Chapter Four

Internationalism, Roy and Tagore

Roy and ‘The Future of Indian Politics’

Narendranath Bhattacharya, who later became well known as Manabendra Nath Roy made a significant contribution to the development of political and social thought of India. His Marxian interpretation of political and economic conditions in India was pertinent and remarkable, presenting deep insight into development of a national movement in India.

During Narendranath’s growing years Bengal was going through widespread commotions culminating in first, the partition of the Bengal and then its cancellation by the British government. Ardent desire for freedom, emanated from these conditions could not be suppressed by British Government and also could not keep Naren aloof from joining the revolutionary group for challenging the established government. During his early youth, Naren was associated with Anushilan Samity, a radical revivalist organization where he and his friends devoutly read and were influenced by books like Bhagwad Gita, Bankimchandra Chatterjee’s Anand Math and Arobindo Ghosh’s Bhavani Mandir. Under the strong influence of Anand Math, he even decided to be a ‘sanyasi’. Another prominent influence he received was from Swami Vivekananda and his religious nationalism. Ironically, in his later life he described Vivekananda as “He preached that Hinduism, not Indian nationalism should be aggressive. His nationalism was a spiritual imperialism.” (Karnik 1978 : 4)

Majority of young revolutionaries were under the strong influence of this religious nationalism advocating religious revivalist movements. There were a few of revolutionaries who renounced this religious preoccupation in their life and the most remarkable amongst them was M. N. Roy who was more anxious for freedom for his motherland then he soul. In Anushilan Samity, he learned the art of shooting and bomb making and also took part in political decoits under the leadership of Jatin Mukharjee. For this purpose he along with his associates, attempted to obtain arms from different countries including Germany. The attempt did not bear fruits. As a militant nationalist visualizing the revolution through armed struggle “Roy became a
member of Jatin’s group, which eschewed isolated acts of political assassination in favor of a more ambitious scheme for the province-wide revolt.” (Haithcox 1971:5)

In the course of updating arms from foreign countries Roy went to the United States of America. There he met Lala Lajpat Rai who was there on a propaganda mission. After the socialist meeting addressed by Lalaji, one person from the audience talking about India’s poverty asked “What difference would it make to the Indian masses if they were exploited by native capitalists instead of foreign imperialists?” Lalaji got furious and retorted: “It does make a difference whether one is kicked by his brother or by a foreign robber”. Hearing that answer Roy felt that there was inadequacy in his concept of freedom which ultimately means nationalism.

During those days he visited New York Public library and made his first acquaintance with the writings of Karl Marx. Though Marxism appealed him, he was very much serious about being militarist participant in the struggle of India for freedom. His real intellectual journey began during the discussions with Soviet emissary Michael Borodin. Roy tried to defend cultural nationalism earnestly but Borodin’s arguments convinced him that he was defending what he no longer believed in. “The transition from nationalism to socialism was a big event in Roy’s political career. It was a sharp break with its past nurtured on Bankim Chandra and Vivekananda and Orthodox Hindu philosophy” (Karnik 1928: 44)

The vision of a revolution that he had in his mind when he was militant nationalist was essentially different from the vision he had as a socialist. Naturally he withdrew from the influence of cultural nationalism and came to appreciate the vitality of values like social justice and economic liberation. In ‘Memoirs’ he writes

“During my short stay in the USA, I became painfully conscious of the ignorance which concealed the contradiction between the social idealism of the early evolutionary moment which drew inspiration from Bankim Chatterji’s ‘Anand Math’, and the cultural nationalism which it also professed. It dawned on me that nationalism, whether revolutionary or constitutional, cultural or political, relied mostly on emotion because it was intellectually weak .... I no longer believed in political freedom without the content of economic liberation and social justice. But I had also realized that intellectual freedom- freedom from the bondage of all tradition and authority-space was the
condition for any effective struggle for social emancipation”. (Roy 1964:219)

Borodin had already prepared a background in Moscow for Roy’s visit for he had become ardent communist by that time. When Lenin presented his thesis on colonial and national issues, Roy also presented his alternative thesis to the Comintern. The difference of opinion was regarding the support to be extended by communist party to national bourgeoisies in colonial territories. Roy made a distinction between real revolutionary bourgeoisies and that of ‘reformists’ character based on peculiar class configuration. He suspected the reliability of reformist nationalist bourgeois and expressed suspicion that in the event of the real revolutionary moment they are bound to make alliance with imperialists to safeguard their own interests. Roy had Indian National Congress in his mind when expressed his views.

This book “The Future of Indian Politics” comprises Roy’s analysis of India’s economic and political developments. It further supports Roy’s alternative thesis about the alliance between imperialists and national bourgeoisie as they have common interests nourishing on the exploitation of common masses in India. He recommends the need to establish communist party as a kind of assurance against the betrayal by national bourgeoisie, uniting the workers and peasant masses. In the introduction S.N.Ray says “The object of this thesis, ‘The Future of Indian Politics’, was to show a new path for the nationalist revolutionary movement, and to delineate broad-based people’s party for the purpose.” (Roy 1971: xiii) British imperialism in India was dependent on two factors:

1. Support of reactionary aristocratic class for its own interests.

2. Passivity of Indian masses.

To keep Indians economically backward was the need of British imperialism. So consequently the relation between imperialism and colonial bourgeoisie was of antagonism. This picture of imperialistic rule changed after World War I. After World War I, imperialism needed to widen its social basis in India to persist in power. It was possible by bringing elite national bourgeoisie within the economical orbit of imperialism and so they were offered economic concessions. It caused the isolation of middle-class bourgeoisie whose comparatively radical political activities were
repressed firmly. British imperialism created schism between the national bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie by very clever employment of the policy. “Economic concession and political repression” culminating in continuous political regrouping. War exigencies also compelled the British government to relax the economic restrictions for Indian masses. Class differentiation and constant political regrouping resulted into the split in the Swaraj Party putting the seal on the end of revolutionary spirit of bourgeoisie nationalism. This was Roy’s interpretation of the social movements in India which reveals his minute profound insight into development of national freedom moment in India. According to Roy, elite bourgeoisie shared the British government’s fear of national mass revolt, they had the strategy of exploiting the power of masses for gaining more privileges but ultimately they would compromise with imperialism for something less than complete freedom. Uniting peasant classes with petty bourgeoisie classes that are small traders, artisans and middle-class intellectuals for agrarian revolution was his significant opinion breaking the confines of orthodox Marxism.

The attitude of national bourgeoisie of securing more and more concessions and privileges for themselves also created economic chaos in the lives of peasants and working classes. These scholarly and earnest observations by M.N. Roy enlighten us about the pathetic condition of lower classes, self-indulgent, conspiring attitude of elite classes which was never egalitarian but confirming the class hierarchy in the society. His penetrating insight into India’s economical field reveals the exploitation of peasants and working classes by their own countrymen. National bourgeoisie had two major demands:

1. Fiscal autonomy and
2. Administrative reforms

They always blamed the British rulers for restraining the industrial development of India. Actually they had compromised with imperialism for the security and stability of their own. As they acquired wealth the demand for the fiscal autonomy grew strong. This accumulation of substantial capital in the hands of Indian merchants due to noticeable growth of trade with British also increased the export-import equation considerably. India could be supposed to be in a state of ‘national prosperity’. But it was not national wealth; a major part of it went to imperialism.
including surplus Indian export. Nearly 70% of export was raw materials and foodstuffs produced by very small peasantry except tea plantationers.

“The unpaid excess export therefore indicated that terrible exploitation of the peasantry. Imports were and still are mostly manufactured goods. The comparative smallness of their volume shows the corresponding limitedness of the buying capacity of the Indian masses. The latter produced and were obliged to give up much more than they could get in return. The proceeds of the exploitation of the Indian peasantry, reflected in the trade balance in favor of India, was divided between British imperialism and Indian traders.” (Roy, 1971: 7)

The native mercantile always made bitter grievances about ‘draining out’ wealth from India which was inappropriated by British and other capitalists. The complaint was not against extracting 1,444 crore of rupees in 40 years without paying back a single penny but against the fact that the entire money was not going in the hands of native bourgeoisie. Objective of nationalist program was not for attaining justice for peasants and working class but it was weak protest against the ‘unfair’ distribution of booty. In spite of this unfair treatment and knowing the truth that economic autonomy cannot exist without political autonomy, significantly national bourgeoisie never pressed for complete freedom. Restlessness of Indian bourgeoisie due to impeded industrial growth by British government, their anxiety for exploiting more and more economic resources after WWI and growing poverty as well as unemployment giving rise to widespread discontent, both of them were contradictory factors. Roy explains the economic need forcing “The intellectual bourgeoisie to begin its political struggle, which was initiated in the form of Indian National Congress” (Roy1970:24)

With the intention of pacifying the grievances of national bourgeoisie, British government took some measures. British government set up the Indian industrial commission to study the possibilities of further industrial development and in 1917 the Indian Munitions board to improve Indian resources to meet the exigencies of war. Montague and Lord Chelmsford brought some reforms. These reforms with the right of Indian capital appeased the upper strata of Indian bourgeoisie. Consequently they not only departed from the national freedom movement but also cooperated with British government to suppress the revolt of Indian masses. According to poignant observation of Roy, they also feared with British rulers the mass revolt because
indirectly it was a threat to the security and stability of their business. For that matter national bourgeoisie were not ready to sacrifice their own interests for the betterment of downtrodden classes. Analyzing the class composition in India, Roy wrote: “The Indian Proletariat could not help learning from experience that they must fight to earn the right to live as human beings. The growth of class-consciousness became wider with the development of native bourgeoisie. Roy found class struggle raging in India simultaneously with the national struggle.” (Roy1973:28)

In the course of time Roy believed that national bourgeoisie would not contribute earnestly to the national struggle for freedom as they were satisfied with the meager concessions from British government, the responsibility to lead the political movement fail on the shoulders of peasants and working class. National bourgeoisie understood that discontent of Indian masses was economic and not nationalistic. To meet the needs of post-war crisis, British imperialists thought of the only possible solution to manufacture in India as cheap labor, raw materials and cost-saving convenient transport were available to them. Roy’s theory about the betrayal of national bourgeoisie was proved when fiscal commission was appointed to study tariff issue including eleven members out of which seven were Indians and only one English official among them. It could happen due to coinciding interests of imperialists and national bourgeoisie. Acceptance of discriminating protection, Steel Industry Bill abolition etc. provisions were made for the welfare of the Indian capitalist class. British government without damaging their interests essentially fulfilled their demands considerably at the expense of the masses. By abolishing 3.5% excise duty, British government fully satisfied the Indian capitalists. Cotton industry prospered with an aggregate capital of Rs. 3,00,000,000 had a clear profit of Rs. 350,000,000 during 1919-21. Even then in September 1925 the workers in the Bombay Mills suffered the wage cut of 11.5% (in addition to 20% wage cut in 1924). Roy’s concern about the precarious condition of workers and peasants clearly reveals the foundations of his nationalism. In giving these concessions British government already had their own interests but it was a subtle policy of isolating petty bourgeoisie from national bourgeoisie capitalists which wholeheartedly cooperated with them. Government wanted to convince them that they can prosper in their business within the orbit of Indian nationalism. Another reason behind granting these concessions to Indian bourgeoisie was widening the sphere of freedom struggle encompassing
almost entire population. Interpreting those economic conditions Roy wrote “An examination of the economic consideration will, however, show that it will not cost imperialism nearly as much to buy off the services of the Indian bourgeoisie and even the upper stratum of the middle classes, as against the revolutionary danger coming from masses. As a matter of fact, it will cost nothing.” (Roy1971:26) Political consequences of these policies were steady weakening of demand for freedom and regrettable bankruptcy of Swaraj Party. Roy as Marxist thinker rightly comprehended the fact that economic development is the decisive factor in deciding the future of Indian politics. During the latter sixties the changing relations between imperialism and Indian capitalists influenced the freedom movement immensely. Right wing of Swaraj Party due to fulfillment of business demands drew away from radical political movement and accepted political peace. Majority of them got satisfied with the movement for a few administrative reforms. Split of Swaraj Party was not between right wing and other party. Roy regretfully inferred that programme of Swaraj Party pitiably brought the national freedom struggle back on bourgeois even feudal tracks. They wanted to secure the votes of elite bourgeoisie and capitalist classes, their programme included nothing else but their demands. In the session of national Congress at Gaya (1922) the need arose for a change in the national program, communist came forward with their program of revolutionary nationalism. Resident C.R. Das who previously asserting the welfare of 98% against the interests of 2% did not enlist his support and that programme was not even discussed in that session. Communist’s were labeled as ‘Bolshevist’. Swarajists interpreted the word Swaraj as “an effective control of the existing machinery and the system of government and the right to frame a Constitution.”(Roy 1971:37) Roy criticized the Swaraj party as its program in greater protection of private and individual party. Swaraj party needed the support of influential and significant class of people like landlords, capitalists and elite national bourgeoisie. In its program they openly stated that they stand for the justice for the poor but that justice would not be of any quality if it comprises the injustice to the landlord. They wanted to settle the issue between the landlords and tenants by agreements. Roy exposed the Swaraj party by denouncing their policies as ruinous for the majority of Indian masses. After the Concanada Congress session he commented on Swaraj party that how if he had “shifted the nationalist movement into purely bourgeoisie grounds.”(Karnik1978:197) He stressed the need for revolutionary leadership. He condemned the Swarajists that while posing themselves as
representative of masses they voted for Steel Industry Bill, taxing the poor masses for the interests of steel magnates. Leaders like Motilal Nehru, V.J. Patel as members of selection committee, willingly cooperated for the government. An amendment for securing minimum wages in return for the advantage again from protection did not get the support of Swarajists. C.R. Das, president of Swarajist party was aware of the fact that precarious condition of Indian masses had prepared a ground for revolutionary movement, prompted by British police, he called the revolutionary nationalists ‘anarchists’ “He argued - if you strengthened our position by making some administrative readjustments, we will still be able to carry the lower middle class and petty intellectual revolutionaries in tow, taking advantage of their political immaturity.” (Roy1971:46). British government also realized the truth that to resist revolution, make agreements with Swarajists. Roy’s statement about the compromise between national bourgeoisie and imperialism occurs again and again in his writing and later on it was to be the basis for serious controversy between him and the CI.

In 1923 India faced the communal riots in many areas of the country. In the name of communist party Roy published his opinions in a manifesto about these riots. He expressed regret on these incidences because recurrence of communal rivalry and religious enmity had to completely put aside the struggle for freedom. These incidences were caused because the religion was allowed to interfere in the national movement. According to him religion had no place in the political field. Middle-class intellectuals who desire freedom should free themselves from the shackles of religious controversies and communal clashes and instead of that they should at once try for their economic betterment. “They had to replace the religious propaganda and metaphysical abstractions by economic slogans to make the masses conscious and subsequently to lead them to the fight for national independence without which their own economic emancipation is impossible. When the cry of ‘land to the peasant and bread to the workers’ is raised the masses whether Hindus or Muslims will rally to their standard.” (Karnik1978:196)

According to Roy there is very close relationship between economically backward condition and petty bourgeois intellectuals. More they are economically backward, more they are reactionary in their social orientation. This led to fissipерous tendencies in national movement as well as in society itself. This petty bourgeois intelligentsia was extremely under the impact of religion, mysticism, Gandhism etc.
These influences fettered their political radicalism i.e. desire for complete independence. Roy observed that “The political radicalism of the petty bourgeois intelligentsia cannot influence the national movement because there is no social force to back it up” (Roy2000: 97). He further argued that they were against any reforms or changes in the land ownership system which was tyrannical towards peasants and in this case they were more reactionary than imperialists. According to him it was the need of political as well as social revolution to be free from economic poverty which presupposed the existence of religious, metaphysical influences becoming hurdles in the path of egalitarian revolution.

In his ‘The Future of Indian politics’ Roy described the pitiable deterioration of Swaraj party, resulting in the split and ultimately its debacle. Das’s Faridpur speech was one of the incidences which led it to its destiny. He said “Then comes the question as to whether this ideal is to be realized within the Empire or outside it. The answer which the Congress has always given is within the empire….If the Empire furnishes sufficient scope for the growth and development of our national life, the Empire idea is to be preferred…. ” (Roy1971:50) This was a stand of the people who had their lives to live, property to be preserved and profited by. They were glorifying the safe and secure corner in the British Empire which was more important than national independence. Indian masses were experiencing living death, it was their ‘sacrifice’ for the sake of national progress. Only three years before Das had declared in 1922 that Swaraj is for masses, for 98%. Interestingly after this Motilal Nehru accepted the seat on the Skeen committee to search for the possibilities of establishment of military academy like Sandhurst. V.J. Patel co-operated with the government as the president of legislative assembly and declared “I am ready in every sense of the term to extend co-operation to them…. From this moment I cease to be a party man…. If the Viceroy wants, I’ve been attend him ten times a day, and my assistance will always be at the disposal of the Government official.” (Roy1971:55) All national demands or resolutions demanded some sort of constitutional reforms based on their suggestions; they were assuring complete political peace in exchange. Middle-class followers of the Swaraj party when ceased to be satisfied with the selfish indeterminate and compromising policies of party, it faced a split. This split of Swaraj party indicated that big bourgeoisie and middle-class could not stand together. Even if Swaraj party entered the legislature for the welfare of the country, it served
exclusively capitalist and landed interests. The debacle of Swaraj party did not mean
the end of freedom movement. The social basis of the party changed from bourgeoisie
to the masses, it was the process of widening the basis of the movement inclusive of
all the native society except elite bourgeoisie, Indian capitalists and the landlords.
This was new phase of the nationalism so its program was bound to be different from
the earlier one. This development gave new direction to the freedom movement.
According to Roy, when big bourgeoisie were in alliance with imperialism, the
middle class was fighting the bankrupt parliamentary fight and Swaraj party was in
powerless and a hopeless position, the future of Indian politics was bound to be in the
hands of such class of people which were completely antagonist to the imperialism. It
was such a class of people who were poor, deprived of all resources and always
remained in exploited position. They were small traders, artisans, employees, students
and petty intellectuals.

According to Roy, bourgeoisie could have led the revolutionary movement
when it was against the aristocratic feudal system of capitalism, when it prevailed
against the backward, antiquated forms of society. But it did not happen and they
could not lead the movement as vanguard of the revolution. This possibility was
realistic considering the composition of society in Eastern countries. In such
condition the proletarian class, large number of peasants and poor and landless
agrarian toilers were there to lead the movement by changing its social character.
Regarding communist parties he said “….their (communist party’s) existence proves
that social factors are there, demanding political parties, which will express and
reflect the demands, interests and aspirations of the masses of the people, peasants
and workers, as against that kind of nationalism which merely stands for the
economic development and the political aggrandizement of the native bourgeoisie.”
(Karnik 1978:171)

M.N. Roy when analyzed the changing social character of freedom movement
and class composition in India, he never thought about it within the narrow
framework of Indian boundaries. His concept of nationalism was never restricted to
Indian Territory but it had external dimension also. He was essentially an
internationalist. He always considered Indian struggle as a part of the international
struggle. According to him Indian freedom moment was not merely political
movement but also had economic and social objectives. It was a part of international
struggle towards classless egalitarianism. Using the analogy of microcosm and macrocosm, he explained that the concept of internationalism was taking roots all over the world and so Indian struggle could not be isolated from the international struggle. Apart from analyzing nationalism he also discussed fascism, theory of international war and the dilemma of peace under the major concept of internationalism. Roy described nationalism as ‘the philosophy of frog in the well’. He thought that the concept of nationalism had lost its utility and if it existed, it would serve the reactionary forces. He wrote that if one wanted to have a place in the New World as free nation, one must participate in the making of that world. Here we find similarity in the thoughts of Roy and Tagore about internationalism but Tagore did not oppose cultural nationalism, on the contrary Roy was staunch opponent of it. He realized that the narrowing of Indian nationalism degenerated into anti-progressive and the revolutionary cult. “Roy criticizes the abstract ideal of national freedom, which presupposes a homogeneity and identity of interests on the part of population of a country, trying to attain it”. (Grover 1973:75) Roy believes that movement of national freedom is always followed by social liberation which reveals another aspect of freedom. National freedom does not mean freedom for each and every individual of nation. In case of India it was a blazing truth, freedom for Indian population did not mean freedom for women or untouchables. Freedom within international context transcends the national boundaries but it needs great endeavors and cooperation. Roy criticized the ‘metaphysical’ concept of nationalism because he thought wrong alliance of nationalism and democracy could be a threat to the individual freedom. National state is not always a democratic state and national freedom does not identify the democratic freedom. Nationalism deviating from democracy can only lead to dictatorship ignoring individual comfort and conveniences. He feels regret that democracy allied with nationalism leaves the path of humanism. He feels disgusted with nationalism because he thinks it is an expression of exploitative patriotic aggressiveness. He thinks that nationalism is more spontaneous reaction of perishing medieval social system against progressive tendencies in the revolutionary movement against foreign rule. That is why he described Vivekananda’s nationalism as ‘a spiritual imperialism’. He rejects the India’s claim of spiritual superiority as pseudo-philosophical. He dispels the misunderstanding that Western culture is materialistic and Eastern culture is spiritual. Conditions that give rise to intellectual revolution in the West would not have created
the same change in India. His analysis is not ethical but historical. In backward countries ignorance is shared by all people despite of their geographical locations. So he stresses for eradication of belief against the modern culture.

Roy’s internationalism transcending into cosmopolitanism refuses the idea of preservation of national boundaries because it does not agree with the concept of one world, one government. He thinks of Commonwealth where all men and women are free regardless of their national boundaries. Therefore he insists that Indian political objectives should extend the national boundaries to transcend the narrow orthodox nationalism. The other aspect of his internationalism according to Grover is “Roy is much ahead of time. Nationalism has its unpleasant aspects but it appears to be a necessary stage in historical development. No people, it seems, has been able to skip this stage. How could India, disunited and subjected to foreign rule, help in forging out broader cosmopolitan view. The British would not quit without being forced by the generation of some kind of national spirit. Roy fails to appreciate it.”(Grover 1973:76)

Roy condemned the nationalism for its narrowness and orthodox tendencies but he is not concerned about the origin of nationalism as it says, for nation “Two things are needed a rich legacy of remembrances; the other, the desire to live together”. (Renan1994:17) It is formed on the common basis of common language, territory, economic life, common body of customs and habits. Bonds of concern and mutual cooperation bring people together to form a nation. Nationalism is “a state of mind…. striving to correspond to a political act.” (Kohn1994:162) Due to nationalism people identify with the state. There is also the worst side of nationalism which comprises national, trans-national disputes of borders, wars, national upsurge, egos and aspirations and sometimes garbed under them, the vengeance. Within nation also people face religious, racial, communal disputes, propagation of specific ideology, and preservation of social order as well as sometimes rebel against it. Roy’s concept of internationalism ‘Vishwabandhutwa’ is no doubt of panacea for all the evils of nationalism. To become a world citizen, some might say a utopian idea but it is a permanent solution for divisive tendencies in society. These widening realms of mutual affection and cooperation can reach to peak of egalitarian society and invoke a new epoch in the history of mankind.
While thinking of nationalism Roy also considers the issues of internationalism such as fascism, theory of international civil war and the dilemma of peace.

**Fascism:**

Before returning to India, Roy experienced the growing impact of totalitarianism in Germany. When he came to India he noticed the fascist tendencies in the Indian political and social fields. Roy considers fascism as a logical product of post-Hegelian ideology. It is based on pragmatism putting strict constraints on individual freedom, it expresses base materialism. Roy finds significant similarities in fascism and Hindu Vedantic mysticism which have inherent opposition to the rational thinking and scientific basis of thoughts. Roy draws parallels between “the doctrine preached in Gita and the fascist new Hegelian metaphysical conception of state.” (Grover 1973:78)

Aurobindo had also identified the earth with Sanatana Dharma. According to Roy this ideology of new Hegelianism garbs the mysticism and metaphysics with pseudoscientific thoughts. According to him the points of the beginning of fascist philosophy and Indian philosophy are the same. Here the philosophy is beyond the realm of sense-perception and reason, presenting dazed abstract, metaphysical realities trying to convince about their being as absolute truth. Roy draws our attention towards the theory of karma which widely considers the social inequality, compares it with five unequal fingers of hand and thus allows autocracy and violence. Free will and determinism are contradictory concepts. Concept of freedom also changes with conditions. But the nature of Indian psyche reveals the powerful impact of authoritarian tradition. Impregnable medieval, conservative traditions pave the way for fascism. Faith in those traditions makes Indian people superstitious, put blinds on their eyes by shunning the path of rational thinking. Absence of respect for individual freedom and liberty fosters as well as promotes the ideology of fascism. In India people have high materialistic demands but meager cultural needs. According to Roy India was the society of traditionally bourgeois people. If democracy comes in India, it would be more like the democracy of the Reich than Great Britain. He believes that the foundations of Indian social system, institutions are laid upon authoritarianism. So that individuals’ endeavor to reach the goal beyond themselves, their aspirations and
desires become subordinate to the demands of the rigid social system, which always discourages individual self-effort towards building his own culture for himself. Roy believed that Subhashchandra Bose’s blend of nationalism and communism was very close to fascism because Bose believed that social reforms were possible only through political authority and power. According to Bose powerful government implementing military discipline is necessary to keep India united and to establish order after freedom. According to Roy the prominent characteristic of fascism is the concept of Superman. There has been a trend of hero-worship in India and the leadership itself identifies with authoritarianism. Except leaders like Dr. Ambedkar always vehemently opposed this hero-worship and advocated to maintain faith in our own reasoning capacity. In India, infallibility is always associated with leaders. Referring to this Roy described the Gandhi’s charismatic position, his medieval propositions which Nehru always tried to rationalize. Leaders like Sardar Patel, Dr. Rajendra Prasad and Acharya Kriplani always accepted the secondary position. To Roy, Gandhi’s charismatic influence and unconditional submission for Gandhi’s judgment by others indicated fascist tendency in Indian politics. Arthur Kostler says “India is a democracy in name only; it would be more correct to call it Bapucracy.” (Grover 1973:81) Charismatic relationship includes complete devotion of followers, extreme sanctity, association of heroism and normative patterns established by that individual person.

Roy’s fear about entry of fascism in Indian politics is not unfounded. In Indian society people live under the strong influence of religion and medieval thoughts. Hindu religion in India is nothing but rules and prohibitions which impose rigid thinking on people’s mind. Acceptance of religion does not include the acceptance of principles*. These norms and conditions discourage individual’s independent and rational thinking and liquidate the reasoning capacity. Such a society of individuals always faces the threat of encroachment of fascism.

“Rules are practical: they are habitual ways of doing things according to prescription. But principles are intellectual; they are useful methods of judging things. Rules seek to tell an agent just what course of action to pursue. Principles do not prescribe course of action………. The principal may be wrong but the act is conscious and responsible. The rule may be right but the act is mechanical…. To permit of this responsibility, religion must mainly be a matter of principle only…. The moment it degenerates into rules it seizes to be religion, as it kills
responsibility which is the essence of a truly religious act.” (Ambedkar 2013:68)

It can be said that Roy confuses fascism with traditionalism; traditions have their own beliefs and notions. People are free to obey them but when they are pressurized to accept them by force then the act transforms into fascism. Roy is afraid of that kind of fascism. Though the complete nation is not fascist, existence of merely fascist tendencies also drives the nation into regressive mode.

**Theory of International Civil War:**

Roy’s thoughts about possibilities of fascism develop into theory of International Civil War - of war between democracy and totalitarianism. Here he criticizes Congress leaders’ attitude for not supporting British government fully to the war against fascism. Congress leaders were ready to support British government on condition that India should be allowed to support it as a free country. M.N. Roy was of the opinion that India must support British government wholeheartedly to defeat fascism. He lent unconditional support to British government as according to him annihilation of fascism was consistent with the aim of freedom. He was thinking of this war against fascism on broader terms. According to him threat of fascism to the world was more alarming than the rule of British government. Gandhi offered only moral support to the war based on the principle of non-violence which according to Roy was absolutely an impracticable decision, irrelevant to the political challenge at that time. He thought that India could get the freedom when the world is free. India could not be free in the world enslaved by aggressive fascism. It was the fight not in the context of national boundaries but for the progressive, ideal principles leading the world towards real emancipation. Roy was not narrowly thinking about the welfare of India but of the whole world. He was of the opinion that defending the world freedom only India could get her freedom. He pleaded to the Congress leaders for adopting broader vision about the world events and to have national as well as international approach to the issues. According to him fascism was not a threat for only Britain but the whole world and fight against it could be anywhere. This fact turned this war into international Civil War. Roy wanted to save India from fascism as one of the members of international war front against fascism.

Interestingly, according to Roy there is no contradiction between imperialism and fascism. Both of them are originated from capitalism, imperialism when
capitalism is flourishing and fascism when capitalism is decaying. They are like parallels. In Roy’s opinion “Imperialism and fascism are not related in space. They are related in time. Fascism begins with imperialism ends. Imperialism grows into fascism.” (Grover 1973:86)

Fascism economically puts restrictions on capitalist production and politically suppresses the democratic freedom. Concern for war did not take precedence over the cause of Indian Nationalism. Roy was the only Indian person who repeatedly upheld the issue of war against fascism. Roy regretted that India was indirectly supporting fascism by not supporting Britain. People like Bose seemed to welcome Japanese victory not anticipating threat of fascism invasion in future even in case of India. It was the ignorance of the fact that India was a part of the world. According to Roy fascism presents the clash between idea and ideals. In his opinion, fascism was opposed in fascist country also and it was not the war between two groups of nations but was the war between two ideologies. So the war against fascism had to be waged along all the fronts cutting across all the countries and nations. Only military victory over fascism was not enough but it needed the revolution changing the social relations fundamentally. Fight against fascism was not enough but it was also a fight for a revolution. Defense of India was not defense of its status quo but it anticipated a basic change in its social pattern. It was not a fight between rampant nationalism and degenerating imperialism but a issue related to revolution and counter-revolution. Fascism stands for the counter-revolution and it can be subverted only through the positive forces of revolution. According to him revolution represents change in the course of history by stating the ideas and events in the progressive direction. There are two stages in Roy’s concept of revolution first eradication of the anti-revolutionary conditions and second reinforcement of the embryonic progressive forces to establish reform into social and political systems. First part of the concept of revolution was achieved by the entry of Britishers in India and second part was never accomplished in a real sense of the word. Hence the revolutionary conservative forces remained persistent in the Indian society. On the other hand people representing progressive forces were also in existence. India was an amalgam of these two contradictory forces which represented two groups in international Civil War. It was not justifiable for India to oppose imperialism at the cost of victory of fascism. It did not concern to patriotism, it was an issue demanding much wider vision as it was
going to affect the whole mankind. Mutual understanding between Britain and India was needed to maintain democracy and progress in both the countries. In Second World War fascism was defeated and according to Roy the international Civil War took the form of fight between communism and anti-communism. He urged people not to participate in the mad race within each group. Roy was criticized on being biased against Indian national Congress because enslaved and dependent India had its own limitations in helping Britain. Roy’s analysis of Civil War in terms of fascism and democracy, communism and anti-Communism presents one-sided view of the issues, ignoring the highly politicalised intricacies of the modern world.

**Precept for Peace:**

Future wars in approaching civilized world would be the wars based on ideology. Peace is inconceivable when progressive versus reactionary, communist versus anti-communist and democracy versus totalitarian forces are active in the world. To establish peace in reality, the social and political issues need to be sorted out. Roy’s concept of peace is based on democracy, not communism. Roy wanted Russia to discard their doubt about imperialism in West and avoid encouraging revolution in those countries. According to him if Russia followed the path of economic prosperity and democratic, political freedom then it could help to establish peace in the world. To protect peace in the international field there should be security allied with freedom. Every powerful country should avoid the greed for expansionism. There should be freedom of choice for every nation to decide whether it wants to be a free country or part of some big nation. Roy thinks that communism should not be imposed on any nation from outside it should be choice of its own people without any intervention from outside world. Here the insistence is on the democratic choice of communism and not on the militarization of communism. It is really a question of choosing particular ideology with freedom.

According to him cultural integrity of Asian countries is fiction and it’s concept of racial unity is perilous as it has inherent traits of antagonism to European ideas and culture. Reemergence of Asia as a fascist country would be a self-defeating act. According to Roy, Asia has reactionary, regressive forces comprised in its social and political field so it is not a great help towards establishing peace in the world. For playing the vital role in securing peace for Asia it should outgrow the tendencies of
cultural jingoism and Orthodox nationalism. To attend the final goal of freedom and peace, Asian people must critically examine their traditions, culture with rejuvenation of ordered moribund social institution and abandon the iconoclastic attitude towards Gods of ancient past. They should adopt rational and scientific attitude with progressive outlook.

Roy did not consider the question of Kashmir within the limits of nationalism on the contrary he was aware of the fact that people of Kashmir were denied the right of self-determination for themselves. According to him logic of nationalism had created a danger of war for India, in the focus of Indo-Pak hostilities. According to Roy, India needs a long period of peace to construct her democratic system. Communism gets inspiration from the authoritarian oriental culture which should be replaced by democratic tradition. Although he appreciated that formation of United Nations organization was very essential concerning world peace, he thought it was inadequate for working as world government due to existence of separate national states. According to Roy nationalism and internationalism were contradictory concepts. He advocated for internationalism which presupposed the dissolution of national states under one world government. His concept of peace is completely devoid of institutional and national framework. To secure the ultimate aim of peace, institutions must be run by politically perfect man. Roy’s concept of peace reflects his thoughts about humanism. Mutual trust, love and cooperation can build a society beneficial for living as the world community. Peace can exist in a cooperative world order where there is a unity of outlook and interests without class as well as national differences. A world community needs development of moral and political objectives so that members of community would be committed to them by transcending their national boundaries. According to him, we must sincerely wish for peace by giving up faith in Providence. This may be the long process but we must put faith in humanity, reason and truth and pursue the goal. “Roy attaches greater importance to the substance than to the infra-structure of peace”. (Grover 1973:100)

The theoretical conceptions may lead us to believe that their practical implementation is unrealistic but the essence of that philosophy is democratic freedom, security and peace, vital for building a humanistic world community. For the avoidance of International Civil War and maintain peace in the world, he opposed the fascist tendencies. In case of India he perceived the origin of fascism in
spiritualism and mysticism of Hindu religion. Authoritative culture and religious normative patterns are equally fomenting for the growth of fascism in India. His thoughts about ethnic origin of Indian people have scientific basis. According to him all the Indian people believe that they belong to the Aryan origin, it is not correct. Before the entry of Aryans, India had very rich and developed civilization, otherwise India could not have developed the same complex and multifaceted culture as we experience now. Aryans represented the pastoral culture. Theory about pre-Aryan culture appealed to him. According to him, if Aryans came, they inhabited in a limited area in the north. "But the eagerness of an average Indian to claim Aryan ancestry was, and still is, very widespread. As a reaction to the American prejudice against the color thesis, the Indians in the United States led emphasis on their descent from the white Aryan race." (Roy 1964:550)

In reality there is ample evidence to prove our descent from the Dravidian culture. Roy also gave the proof of ‘Ramayana’ with its picture of comparatively developed civilization and culture and asked what the need was there to trace the descent of Indians to the Aryan origin.

During the Vedic period the concept of God was in the form of deification of various natural elements. According to Roy it was a religion of decentralized tribal community. Monotheism is the reality of a centralized society. Only under the intense impact of social crises, the development of religion adopts the path from polytheism to monotheism. Political aspect of our history always reflected the absence of centralized society, thus weakening the unified and integrated development of progressive attitude of the whole society.

Roy asserts materialism as the explanation of the world without any possibility of supernatural or metaphysical. “The freedom from the metaphysical conception of the absolute, immutable, categorical liberates man from the fetters of the traditional, of the respect and awe for the established order of the world. There is nothing sacrosanct, nothing permanent, and nothing eternal. To change is the nature of everything.” (Grover 1973:110)

Roy was mainly criticized by conservative leaders of India for his attacks on spiritual ideology of Indian masses, his severe criticism of Manu and his code. His approach clearly reveals his stand not only for political and economic revolution but
also for social and ideological revolution. He called upon youth saying “Revolt, revolt against tradition, revolt against authority, revolt against intellectual slavery. The revolt against imperialism is being miscarried simply because it has not yet been consciously backed up by a far-reaching revolt, a social revolt. Be the standard bearer of a social revolt, and you will qualify yourself for leading the struggle for national liberation more effectively than those related to an antiquated philosophy and a reactionary social outlook.” (Karnik 1978:412)

Like Marxist thinkers Roy also felt that new framework of society could not be built upon traditional principles, patterns and forms of institutions. Social units based on these old norms would nothing but bring the society back into regressive mode. Gandhi and Bal Gangadhar Tilak were the leaders who consistently advocated the spiritualist Hindu ideology and exploited the heritage to invoke the national spirit among Indians. Roy failed to grasp Gandhi’s mass appeal and potential for organizing mass movement and strongly criticized Gandhi for the stance taken by him from time to time. He felt that Gandhi’s leadership was authoritarian and contradictory to the democratic values. It cultivated the values of submission, self-negation and servility. His fasts were obstacle in the path towards the rational pursuit of solution for some issue. It is explicitly observed in the case of Poona Pact during which Gandhi’s fast compelled Dr. Ambedkar to withdraw his demand for separate electorates for untouchables. “For Roy, Hinduism was a slave ideology and Gandhi another in a long line of ideological jailers who for centuries had affected the Indian mind in the name of spirituality. Instead of encouraging man to reach beyond his grasp, he argued, Gandhi would consign man to the suffocating restrictions imposed by the cast system, religious superstition and village life.” (Haithcox 1971:254) Medieval ideology was a used to evoke very intense and venomous religio-nationalist sentiment. In 1930 he wrote a letter to his friend that he is living in ‘antiquity and the Middle Ages’. He felt repulsion for the social system in which he was living and detestation about the economic backwardness, intellectual inertia and cultural degradation. Gandhi was the voice of the mass discontent “The religious ideology preached by him also appealed to the medieval mentality of the masses. But the same ideology discouraged any revolutionary movement restrained by a reactionary ideology.” (Roy1964:543)

Though for years together Roy underestimated Gandhi’s leadership, by 1930 he realized the dependence of national movement on him and Gandhi’s tremendous
potential of appealing to the masses and arousing their involvement the freedom struggle. Nobody among the Indian leaders could organize such a vast scale movements for national freedom. Despite of Roy’s appreciation for Gandhi he knew that building the base of nationalism on spiritual and traditional ideas which in Indian situation were essentially Hindu religious ideas, would encourage the divisive tendencies in Indian society, driving apart Muslim community from Hindu people. “He attacked Hindu as well as Muslim communalism, but pointed out how protection of minorities was an essential part of democracy. He advocated steps for removing suspicions and fears of Muslims.” (Karnik1978:418)

He thought that economic interests of both the communities were identical so the emphasis on the betterment of their lives was the ideal way to bring them together. In Indian nationalism there was negation of individual existence as well as individual expression and that Roy identified with the tendencies of fascism. As Gandhism was understood as philosophy of nationalism he equated Gandhism with fascism. These authoritarian, spiritual forces made him regard nationalism as ‘an antiquated cult’. Roy tried to utilize the political movement of freedom struggle for socialist revolution but as he was alienated, rather antagonist to socio-cultural aspects of Indian society and also an atheist could not reach the goal. “Roy’s radical rejection of traditional Hinduism negated all his best efforts to win either the acceptance of the Congress leadership, its rank and life or is the populace at large.” (Haithcox 1971:258)

Roy’s criticism on Hinduism and Manu naturally drew his attention to the subordinate position of the women in Indian society. His views about the secondary status of women in society, although in continuation of Bengal Renaissance, were much ahead of time and more radical in essence. He expressed his views in the essay ‘The Ideal of Indian Womanhood’. While writing on the issue of exploitation of women he had not exempted Gandhi for his absurd approach to the problem of birth control. Gandhi was in favor of birth control but he prohibited the use of contraceptives. He asked the women to resist their husbands from physical relationships. According to Shastras, marriage and giving births were religious duties. So birth control was also violation of Scriptures. Roy raised two objections to the stand first if was it sinful to have sexual intercourse when there was no need for children. Was sexual intercourse not the physical and mental need of an individual?
And second did women have the authority to deny their husbands sexual contact. So according to Roy, Gandhi’s advice was incongruous with the status of women in the society. Even in the modern countries resistance to sex is a legitimate ground for divorce. According to Hindu religion marriage is a sacred unity but in reality it is only transference of proprietary right. Groom obliges the father of bride by accepting her and is to be coaxed by additional gifts i.e. ‘Hunda’. On the whole it is tacit consent by every woman for every kind of sacrifice for her husband, her God. Roy regretfully reveals the deplorable condition of women that they try to satisfy their husbands in every way whether he loves her or not. Roy exposes the hypocrisy inherently implied in Hindu religion as woman is conferred with the status of goddess in the Scriptures and in reality she is nothing but a bonded laborer without any expression of rights, authority and desires. These glorifications about the status of women do not blind any truth seeker to the fact that code of Manu does not permit any kind of independence to the women. Throughout her life she is protected by initially a father, then husband and lastly son. According to Roy ‘protection is a euphemistic term for subordination’. (Roy 2000:547) She is only a possession of man. Supporters of Indian traditions talk of marriages as ‘unity of two halves’, ‘wheels of chariot’ meaning only companionship not equality. Defenders of Shastras have mystified the position of women and conspired against them to deprive them of every quality. Marriage as a unity of two souls, is a myth. One is always superior to the other and unmistakably it is man. According to Roy in feudal-patriarchal society she is one of his worldly possessions, cooking and bearing children for him. He states that if women wear given the due respect and status in the society they would not have rebelled against social system. He asserts that the conditions are changing. Due to Western impact and modernization world values are losing their force. Changing social scenario has encouraged women to aspire for real freedom and partnership. Roy blames the Indian leaders for being deliberate defenders of antiquated traditions and customs. They are not ignorant of the facts and know what they are talking about. Roy also discusses the right of decision in the marriage. Selection of husband is not a voluntary decision for Indian women and if the decision is involuntary then responsibility of maintaining discipline in marriage should not be up on the shoulders of women only. Ironically it is a woman who is deprived of freedom as well as separate individual identity and obeys her husband like a robot. “And the responsibility has no moral force, unless it
is voluntarily assumed”. (Roy 2000:550) Roy perceiving the precarious, pathetic condition of women blames the Hindu religion and Indian leadership for it.

The responsibility of maintaining marital bond of sacredness is only for women. Woman is like a land for them to cultivate, as owner of the land they can have as many lands as he can. Enlightened woman as well as any men of true justice and moral values cannot accept this discriminatory social system. Later on Roy argued that modernization has penetrated into Indian culture. Now we do not live in Manu’s age, so the social system must change. The institutions in society when become decisive and supreme suppressing individual identities then they should be discarded. “The Hindu system of marriage is an antiquated institution” (Roy 2000:553)

Roy demands that defenders of progressive reforms should foment the revolt against this injustice. Instead of mystifying the womanhood they should face the facts. Women of this country should be provided with at least elementary rights. Harmony in the society should not be at the cost of women’s well-being. He makes subtle argument that caring for women is not synonymous with offering them equality. Everybody takes care of his possession. Despite natural differences women want equality as human beings. Being paternal to them should not be the denial of economic freedom. Interestingly Nazi also placed before their women the same Aryan ideals of womanhood i.e. religion, housekeeping and bearing children. Women deprived of economic sources have to surrender to the master of the house, her husband.

Roy emphasized on economic freedom for women because according to him it is the only way to attain justice and equality for themselves. He is aware of the fact that even if the poor women are earning, they are, with housekeeping, bearing children only beasts of burden. Men can afford to have protective and paternalistic attitude only towards women who are members of upper-class of the society. Lower-class women have to work outside the home to earn money. According to him modern women are becoming conscious about their rights but they

“…. are rebelling not against men, but against certain social codes and economic disabilities which placed them under the domination of the male. There is no sex war. That is an absurd idea. There cannot be any
antagonism between the sexes.... As a rule, women cannot do without men anymore than the male can dispense with the female. Inequality is in the relation between man and woman, as social units.... The revolt of the modern woman is not a revolt of the female against the male; it is a revolt of one category of social units against another; offer group of the suppressed against the suppressor, rather against the conditions which do not correspond with the relation of natural equality of the sexes.” (Roy 2000:557)

M.N. Roy, throughout his life, championed the cause of women, peasants and proletariat. His political philosophy consistently aimed at assertion of rights of common man in India irrespective of his caste, religion, class and gender. He rejected the Orthodox concept of nationalism but never undervalued the importance of freedom of India. Roy was a man of independent thinking. He did not adhere to the communist traditions of surrendering obedience and strict discipline. During the Second World War nationalist thoughts became dominant part of his political ideology.

“Over the years Roy had become increasingly disenchanted with Russian communism as a progressive force in the world. As World War II progressed, nationalist themes became more and more pronounced to the exclusion of revolutionary zeal.” (Waithcox 1971: 298)

He lost his faith in Russian communist revolution as liberating force for international communities. In 1936, after his release from prison, he joined the Congress party with socialist and nationalist revolutionary interests. He emphasized on the economic reconstruction of India. According to him those who will control the economic powers of the country would be the rulers of it. He stated that there were two freedoms, one was freedom for the upper strata of the society at the cost of Indian masses and other was the freedom of the common masses which they might have to snatch from the Indian leadership. He repeatedly warned that Indian bourgeoisie, the merchants, financiers and traders were deciding the government policies. He stated that Indian people should not get carried away in the feeling of racial animosity against imperialism but carefully observe that one exploiter should not get replaced by other i.e. Indian bourgeoisie. According to Roy, that would not be the real freedom. Upper-class is replacing the imperialists would not change the exploitation of Indian
masses, there would be only change of individuals. To avoid this, more political and progressive minded people should come forward to demand democratic government. He says in ‘Planning a new India’, we want the government having a commitment “That, India cannot be free, and there can be no guarantee against the economic disorder which will follow the war, unless there will be an economic policy having for its intermediate object the raising of the standard of living of the masses, that is of the peasantry and that cannot be done without encroaching upon the privileges of the parasitic landlords and other vested interests.” (Roy 1944:19)

Assuming that solution of political change would be the solution of all the problems of India is oversimplification of the issue. He insisted that Indian masses should be at the center of economic reconstruction. According to Roy the root cause of all economic problems was poverty. For eradication of poverty increasing production of labor, industrialization, modernization of agriculture etc. were suggested by him. For industrial development three factors were essential: 1) abundance of labor, 2) capital and 3) facility of internal market. To improve the condition of internal market, living standard and for that matter amount of income of people should be increased. Roy’s study of economic situation of India revealed the fact that system of land tenure and the medieval system of credit used to take of a nearly 300 crores of rupees from the peasants. This was exploitation of large masses of peasants and laborers by competitively meager nonproductive landowning class. According to Roy if peasants could have kept that much money to themselves their living standard was bound to improve by itself. He stated “The system of land ownership and the associated form of credit, which together absorb a large portion of the wealth produced in the main industry of the country, must be abolished so that there will be more wealth in circulation. The greater the circulation, the greater the impetus to the economic life, and economic progress begins.” (Roy 1944:34)

Economy of India should not be capitalist economy which inherently aims at more and more profit but such economy which satisfies the needs and requirements of common Indian masses. The political expanse of India reveals two contradictory tendencies to us first leaders like Tilak and Gandhi always defending sowkars and landowners and second like Roy and Ambedkar always justifying the annihilation of feudal medieval systems. So he states that “Under the given Indian conditions the proletariat is only class that can solve the problem of the national revolution …. petty
bourgeoisie…. Are unable to liberate themselves from reactionary outlook…. The peasantry themselves are too backward to be an independent political factor.” (Ray 2000:129) With proletariat’s he also called upon the middle classes to take the responsibility of solving the post-war economic as well as political problems. They should demand the economy which would satisfy the basic needs of people. He remarked that our politics had lot of sentiments and emotions, it must have a purpose. He emphasized on industrialization, utilization of labor, modernization of agriculture and salinity as the right of the people. His faith in democracy and individual freedom led him towards evolution of radical humanism advocating humanist radical democracy.

Roy is generally criticized for his evaluation of social structure and classy questions of Indian society at that time. “In his analysis of class forces in India, Roy greatly exaggerated both the numerical and ideological strength of the Indian proletariat. Estimating that India possessed 5 million workers, and an additional 37 million landless peasants, he reported to the Comintern that, although the Indian nationalist movement rested for the most part of the middle classes, the downtrodden Indian masses would shortly blaze their own revolutionary trail.” (Haithcox 1971:14 – 15) He misjudged the magnitude of proletarian forces. He ignored the fact that Indian workers were not completely proletarianized. They were essential villagers because they had to go to their own villages for some months due to the lack of work. Society is shaped by the thoughts and ideas of the individuals who live in it. He magnified the proletariat nature of Indian worker. He stated the aim of national revolution as to establish the state that would defy the regressive, reactionary and counter-revolutionary forces. It would recognize the authority of oppressed classes “Such a system based upon professional and economic interests will eliminate the question of communal (religion and caste) representation. The National Revolutionary Party must condemn the introduction of religion into politics.” (Ray 2000: 101)

Although Roy prohibited the entry of religion in politics he underestimated the decisive and detrimental influences of castes in Indian society. He led the major emphasis on economic reconstruction of the society but did not pay attention to the fact that in Indian society castes have their own economic basis. Castes a crucial role not only in social field of society but also economic field as well as political field. He inadequately judged the magnitude of cost issue and discarded it as minor issue. There
was absolutely no possibility of victory of economic development of the masses interpreting them into only classes as castes could change the economic equations. “Roy simplifies interpretation of Indian history to the exclusion of caste-system. Still today the innumerable caste-divisions are found existing in Indian society, and the barriers, separating these castes have not been broken yet. The newly enfranchised proletariat masses like the language of traditional politics which so largely turn us about caste.” (Grover 1973:29) Though he rejected the narrow concept of nationalism his political, economic and social thought mainly concentrate on the welfare of the exploited section of the society. Throughout his life he defended freedom from poverty, totalitarian and conservatism.

Roy’s radical humanism was more of a social-cultural movement than economic and political one. His views on democracy had those times are pertinently relevant even today he says “The future of democracy in India is not bright. Popular mentality is still authoritarian, and politicians and political parties glorify that reactionary cultural heritage as spiritual genius. People with an authoritarian mentality cannot establish democracy. If democracy fails in India that will not be due to the conspiracy of political parties and leaders; the failure will be predetermined by all objective conditions and the mentality of the people which cannot conceive of human freedom and human creativity.” (Karnik 1978:593)

**Tagore and ‘Nationalism’**

Rabindranath Tagore was born as a fourteenth child in Brahmin aristocratic family of rich landlords. Although it was a privileged family as Brahmans as well as aristocrats, the Tagores supported the reformist moment led by Raja Rammohan Roy. Maharshi Devendranath Tagore, Rabindranath’s father supported the moment as its first organizer and opposed the anti-reformist tendencies strongly. Ironically in his old age he turned to Vedanta philosophy. Tagore family led a very plentiful life. The distinguishing feature of aristocrats those days can be described as “The aristocrats of those days lived a double life. At home in the joint family, the orthodox and traditional ways of life were maintained and household deity was scrupulously worshiped morning and evening. Outside the family quarters were spacious reception rooms and banquet halls …. Where the wine flowed freely, where the ornamental hookah was always ready with fragment tobacco, where famous musicians vied with
one another in displaying their virtuosity and the professional dancing girls their charms.” (Kriplani 2011:4)

Rabindranath Tagore followed the legacy of progressive thoughts more intensely after his father. Raja Rammohan Roy and Mahadev Govind Ranade in Maharashtra were role models for him as defenders of reformist movement. He expressed his respect as “We have every reason to deplore our past and despair of our future, but at the same time we have a right to hope for the best when we know that Rammohan Roy has been born to us.” (Tagore 2010:XV) Rabindranath Tagore has deep appreciation for Roy and Ranade because they accepted those values which were precious for the development of India but they never betrayed the Eastern spiritual basis and furthermore they tried to build the bridge between the East and the West. Tagore was never confined to the national boundaries, he always tried to encompass diverse cultures of various nations, made friendships with people, and exchanged views on matters without any specific economic, political or religious objective. As he followed Roy and the Brahmo Samaj, he revolted against Hindu conservatism and polytheism. His rebellious thinking made him unbiased and receptive to acceptance of Western people and values. His family being wealthy facilitated his foreign visits. In January 1885 he wrote his friend Pramatha Chaudhuri about forces of East and West wrestling inside him. “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…. Hence the swing of the pendulum between passionate pain and calm detachment, between lyrical abandon and philosophizing between love of my country and mockery of patriotism, between an itch to enter the lists and the longing to remain wrapped in thought.” (Tagore 2009:XI)

Tagore deplored the exploitative, repressive rule of British government. According to him it was the failure of West to express the best of it in all aspects of its rule in India. According to him the real spirit of West was its expression of service for the welfare of humanity in which it failed regrettably. Colonial rule in India revealed the failure of East-West unity. Tagore’s intense desire was to acquire from the West the knowledge about arts and literature, science, its spirit of justice etc. A journalist, when asked him whether a union between spiritual perspective of East and mechanical development of West was possible, he replied ‘it can and must be.’ He welcomed the scientific progress of the West “Only he felt that, while the great
scientific revolution of Europe and America more than equalled India’s contribution to religion and philosophy, India could supply a corrective to the misuse of science by the West. And that, in the present context, India could not do without the West and the West would not do without India.” (Anand 2010: 72)

He stated that India should understand the coherence implied in various cultures of world and become conscious of it spiritual purpose, its obstructive regressive aspect in the unification of East and West which was essential for the perfection of world culture as a whole. As it is observed, due to his privileged position in society, he got the opportunity to witness various contending East-West issues around him. Exposure to Western literature and arts with analysis of our own Eastern culture sowed the seeds of his renunciation of the orthodox concept of nationalism. Initially he enthusiastically participated in Swadeshi movement but later on he opposed it. Ramchandra Guha quotes Tagores’ letter to his friend in November 1908 as ‘Patriotism cannot be our final spiritual shelter.’ ‘I will not buy glass for the price of diamonds’ wrote Tagore, ‘and I will never allow patriotism to triumph over humanity as long as I live.’ (Tagore 2009:XII)

His views and opinions about the cult of nationalism and need of internationalism for cherishing humanity revealed his profound foresight of world’s future in his book ‘Nationalisms’. It is based on his lectures given in Japan and United States in 1916 and 1917. He denounced the narrow concept of nationalism and advocated for worldwide mutual cooperation and exchange of cultural values. He repeatedly warned people all over the world about the perils of nationalism. Rampant nationalism would drive people towards the conflicts and violence with the aim of expansionism. Jingoist creed of nationalism would spread hatred and enmity among various nations and even within particular nation. According to him there was a ‘thin line between nationalism and xenophobia.’

**Nationalism in Japan:**

In his lecture in Japan he says, the worst kind of slavery for any human being is to be captivated by dispiritedness because there is loss of belief in oneself. He says, we, the Asian people are always blamed for glorifying the past and not living in the present. Asian people have always maintained that regressive tendency is a common assertion by other people. But the educated class of people in India is trying to reverse this charge by bragging about it. We always convince ourselves about the truth of the
matter and choose to cling to its spell. Tagore praises Japan for overcoming passivity and achieving magnificent success in various fields of life with flying colors. Japan’s outstanding accomplishment has taught a lesson to the Indians. Tagore reminds us about India’s past historical achievements in various fields of science, philosophy, arts and literature. Tagore asserts that in the ancient times Asians had a very civilized culture than the West. After a period, this guiding voice of East rested in silence and East entered into phase of stagnancy. But according to Tagore these pauses are very essential for rejuvenation of the life of the people. These periods of inactivity provide for renewal of life. Tagore asserts that forming the ideals and never testing them in crucial periods of life is not proper. They should not be limited by the securities but should be given the real freedom on the road of risks and adventures. “Ideals once formed make the mind lazy.” (Tagore 2009: p. 3-4)

Japan’s progress according to him is not a ‘short-lived wonder.’ Japan abandoned the old dispositions, patterns and appeared on the screen of the world as triumphant nation. It was an act of great potentiality and strength. Although Japan had progressed and came out as a modern country, its roots are firmly fixed in its legacy of Eastern tradition and culture which always imparted the consciousness about the Eastern values like self-sacrifice, recognizing the power of soul, attending the social duties and maintaining composure in the face of calamities etc. Keeping pace with present, Japan has accepted all the responsibilities of modernization. Japan is a true exemplar for Asian people who have to give up leaving in the past and instead accept the full responsibility for life by facing the risks. Tagore does not believe that Japan’s accomplishments are the result of its imitation of West. Imitation generates only weakness. Science is only the rules and principles of physical world, merely borrowing them one cannot change one’s mind set. Tagore says “You can borrow knowledge from others, but you cannot borrow temperament.” (Tagore 2009:4) The existence of life always has a choice to make about acceptance and rejection of the matters. Mere accumulation of knowledge is not adequate but we have to mould it according to our identity and intrinsic needs. Tagore appreciates Japan for preserving her own identity and outlook. That was the reason he wholeheartedly appreciated Raja Rammohan Roy’s attitude towards Western education because it was based on thorough comprehension of Eastern wisdom. It was not an immature imitation but conscious acceptance of Western knowledge. He hopes that Japan would not forget the commitment to her own inheritance due to pride of its foreign achievements.
Japan would set an example before the world by the way it accepts the modernism with its assets and challenges. Modernization has come not only with advantages but also some crises like conflicts between capitalism and labor, man and woman, materialism and humanistic ideals, individual and ‘organized selfishness of nations’ etc. Tagore warns us about the feigned appearances of freedom and new types of enslavements comprised in mechanization and modernism. Tagore asserts that modernization should be accepted with the application of our spiritual ideas, social liabilities and simplicity. The external appearance may comprise machines and technology but the soul should be rooted in Eastern philosophy. For centuries Japan had her own dispositions and mannerism which cannot be abandoned for the sake of modern progress. They had solved the crises in that society according to their own philosophy. Japanese people have every kind of freedom to shape the Western material according to their genius and needs. Through their experiments, various aspects of modern civilization will be humanized for truth, beauty and harmony. Tagore remembers the past when Eastern Asia from Burma to Japan was in union with India. Those nations were tied to each other with the bonds of amity and cooperation. They were not together due to exploitative self interests or conspiracies. There were literature and arts flourishing on mutual understanding and goodwill. People were endeavoring to reach the higher ideals of humanity. Now, according to Tagore the new political civilization has come into existence in Europe after Industrial Revolution, encompassing all the advantages and disadvantages of modernization and materialism. “The political civilization which has sprung up from the soil of Europe and its overrunning the whole world, like some prolific weed, is based upon exclusiveness. It is always watchful to keep the aliens at bay or to exterminate them. Carnivorous and cannibalistic in its tendencies, it feeds upon the resources of other peoples and tries to swallow their whole future. It is always afraid of other races achieving eminence, naming it as a peril …. Forcing down races of men who are weaker, to be eternally fixed in their weakness.” (Tagore 2009:8) Tagore intensely criticizes European civilization for its mechanization at the cost of humanity and imperialistic expansionist attitude which drives the big nations to devour small nations greedily. People who have lion’s share in satisfying this greed, Tagore blames, are worshipped under the name of patriotism. Tagore warns us that there are moral and ethical values essential and applicable for individual as well as institutional life. Under the name of nationalism you cannot trample them. Gradual loss of these
values will degenerate the whole society, people will no longer able to believe other people. Cynical distrust will wipe out the sacred values of humanity. Tagore strongly emphasizes the need for having moral and ethical basis to the cult of nationalism because according to him this greed of national patriotism is a recent phenomenon which has not been given adequate trial. In China and India we have a civilization based on societal and spiritual values. Though Western civilization has large machines and material progress, they do not have a touch of life to them and so they are ‘against life as a whole.’

Tagore says, the Asian people are generally blamed for their rigidity and passivity. Asian people maintain a kind of contemptuous attitude towards external reality and remain stoically contented in their subjective interpretations of the reality. Even if Asians foster the metaphysical attitude they do have ‘some deep basis of reality’ as the foundation for their organized bodies. According to him Asian civilization is not standing upon set of abstractions but they have a vision and spiritual sense to see ‘infinite reality in all finite things.’ Asians are blamed for their lack of immobility and consequent lack of progress. But according to Tagore for Asians the development is inward, it is inner growth of their spiritual strength, growth of life. Asians have that distinctive vision of reality which reaches beyond the death. This vision bestows tranquility and purity upon them and leads them to self-renunciation. This inner, life oriented spiritual strength is much more vital than material acquisitions. Running breathlessly after materialism the West can feel tired but East with her spiritual ideals can wait and become a torchbearer for the West in coming future. Large machines, trade, commercial transactions have predatory speed and so they cannot wait for people but Eastern values like love, beauty, devotion and faith can wait, they are eternally vital.

Tagore also genuinely acknowledges and appreciates Europe’s achievements in various fields like astronomy, physics, medical field and also agriculture. He appreciates Europe for having unique treasure of arts and literature, nourishing generations after generations all over the world. He congratulates them for employing all intellectual resources and bending the forces of nature in service of humanity. He says, such powerful strides do require motivation from spiritual strength. European people also cherish higher values like sense of justice, equality and sacrifice for others. Tagore appreciates them for their love of freedom, resistance to militarism and defense of individual rights. According to him Europe’s failure reveals only when it
builds its own power greedily, resists its own essential nature, performs unrighteous, unfair acts and spreads immoral tendencies all over.

Later on he argues that Asian civilization has also chosen her path which deals with social not political aspect of people’s lives and is based on spiritual and humanistic ideals. Till now they have solved their problems in ‘security of aloofness’, though many regimes changed, no foreign aggressions could disturb them. But now they are exposed to the external world. Now the problems of world are their problems. Now it is the need of time that they should blend the external civilization with their own historical inheritance. Now they should leave their self-woven civilization to face the world, so that new vitality may spring up to nourish the new path created by them. According to Tagore Japan is the first country in Asian group of countries to complete the task, and has become a hope for others.

Tagore observes that the countries he visited in the past were nothing but exhibitions of wealth and materials like dress, furniture and entertaining matters. He observed the amazing extravagance of materialism making the person alien, envious and then making him feel low. In Japan he observed the presence of aesthetics, beauty and love. There was complete absence of display of power, greed and wealth. In Japan people have not analyzed the nature but understood it with the help of congenial tenderness of heart. Acquiring knowledge about nature is very different from internalizing its spirit, feeling of ‘oneness’ with it. According to Tagore European people have received the expression of power in mainly political and commercial fields and Japanese people in the realizing beauty of nature.

Japanese people have discovered the spiritual bond of love with nature. Why stressing on individual freedom ironically he understands Emperor in Japan as paternal figure for its people. He calls the Emperor as head of family i.e. of Japanese people. He states ‘maitri’ as the foundation of their culture. Tagore warns those people in Japan who are against the spiritual ideals that for a truly modern man there is no need to imitate modernism. Modernism needs freedom of soul. “True modernism is freedom of mind, not slavery of taste. It is independence of thought and action, not tutelage under European schoolmasters.” (Tagore 2009:19)

Some people adhere to science as the only basis for living. Science appears as a serious concept but lacks the essential profoundness. Tagore does not object to Japan’s acquisition of modern weapons but he insists that they should be used for only self protection and not for expansionist purposes. According to him, spiritual ideals
true protect the human beings. The West is travelling on the suicidal path, it is suffocating the people under the pressure of institutional organizations so that they could be held under dominance. On this background, Japan should believe in ‘moral law of existence.’ Tagore’s concept of nationalism transcends the boundaries of orthodox nationalism, it includes spiritual and humanistic values dominantly. It is based on love, co-operation and individual freedom than competition and will for expansionism among nations. Japan need not to imitate the external attributes of Western nationalism but to accept the motivational strength behind it. Nations diligently encouraging ‘moral blindness’, as the creed of nationalism are leading themselves towards self-destruction. Tagore deplores Western nationalism because under the impact of this cult of nationalism young people are goaded to foster malice and aspirations by any means and methods. These are invoked by twisting the historical facts, improper representation of races and their culture for arousing adverse feelings for them, by building monuments of the events, that are crafted usually which are fit to be forgotten speedily for the well-being of humanity and continually instigating antagonism among neighboring nations. This is venomous for the humanity. Provoking humiliation for defeated nations by exhibiting war medals etc., abating people’s minds to foster superiority complex, invoking their vanity and infusing hatred in children’s minds for others are imitations of Western nationalism.

For prevention of future self-destruction Japan needs to watch the development of its nationalism diligently. Tagore expresses his concern as “Therefore I am afraid of the rude pressure of the political ideals of the west upon your own. In political civilization, the state is an abstraction and the relationship of men utilitarian.” (Tagore 2009:23) According to him nationalism must have humanistic values at its core and essentially human values should be the driving force of nationalism. Climate charged with the devilish ambitions, conspiracies, hatred and fear is the gift of Western nationalism. Japan should not accept these values in exchange for its own inheritance. Minds of children should be infused with altruistic values, positing the values at higher eminence than business, political strategies or patriotism. Tagore blames Eastern people for insulting humanity when they discriminate or assume people from particular creed, color or caste as inferior individuals. Ramchandra Guha in his introduction to Tagore’s ‘Nationalism’ states that “Unlike other patriots, Tagore refused to privilege a particular aspect of India - Hindu, North Indian, upper caste etc.
and make this the essence of the nation, and then demand that other aspects conform or subordinate themselves to it.” (Tagore 2009:1)

When he was asked about the name of the religion he follows he wrote “What is generally called ‘religion’, I cannot say I have achieved within myself in a clear deep-rooted form. But there has been in my mind a steady onward growth of something alive which I have felt on many an occasion. It is not, by any means, a particular conception - but the deeper awareness, a new awakening.” (Anand 2010: 69) Assuming other people inferior denotes once own weakness which we try to compensate by ‘sight of power.’

West exhibits this power by blundering structure of modern progress comprising efficiency and ambition assisted by machines which is not going to last forever. Suffocating tendencies of war, despair and hatred form the basis of excessive cult of nationalism, which is towered with the help of patriotism.

**Nationalism in the West:**

This segment includes Tagore’s lecture delivered in the US. He elaborates on Western concept of nationalism. While man faced the calamities he also learned to carve his own path for him. Those crises shaped his way of life. As human beings have developed the superior qualities of intellect, they had the highest responsibility towards them. Tagore explores the history of India as an abode of all different races. India has been facing this race problem for many centuries. Due to this decentralized structure of India, it cannot express itself as an organized force. On the contrary West has emerging as organized force, an advantage to her. Unless and until we solve this race problem with the help of truth and humanity, we will remain deprived of all benefits. Our difficulties are of social adjustment among various ethnic races. India is trying for ‘social regulation of differences’ and also for spiritual unity within all races. Tagore blames India for her discriminatory attitude for setting the dividing wall too high, spoiling children’s mind with the concept of social divisions based on inferiority and superiority. He assures that India has been carrying out the experiments of social adjustment. History of India is a history of social upheavals and strivings for spiritual ideals. He glorifies the India’s past which included devotion and commitment of ‘Gurukul system’, grandeur of home, fields and temples, consciousness of eternal, adoration of nature, simplicity of law and village administration. He says like
Mughals and Pathans many dynasties invaded India. They were not organized like force of West i.e. British rule. The former invaders were like Indians with their religion and tastes. Indians loved them, hated them but more or less they were not as deeply disrupted as under the rule of West. This organized force of West as ‘nation’ is like “A nation, in the sense of the political and economic union of a people, is that aspect which a whole population assumes when organized for a mechanical purpose.” (Tagore 2009: 37) Community living with social relationships is a natural expression of man. Tagore observes that under the impact of mechanization and professionalism the bonds between individuals especially man and woman are withering away. The nature of relationship between man and woman is changing from mutual surrender to conflicting one.

There are people who oppose the control of power on individual freedom but the power is becoming immensely abstract. Motivation to earn more and more wealth has become most dominant than all social needs. It is destroying the integrity and totality of human existence creating the conflicts between its elements for example economic war between capital and labour. Tagore warns that when nation as ‘organization of politics and commerce’ becomes omnipotent by devouring harmony of social life then humanity is ravaged. When nation turns into ‘perfect organization of power’ it has to compromise with purity of means and allow unrighteous activities. Success is the justification of all mechanism of nation. He not only blames British rule for lack of humanitarian touch but the Nation lacking in humane and spiritual ideals. Tagore warns “…. We must stand up and give warning to all, that this nationalism is a cruel epidemic of evil that is sweeping over the human world of the present age and eating into its moral vitality.” (Tagore 2009: 42)

Tagore differentiates between rule of other governments like Mughal and Pathan dynasties and rule of British nation. He describes the difference as difference between ‘the handloom and power loom.’ According to Tagore the former governments did not impose severe constraints on people, they had not tightly controlled the lives of the people, so the people had space for making social adjustments. The rule of British government was strictly impositional without any elasticity and flexibility. Tagore also feels gratitude for the British government as it established order and rule of justice for segregated Indian society including various races and castes. Tagore appreciates the desire of British government to form amiable bonds between different races but differentiates by saying that it is the will of Western
spirit not of Western nation. Western spirit reveals the best it has and Western nation expresses the worst it has. India is troubled by the conflict between two. Unlike other countries, in India Western nation is not encouraging people for commerce and industry on the contrary, intentionally keeping Indians backward. “The truth is that the spirit of conflict and conquest is at the origin and in the center of Western nationalism; its basis is not social cooperation. It has evolved a perfect organization of power, but not spiritual idealism.” (Tagore 2009: 46)

Law of humanity is morality, civilization which flourishes on the resources of others and deprives them of all benefits, leads the path of self-destruction. According to Tagore, the law and order generously given by Western nation is ‘merely negative good’ because of its rigidity and it needs more touch of life. This rigidity of system and ‘tireless vigilance’ of nation creates only illusion of freedom. On the contrary, people have to surrender their humane values and freedom to this fetish of nationalism. Nation demands from people their utmost employment of all physical, moral and intellectual resources to defeat other nations for power and barter their higher aspirations in exchange for profit and power. Tagore strongly criticizes as “The nation, with all its paraphernalia of power and prosperity, it’s flax and pious hymns, its blasphemous prayers in the churches, and the literary mock thunders of its patriotic bragging, cannot hide the fact that the Nation is the greatest evil for the Nation, that all its precautions are against it, any new birth of its fellow in the world is always followed in its mind by the dread of a new peril.” (Tagore 2009: 51-52). Nation plots ‘conspiracy of fear’, so that people as rivets adjust to dead rhythm of machines for mutual protection. Individual, who leads life with comparatively slow pace, cherishes the philanthropic values as love, cooperation, adoration for beauty and is not systematically organized always lags behind and lives in the fear of losing freedom. Nation wants people to be powerful, not perfect which is a pre-requirement of man to be whole and in perfect integrity. So there is every possibility of dehumanization of man and nation also tries to petrify his morality in order to be efficient and powerful. All these strategies, garbed in patriotism, are implemented to strengthen the cult of nationalism.

Tagore emphasizes on ‘unreal abstraction of an idea’. Ideas are the product of our intellectual power with their own logic constructions. It is imperative on us to examine every abstraction, for being real or unreal. Abstraction of an idea if it is unreal intoxicates the moral sense of man, paralyzing his conscience. Man, even if he
is not essentially that cruel and mean, it leads to disastrous consequences. The idea of nationalism operates in the same method. Unreal abstraction of idea of nation drugs the people to carry out its systematic program without any kind of moral considerations. Tagore says “The time has come when for the sake of the whole outraged world, Europe should fully know in her own person that terrible absurdity of the thing called the Nation.” (Tagore 2009: 61)

**Nationalism in India:**

In this lecture Tagore discusses the problems peculiar to India. He says he doesn’t hit particular nation but the concept of the nation. Like any other country India has social issues more dominant than political ones. In Europe there is racial unity with inadequate resources for its people so it adopts the policy of political and commercial aggressiveness. In India it was never like that, it consistently faced the problem of race diversity, although it diligently tried to solve it by applying social adjustments. When American people look at this Indian problem insultingly Tagore stresses the fact that in presence of Red Indian and African-American issues, they do not have a right to allege India. India sought for some common basis of unity for races by taking inspiration from Saints like Nanak, Kabir, Chaitanya etc. Histories of nations are peripheral; the real history is a history of mankind. In this situation to alternatives are there for people to fight or to cooperate. People who live by values like mutual help and fraternity will last permanently but people having instincts for fighting and antagonism for foreigners will be eliminated in the coming future. Morality, now will have to encompass the whole world not merely ‘fractional groups of nationality’. Europe feels pride for her traditions. Although, pride in every aspect and its blindness at the end. It exalts its consciousness and ultimately misleads. Due to this, Europe cannot impart to the east what is best in it and unable to accept what is best in the East that is stored in its traditional inheritance. Comparatively, as America was the newly created country it did not have time to impose its ways and means on the world and also according to Tagore, it does not have a tradition full of unfair intricacies. English rule in India has always been apathetic and scornful towards Indians because of its ‘pride and national selfishness.’

Indian people have never had awareness about the concept of nationalism because it was a decentralized country and was not an organized force. According to Tagore, for truly gaining India back people should regard humanitarian ideals greater
than country. People with moral values have bright future. West should not appear as a curse for the world, on the contrary it should help the weak one and not incur the danger of self-destruction. “What is the nation? It is the aspect of a whole people as an organized power.” (Tagore 2009: 73). Tagore says that insisting on people to be strong and efficient, idea of nation diverts people from higher spiritual ideals so that people think of fulfillment in terms of maintenance of that organization.

“Tagore was a patriot without quite being nationalist. He was no apologist for colonial rule; after British soldiers fired on an unarmed crowd in Amritsar in 1919, he returned his knighthood. At the same time, he was dismayed by the xenophobic tendencies of the populist edge of the Indian national movement.”(Guha 2010:186) He criticizes Congress for not having ‘real programme’ but only some freedom at administrative level. According to Tagore constructive programme was necessary for India as her own choice. He wanted Indians to reveal their moral strength to the British government, to march towards moral victory by ‘failure and suffering.’ According to him, split in the Congress occurred due to futility of its programme. The division led to the rise of Extremists who stressed on a radically independent and aggressive method for demanding freedom. According to Tagore they were unsympathetic to India’s peculiar social constitution and for that matter its special social problems. Causes of our difficulties are deeply rooted in our social system and they are the determinants for our subjection. There is need to abandon unjust and disgraceful social customs and ideals, embarrassing caste system, parasite tick and a blind reliance on traditions. Even if British rule is drived away there is every possibility of another kind of servitude. Due to divisive tendencies and segregations India suffers from feebleness of its unity. According to Tagore this ‘diversity’ is from the beginning but India unlike other countries has not committed the sin of exterminating the original inhabitants. According to him India has always been doing social experimentation for unity though there was a provision for maintaining freedom of differences. Regulating the caste system differences were acknowledged but flexibility and mutability in maintaining the boundaries of caste was ignored. The compartments became too rigid. The boundaries became immovable as well as too high. He says, “Her caste system is the outcome of this spirit of toleration. This has produced something like United States of a social federation, whose common name is Hinduism.” (Tagore 2009:77) Truth’s changeable and fluid nature was missed in the regulation of caste system. The same crucial mistake was repeated when professions
and trades were allotted according to castes. This distribution minimized the cutthroat competition and envy but again due to ignorance of law of mutability the walls between the castes became petrified which turned ‘arts into crafts and genius into skill’. He assures that the caste system in India has taken all the responsibility to solve the problem of ‘races’ with an attempt to avoid the friction. In West there is homogeneity of races so they have altogether ignored this issue. He blames west for their rule in colonies as they either use colony people as workers for unskilled labour or reduce them to slavery. According to Tagore the root cause behind the blunder of establishing strict barriers between castes in graded order was a misconception and misjudgment of human nature. Conferring inferior status on others and degrading them is an act against humanity.

There are two guiding principles behind the formation of any institution, first regulation of our ‘passions and appetites’ and second selfless love for other fellow human beings. In West the appetites are bound by the restrictions of demand and supply. He says “In India our social instincts imposed restrictions upon our appetites - maybe it went to the extreme of repression - but in the West the spirit of economic organization with no moral purpose goads the people into the perpetual pursuit of wealth…. “ (Tagore 2009:80)

Freedom from greed for power is real freedom. Mere political freedom does not set our minds free. In politically free countries also minority rules over the majority, being politically free means being powerful not essentially free. People should accept moral and spiritual freedom as their goals. Tagore rejected the orthodox concept of nationalism though he supported the freedom movement. He advocated love and co-operation between nations instead of ambitious jealousy, hatred & pride. In name of patriotism greed for expansionism is cultivated. It nourishes on the excessive cult of nationalism. We should comprehend the greed under disguise of patriotism. This nationalism leads to dehumanization of state. The basis of nationalism should lead the nation toward humanitarian ideals, otherwise moral blindness will translate itself into self-destruction. Patriotism is sharpened and hatred and envy are cultivated in the minds of children by rewriting history misrepresentation of facts and races, spreading jealousy & conspiracies. Patriotism is risky, it is the expression of organized self interest goading towards aggressive nationalism. Any abstraction of unreal idea can be disastrous for people, its heightened condition benumbs our moral sense. Aggressive nationalism is that
abstraction of unreal idea of nation which may drug our moral consciousness leading to self destruction.

In case of India he says the leaders are conservative, the educated people are apathetic toward reformation in Indian society. Nationalism was supposed to be unifying force for Indian society but it revealed the contradictions discriminating on the basis of minor differences like food habits & dressing, treating others as inferior, kills the spirit of rational thinking. In India the social issues are dominant. Under the impact of outdated authoritative tradition and customs the discriminations are prevalent in India. Distribution of trades on hereditary basis, graded & hierarchical structure of caste system expose the stagnancy of the Indian social system with lack of mobility or flexibility. For development of Indian society there is need of constructive programme and mobility in the social system. To solve these problems of social adjustment with proper regulation of differences is obligatory on our part.

There is always a pressure of political and commercial power of state along with the constraints of institutions. Success is the only justification of the state and so it clamps restrictions on the individual freedom. Mechanization leading towards engrossing materialism dehumanizes the society. Modernization has its own evils, to avoid them there is need to substantiate them with spiritual values. Our progress should be based on spiritualism. Modernism is freedom of mind it should not get enslaved by material prosperity. If we are firmly rooted in traditions, spiritual inheritance, we can face the challenges of modernization and confer upon it a human face. Values of west should be consciously accepted with preservation of our own identity. Man has developed a superior power of intellect & hence has the highest responsibility toward society. There is only one religion & it is the religion love.

According to majority of nationalists in India we have accomplished our social and spiritual goals. The only task to be completed is remained in the political field. It was never thought that ‘social inadequacy’ would conceive such helplessness. Inertia of our social institutions would goad us towards politics with prison houses with immovable walls. Tagore warns us that any social weakness might turn out into politically threatening factor.

According to him our basis of nationalism needs more corrective measures. Majority of our national leaders are conservative. Still we have a factor of physical repulsion in our caste system. Moral criteria against amalgam of races will definitely
hamper our political unity and growth. Social discrimination and humiliation of particular people on the basis of minor differences of food habits and dressing style wipes out the spirit of freedom and rational humanitarian thinking. Social organizations in India have become so rigidly stiffened to the extent of becoming paralytic that educated people of India have become apathetic to India’s social needs. British rule also intentionally keeping the Indians industrially backward, confined to only purely agriculture. Tagore stresses the need of social cooperation as the basis of our civilization, not economic exploitation and conflicts. Nationalism is at the root of all troubles in India. He consistently argues throughout these lectures that ‘Nationalism is a great menace.’ (Tagore 2009:74)

In case of India it was proved as accurate judgment of Indian situation where Indian society is a multiethnic, multireligious, politically and socially weak and economically dependent society. Nationalism was assumed as a unifying force for India but it was a failure. Tagore discouraged Indian leadership from advocating nationalist ideas in Indian society. Tagore never accepted the concept of nationalism that supported the anti-colonial freedom movement. He was very much sympathetic about the plight of Indian masses. He was initially enthusiastic about participating in Swadeshi movement. Later on Swadeshi boycott phase created a feeling of disillusionment in his mind. He was against burning goods and other destructive activities.“He believed that it was quite easy to be excited, but such a volatile reaction was not the safest or the best.” (Hogan 2003:31)

He wanted Swadeshi movement to adopt more constructive agenda as spread of education and social reforms etc. in his novel Ghare-Baire he presents both constructive and destructive aspects of Swadeshi movement. This novel also reveals his distrust of extremist nationalism. “The more profound dimension of the Ghare-Baire critique of Swadeshi extremist nationalism is really its rejection of any fetishization of the nation, and of efforts to subordinate morality to its worship.” (Sarkar 2004: 125)

Incidences of communal violences strengthened his rejection of extremism. The consequences of extremist nationalism justified his arguments. In Maharashtra savior of extremist nationalism was Bal Gangadhar Tilak who initiated the festivals like ‘Ganpati Utsav’ and ‘Shivjayanti’ to reinforce the power of nationalism and that culminated into more dangerous segregation of Indian society in separate Hindu-Muslim communities the Muslim League was formed in 1906. Partition in 1947 was
followed by intense communal riots. Tagore had that anticipated revision which pursued future threats to the Indian society. In Ghare-Baire, “Rabindranath seems to be grasping, in embryo as it were, certain possibilities that have become frighteningly manifest in today’s India, more so perhaps that in the times of the novel. Resonances with contemporary aggressive, chauvinist religious nationalism of the Hindutva variety are to apparent now.” (Sarkar 2004:127)

In his lectures on nationalism he strongly repudiated the endless bullfight between nations and newly emerging nationalisms. During his initial participation and the late disillusionment with Swadeshi he became more conscious of religious and casteist nature of Indian society and coercion associated with its unjust and ruthless nature. Though he was against Swadeshi on intellectual level he lent his support by national songs. He criticized Gandhi’s noncooperation as kind of violence and part of negation. According to him Charakha was against the idea of industrial development, “Later Tagore explained and elaborated his viewpoint in article ‘The Cult of the Charkha’ published in the Modern Review which provoked a rejoinder from the Mahatma in the Young India….’” (Kriplani 2011:187)

Tagore criticized national politics as ‘kind of mendicancy.’ His opinions about the principle of nonviolence revealed his genuine grasp of the principle:

“I believe in the efficacy of Ahimsa as the means of overcoming the congregated might of physical force on which the political powers in all countries mainly rest. But like every other moral principles, Ahimsa has to spring from the depth of mind, and it must not be forced upon men from some outside appeal of urgent need. The great personalities of the world have preached love, forgiveness and nonviolence primarily for the sake of spiritual perfection and not for the attainment of some immediate success in politics or similar departments of life. They were aware of the difficulty of their teaching being realized within a fixed period of time in a sudden and wholesale manner by men whose previous course of life had chiefly pursued the course of self. No doubt through a strong compulsion of desire for some external result, men are capable of repressing their habitual inclinations for a limited time, but when it concerns an immense multitude of men of different traditions and stages of culture, and when the object for which such a repression
tagore believed in moral acceptance of spiritual values. he rejected nationalism for its exclusiveness and dehumanizing tendencies. in indian situation, ironically, the presupposed unifying force of nationalism exposed the contradictory separatist and fragmented dispositions. in multistranded society like india heavy price was paid for the cult of nationalism. tagore always emphasized on social adjustment of races and accommodation of differences.

movement of swadeshi often communicated with the masses in terms of sentimental hindu revivalism. this revivalist nationalism comprised certain notions about ideal indian womanhood. rabindranath tagore also shared some of these ideas about the concept of womanhood. “swadeshi nationalism simultaneously exhorted and subordinated womanhood. the bhadralok woman was revealed of figure of motherliness and selfless service to the family, she was made to embody the ‘mother’-land, but she remained at home…. serving the cause by sacrificing foreign luxuries, admiring, usually from behind the curtain, the patriotic oratory of male leaders.” (sarkar sumit 2004: 132)

when tagore was very much enthusiastic about swadeshi movement after the partition of bengal 1905, he had a very conservative picture of women in his mind. rukmini devi arundale remembers his teaching to the students in santiniketan with his emphasis on home. in many books he describes the indian home with its graceful simplicity. she says “in the home he elevated the indian woman for whom he had a great regard. from my many meetings with him i could perceive that he had far greater admiration for the unsophisticated and uneducated woman than for the modern girls who were becoming foreign to their country through wrong education and ideas.” (arundale rukmini devi 2010:75) in the essay entitled ‘brahman’ (1902) he justified the varna system. in ‘rabindra rachanabali’ an essay written after his involvement in swadeshi movement he writes “in europe a band of modern women feel ashamed even of being women. they are embarrassed about giving birth and serving their husbands and children…. sweeping floors, bringing in water, grinding spices, serving food to relatives and guests and eating only afterwards - in europe all this is considered oppressive and shameful, but for us it indicates the high status of the grihalakshmi, their sanctity, the respect that is shown towards them…. the more
women look up on even husbands without any striking qualities as divine, the more they are invested with purity and true beauty…. Europe claims that all human beings have the right to have or become everything. But in reality everyone doesn’t have the same right, and it is based to accept this profound truth from the very beginning.” (Sarkar 2004:42)

Tagore believed in separate worlds of men and women where a woman would be respected to her segregated position in the house. A substantial change in his views about women was observed after his break from Swadeshi movement though still he was asserting that they were quite happy with their ‘household goddesses’. He pursued woman as ‘Shakthi’. Tagore glorified woman as submissive, patient, undergoing sufferings mutely and sacrificing, on the hand his character like Sumitra in the play. ‘The King and the Queen’ stands for modern and dynamic woman. In his later writings he himself wiped out the stereotyped image of woman. He admitted the same field of work for both men and women. Although there were natural differences in men and women he declared that they would have to understand ‘the common humanity’ of men and women. He recognized that women were entering into new world by breaking their own confinement and hope for new civilization. He appeared to women “to open their hearts, cultivate their intellect, pursue knowledge with determination. They have to remember that unexamined blind conservation is opposed to creativity.” (Sarkar 2004:140)

Apparently, reading his literature, we observe that Tagore’s attitude was shifting constantly between two opposites. He opposed Swadeshi movement, but he wrote national songs for it. He glorified patriarchy but raised his voice against operation of women. He opposed the colonial rule but was against the idea of nationalism. He always defended individual liberty but saw the Emperor of Japan as paternal figure and justified a monarchy. He blamed the rigidity of social organizations and praised the tolerance of Indians by remaining aloof from the upheavals of foreign rules. He felt sympathy for downtrodden classe, he tried to accommodate the differences but never vigorously demanded equality for graded caste structure of Indian society.

According to Patrick Colm Hogan,

“There is story often recounted about Tagore. When asked what his greatest flaw might be, he said ‘Inconsistency’. The punchline is that he was then asked what his greatest virtue might be and he replied
'Inconsistency’. The moral is directly relevant here. We often tend to think of issues and causes – national, educational, scientific, or whatever – as having answers that are simply right or wrong. But our reaction to these issues and causes is more complex, as the issues and causes are themselves more complex. Like many of us, Tagore felt ambivalent about the positions he advocated, the causes he supported…. His seeming vacillation manifests the ambivalence that most of us suppress.” (Hogan 2003:10)

Tagore was basically poet and visionary. He mentioned social events like conservative customs and caste distinctions are at the root of India’s deterioration. When he talks about showing moral strength to the authority, whether religious or political and undertake constructive work on our own does not sound practical. Sufferings and failures are not easy to bear for generation after generation. If you observe the history of India, lower class/ caste people, even women did not get the minor facility without confrontation. Social Darwinism and hierarchal structure of Indian society does not allow the weaker to survive. At the time of Puna pact he wrote in a letter to Gandhi “…I cabled to Sir Nripen (Sarkar) and from which you will know how I feel about the Puna Pact. I am fully convinced that if it is accepted without modification, it will be a source of perpetual communal jealousy leading to constant disturbance of peace and a fatal break in the spirit of mutual co-operation in our province.” (Bhattacharya 2008: 147-148) It was contradictory that he wanted harmony and peace at the cost of welfare of downtrodden class. He never asks to confront, to fight for the rights. Maybe his economically privileged position and caste allows him to afford such naive romanticism about downtrodden class. He observes separatist caste structure of society and its evil consequences as a result of wrong understanding of human nature, its ‘greed and hatred’, never as conspiracy systematically hatched by Brahmins against non-brahmin people, as it was first exposed by Jyotirao Phule in his ‘Gulamgiri’ (slavery).

It is confusing when he talks about race and caste simultaneously. In India, there are approximately 3 to 4 races and around 5000 castes. So chances of amalgamation of races are very rare where in case of castes they are frequent. The distinction is vague. On this issue Ambedkar writes “To hold that distinctions of castes are really distinctions of race and to treat different castes as though they were so many different races is a gross perversion of facts.” (Ambedkar2013:31)
His greatness as a visionary reveals when he emphasizes on the narrowness of the idea of nationalism in the backdrop of aggressive cultural nationalism, communal hatred, barbarity of civil wars and overall dehumanization goading towards complete failure of moral, ethical values. His objective of internationalism may not be possible immediately but in future it is absolutely imperative for the survival of humanity and for that matter human race.
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