora and Sucharita and the stirrings which it is beginning to cause in the minds of both of them, especially Sucharita’s. These lines capture the state of unrest which lovers undergo during very first stages of love when they are yet to recognise the nature of their feelings. I quote from Sujit Mukherjee’s translation of a bit of the portion left out in the Macmillan Edition:

The impact of his personality, the sharpness of his intellect, the undoubting firmness of his beliefs and the overpowering effect of his sonorous voice, all merged with his words and gave them a live and true form . . . In fact, such a person, quite contrary to her own culture, could even be respected . . . Sucharita felt that Gora was happy to be talking to her. Was it only the happiness of being able to state his point of view? Had Sucharita not contributed to that happiness?

(Sujit Mukherjee’s translation, pp.153-154)
To cite another example of ‘careful abridgement’ (following Rabindranath) or ‘ruthless pruning’ (according to Pearson), in chapter XXV (p-131) of Macmillan Edition Binoy’s speech is a savagely-cut version of the original long and spirited discourse that he speaks out at length about the patriarchal tyranny prevailing in India even though his ‘nation’ worships ‘woman’ as goddess Lakshmi (the goddess of good-fortune). Let us refer once again to Sujit Mukherjee’s translation:

“... from that day I have sworn never to utter poetic untruths about our women or how we regard them goddesses. We call the country motherland, but unless we perceive the feminine principle of our land manifested in the actual women of our country – instead of seeing them within the narrow confines of domesticity in weakness and immaturity – until we see them fully developed in intellect, power and generous responsibility we shall never visualise our country as brightly as we should”.

(Sujit Mukherjee’s translation, p.168)

It is interesting to note that none of the two examples of editing of the Macmillan Edition which I have cited can be accepted to have only ‘a topical interest’ as Rabindranath chose to call them. They manifest two most important motifs of the novel: an exploration of ‘romantic love’ and the nature of the debates regarding the ‘women’s question’ in the contemporary nationalist discourse. However, I think, these and similar changes are matters proper for the area of ‘Translation Studies’, dealing with the politics of translation and, therefore, beyond the scope of my present enquiry.

33 See ‘Translator’s Note’ in Sujit Mukherjee (trans.), Gora, p.479.


