Chapter V

Rabindranath Tagore's Concept of Internationalism

After the politician and the philosopher it is now the poet's turn for our analysis of the concept of internationalism. What were the times in which Tagore lived? How did he perceive the world and the national situation? Why did he feel interested in internationalism? Even though he had no basic inclination for politics, how did he get involved in it or why did he feel compelled to give reactions about it? What was his concept of internationalism? What was its relationship with nationalism? What type of internationalism did he advocate? What type of world view did he believe in? What type of world order did he want and what type he did not want? Was he optimistic about prospects of internationalism? What were the stages in the development of Tagore's concept of internationalism?

Tagore was born in 1861, 4 years after the Indian Mutiny. He was fortunate in both time and space. The advent of the West had disturbed the placid waters of Indian life and a new awakening was taking place. Its initial impact dazzled the Indian mind, so much so that early reformers in India looked like imitators of West. Forces of social inertia were so strong that they could be stormed only by a band whose faith in new values bordered on fanaticism. In fact there were such groups. The young Bengal group led by Debroyo, even advocated total scrapping of Indian tradition.
The year 1857-58 had seen consolidation of British conquest in India, and establishment of three universities of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay.

However, as Dr. Nihar Ranjan Ray observes, "the quelling of the so called Sepoy Mutiny was welcomed by the Hindu Middle class, who cherished the illusion that the historical function of the British was to wipe out the Mughal Empire after which somehow, they would become the ruling power". Anandamath was, a militant assertion of national right to freedom. This question led to identification of nation with Hindus, as no Muslim middle class had yet emerged and because the Muslim aristocracy had been eliminated.

But there were others like Raja Ram Mohan Roy who believed that highest principles of life and existence had been formulated in the East but who still admired West and thought that Western values could be integrated with tradition of India. Tagore's grandfather known as Prince Dwarkanath was a staunch supporter of Ram Mohan Roy in his crusade for Western education. It was said of Tagore's father that he began his mornings with recitations from Upanishads and Hafiz. Of Tagore's family, Dr. Nihar Ranjan Ray has this to say, "It possessed a distinctive and individual tradition consisting of curious mixture of many elements: an over-refined polish inherited from an urban and decadent Muslim culture; a strain of deep and brooding self-introspection emanating from a much sicker inheritance, that of Upanishads and all that they connote; the

influence of some English writers of the time, and through them a western life and thought; an ardent although unspoken nationalism mainly Hindu in content and character. But it was a reformed Hinduism, Hinduism not of idol worship, of ceremonies, of restrictions and of taboos, not banning foreign travel and English language. It was Hinduism which believed in 'real spirit of scriptures'. Incidentally, Tagore's family was considered outcast even though Brahmin, a remote ancestor was supposed to have smelled the odor of cooked beef. But conscious of wealth and talents, the family reacted by a proud unconcern with many of the taboos of the day, but cherished the deeper values of Indian life. Tagore's grandfather went to Britain in defiance of contemporary conventions. Tagore's father rebelled against orthodoxy and became the most important leader of Brahmo Samaj after the death of Ram Mohan Roy. Raja Ram Mohan Roy and his Brahmo Samaj had delivered a great shock to orthodox Hindu society. What irritated the orthodox even more was that Ram Mohan Roy used Upanishads and other Hindu scriptures to prove his points.

Tagore's first voyage to England took place in 1876 and he returned to India in 1880. The Western contact, revival of study of Hindu literature and religion, spread of Western ideas of politics led to development of political nationalism in India.

Tagore's first visit to England produced a mixed reaction. On the one hand, the broadening mental horizon of British, its scientific objectivity, its sense of mental discipline

2 Ibid., p.32.
and social freedom impressed Tagore. But he was quick to notice the divergence between profession of democracy at home by British and its actual practice in international relations, specially in relation to colonies. The young poet did not fail to notice that Indo-British relations were not based on equality. It was a ruler-ruled relationship. It led to degradation in both the peoples. He also noticed the pettiness and ludicrous imitative mentality of 'anglicised' Indian families in England.

But he was more critical of British policy in China and of practices of English opium traders. 'If such a method of making money is called trade instead of brigandage, then it must be due to politeness...It is actually nothing but a traffic in death practiced by a strong power on the weak'. 4 Now as Tagore's biographer Kripalani says, 'his sympathies were extending beyond frontiers of his country and was already beginning to voice the wrongs of humanity wherever perpetrated'. 5

Dejected and oppressed with self, Tagore sailed to England for the second time in 1881. The visit proved abortive. He abandoned the trip before landing in England.

Tagore's second voyage to U.K. took place in 1890. Like his first visit, his second visit too produced a series of letters. Tagore again returns to some old themes as well as new themes.

He is concerned about the impact of imperialism on British democratic tradition. The pride of possessing limitless authority attacks at the very roots of the national character, the love of liberty which is the very foundation of your (British) national pride gets defiled by it.  

Then, of course, the diary of the visit reveals the concern of the poet for poor people, co-existing with lusture of English luxurious living. There is a warning even, the uncared of today must surely have revenge one day...If (European) civilization wants to survive, let it bring neighbours as equals....This is why I think that it should not be a matter of surprise, if Negroes of Africa conquer Europe and the dark nights of New Moon engulf the daylight.  

Tagore was much agitated by darker side of civilization, specially of European civilization. This is clear from an article written by him and titled 'East and West'. His main criticism was that West had not evolved a chivalrous ideal which can bring this age to its fulfillment. Creativity demanded an ideal which united humanity but what West had to offer was passion for power and wealth and national self-seeking.  

Another problem with West was that it applied moral principles against strong when they oppressed weak, as in case of Turks or Spanish but did not apply them to their own conduct in relation to Indians. This was because their self-interest was involved. His worries about problems of capitalist civilization could also been seen in 4 articles written by him in 1891 and

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7 Ibid., p.9.  
8 Tagore Rabindranath : Creative Unity, Madras, Macmillan India Ltd., First Published 1922, Pocket Edition 1988, pp. 93-112.
1892. The articles were titled 'Labour', 'Job-seekers', 'Catholic Socialism' and 'Socialism'. Socialism thus at theoretical level offered a solution to these problems. At that level it had its importance, although about its practical implications, he had doubts. This is evident from his letter in a volume entitled 'Torn Letters'. He said, "I am not sure whether distribution of wealth as claimed by socialists is possible. If this be totally impossible, one has to admit that providence must be very cruel and man unfortunate! For if there be misery in this world, there should be at least this loophole, this expectation that advanced section of community can at least work untiringly for removal of that misery." Similarly Pope's support to socialism seemed to him an indication of the way the wind was blowing. Similarly, although Tagore identified capitalist order as intrinsically 'European' and nurtured a nostalgic longing for soft, mellow, tolerant, oriental way of life, he was not unaware of weaknesses of East, and the strength of the West. For example, regarding West, he said, 'It is not easy to crush the European man under machines...European humanity may tolerate such oppression for some time but revolt they would in the end... If the state grossly interferes with the liberation of individual, a political revolution would happen in due time. When the high priests try to enchain free thinking of individual under the guise of religions a religious reformation sets in.'

long time surrendered to others... every freedom of the body and soul... those who have reduced themselves to mere automata... those who observe codes of conduct as dogmas laid down in infallible scriptures, to them any attempt at reformation never acquires any force'.

From the beginning of 20th century a new phase started for Tagore. Boxer war started disillusionment of Tagore with the concept of nationalism (which according to Tagore was a Western importation) and with the Western nation state system. Tagore was appalled with brutality and futility of that struggle. Boer war was the epitome of the evil.12 Boer war in 1900 and cruelties inflicted by foreign troops also disappointed him. On the last day of 19th century, he wrote a group of sonnets. In one of these, he expressed his feelings in this way:

"The last sun of the century sets amidst the blood-red clouds of the West and the whirlwind of hatred.

The naked passion of self love of nations, in its drunken delirium of greed, is dancing to clash of steel and howling verses of vengeance. The hungry soul of the nation shall burst in a violence of fury from its own shameless feeding.

For it has made the world its food."13

On the other hand, he seemed to say that 20th century would be

11 Ibid., p.12.


13 Quoted in Ibid., p.192.
the century of the East. This is how he expressed it:

"Thy morning waits behind the patient dark of the East
meek and silent, meek and silent.....
Be not ashamed, my brothers, to stand before the proud
and powerful with your white robes of simplicity.
Let your crown be of humility, your freedom the freedom of
the soul.

Build God's throne daily upon the ample barraneness of your
poverty.
And know that what is huge is not great and pride not ever-
lasting". 14

The ideal of nationalism as it had developed in Europe
had several weaknesses.

One was that, "Whether through a lie or a mistake, a
nation must prove its own superiority to itself, and other nations
must correspondingly be brought down. This is the very trait of
the Nation, the mainstay of patriotism. We have not come across
any instance in Europe of a civilization which can lift
nationalism above the display of prowess, above practicing
injustice and resorting to all types of falsehood". 15

Secondly, European malady of nationalism was affecting its
sense of right and justice.

Thirdly, the cult of nationalism has led to domination of
natives of nations or expulsion of immigrants.

Fourthly, it resulted into imperialism. The imperialist
countries exploited colonies economically and even used native

14 Ibid., p.193.
soldiers against other colonies, which was unfair.

The partition of Bengal in 1905 intensified nationalism in India, particularly Bengali nationalism. In the same year Rabindranath took active part in the agitation. Japan defeated Russia. Rabindranath sought to relate these two events and to his ideal of India centered Asian spiritual civilization.

However, Rabindranath's distaste for politics soon reasserted. The chauvinistic assertion of some leaders, split in congress in 1907 and terrorist activists against some officers disguised Tagore. He withdrew from active politics.

In his last public speech before retirement in 1905, he pleaded for tolerance and for acceptance of positive contributions from West in India. His disengagement from public agitations brought a charge of betrayal. But he wrote in explaining his action, 'I have embraced humanity......I will not permit patriotism to take precedence over humanity in my life.'

From 1908 to 1912, he underwent a period of deliberate withdrawal. It led to closing of his field of activity in the world of Indian politics. If he wrote on socio-cultural matters as in case of his article on 'Hindu University', it was to emphasize the interdependence of world, need to preserve national identity but not uncouth peculiarities. But he was to emerge into a world of activity in a much wider world than he had engaged before.

His restlessness led him once more to U.K. in 1912, for his third visit. In the meantime before coming to U.K., he had

composed his best religious poems, entitled Gitanjali. He received Nobel prize for ‘the most distinguished work of an idealistic tendency in the field of literature’. He was the first Asian to receive this award. It gave him immense popularity in India specially as he had lost popularity during partition agitation. It changed the course of life and gave him an opportunity to present Indian ideals to peoples of other countries. He saw in the prize, a confirmation of ideal of East-West synthesis.

Recently, he had witnessed heightened interest in Indian culture among Western intellectuals and also in Tagore’s spiritual-view point, just when Indians were becoming nationalistic, anti-western and unspiritual. This dilemma was not to be resolved. It was to become more acute, in the following decade when Gandhi’s non-co-operation movement intensified the xenophobic strain in Indian nationalism.

The Nobel prize confirmed the hope that India could become the foundation of a new world civilization incorporating best elements of Eastern and Western civilization.

Even before he received Nobel prize, he had rejected the contention that Europe was materialistic. It was just a fashion. As a matter of fact whenever there was good in human society, there must be spiritual strength behind it. As early as in 1913, Vicerecy had dubbed him ‘the poet Laureate of Asia’ and in 1915 King George V was to confer on him knighthood.

The outbreak of war shattered Tagore’s vision of synthesis of Eastern spirituality and Western practicability.\textsuperscript{18} The war in Europe convinced him that West need Eastern virtues more than ever, but simultaneously frustrated his growing desire to carry India’s message there in person. As long as war lasted, he could not go to U.K.

The road to the East was open. But the visit could take place only in 1916. In the meantime, he had been writing about world war. According to him, war was not due to German militarism. It was not a conflict between warriors and traders, but between one trading group and another. Only one of the groups had been forced into the cult of militarism by sheer pressure of circumstances.\textsuperscript{19}

In the article ‘The Roots of war’, he went further and said that if Germany’s intoxication was result of its arrogance, the roots lay not in Germany but in European civilization itself.\textsuperscript{20} The problem was not national but international, the solution too had to be international.

This was significant because all over the world, the thinking was mainly along nationalist lines. At that particular movement, our national leadership was for extending co-operation with British government in war efforts to extract concessions. Terrorists were conspiring with Germany. The Social-Democratic parties were discarding proletarian internationalism and were becoming nationalistic. A handful of western intellectuals like

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\textsuperscript{18} Hay, \textit{Op.Cit}, p.52. \\
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., p.31.
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Russel and Morrel were advocating pacifist viewpoint. Rolland was banished from his country for being critical of war and of French participation in war. Only Lenin, Luxemburg were looking at war from international viewpoint. Tagore was thinking and acting in terms of world and not in terms of his nation.

According to Tagore, the war of Europe was in a way an internal war. It was a war between ideals which had been dear to her heart in the past and her ideology of nationalism. It was a conflict between 'spirit of the west and the Nation of the West'. In a letter to a friend, he wrote, 'will Europe ever understand the genesis of the present war, and realize that true cause lies in her own growing skepticism towards her own ideals—those ideals that have helped her to be great?'

On his visit to East, Tagore went to Japan and then to America. His speeches have been published in a volume entitled 'Nationalism'.

'A nation, in the sense of political and economic union of people, is that aspect which a whole population assumes when organized for a mechanical purpose. It is the organized self-interest of people for aggressive purposes'.

Tagore distinguishes society from nation. Society is an end in itself but nation is a machine, an instrument. 'It is a natural regulation of human relationships, so that men can develop ideals of life in co-operation with one another.'

21 Quoted in Sehanavis, Op.Cit., p.34.
Society had political side, which was not concerned with human ideals. It consisted of a class of professionals needed for self-preservation of society. Science and organization increased the power of this class. Originally supposed to be employed for protecting men from tyranny of Nature and human neighbours, the surplus of power is employed against others for satisfying greed and ego. Tagore describes the overgrowth of this particular aspect of man beautifully. 'Man with his mental and material power far outgrowing his moral strength, is like an exaggerated giraffe whose head has suddenly shot up miles away from the rest of him, making normal communication difficult to establish'.

Tagore is worried more as the West does not seem to have been conscious about it. The whole mankind was facing a crisis because history had come to such a stage that moral man, the complete man was giving way to political and commercial man.

It was West's attempt to be internationalist in terms of nation and not to be internationalist in terms of spirit which was the root cause of the present crisis. For example in India, Tagore was critical of attempt of U.K. to give very little to India, in terms of education and culture. Tagore was not surprised. He gave two reasons. Firstly the spirit of conflict and conquest was at the origin and in the centre of Western nationalism and not co-operation. Secondly, the Western nation acted like a dam to check the free flow of Western civilization into the country of No-Nation. Because this civilization was the civilization (source) of power, therefore it was exclusive.

23 Ibid., p.21.
Tagore was not enamoured of the benefits of British rule in India. The British provided law and order. But it was a negative virtue. Secondly in Britain and elsewhere in Europe the machine called Nation killed the spirit of freedom. Even in the case of West, Tagore felt that they had sacrificed their freedom and humanity to the fetish of nationalism. But Tagore had one more important criticism to make of the Western nation (it was West which had manufactured it). To put it in his own words, "The Nation, with all its paraphernalia of power and prosperity its flags and pious hymns, its blasphemous prayers in the churches, and the literary mock thunders of its patriotic bragging, can not hide the fact that Nation is the greatest evil for Nation and that all its precautions are against it, and new birth of its fellow in the world is always followed in its mind by the dread of new peril." But this was the logic of a Nation and a Nation can only trust a Nation where their interest coalesce or at least do not conflict.25

Tagore's greatest concern was that this epidemic should not spread to third world countries, which he described as 'No Nations'. His contention is worth reproducing also to show the type of internationalism in which he was not interested. "You say, these machines will come into an agreement, for their mutual protection, based upon a conspiracy of fear. But until this federation of steam boilers supply you with a soul, a soul which has her conscience and her God? What is to happen to that larger part of the world where fear will have no hand in restraining

24 Ibid., pp.17-18.
you? Whatever safety they now enjoy, these countries of No-Nations from the unbridled license of forge and hammer and turn-screw results from mutual jealousy of the powers. But instead of being numerous separate machines they come riveted into one organized gregariousness of gluttony, commercial and political, what remotest chance of hope will remain for those others, who have lived and suffered, have loved and worshipped, have thought deeply and worked with weakness, but whose crime has been that they have not organized?"  

Equally important is Rabindranath's assertion that these No-Nations must survive. 'No, for the sake of your salvation' he said, 'they shall live and this is truth'. He gave two reasons. Firstly because, 'the man's world is a moral world which would be dangerous for us to ignore'. Secondly, the moral nature of man could not be divided into convenient compartments and whatever happened in No-Nations was bound to have its impact on Western Nations. As he put it, 'You can not secure it for your home consumption with protective tariff walls, while in foreign parts making it enormously accommodating in its free trade of license'.

As a matter of fact this moral degeneration created a vicious circle. It led to imperialism and exploitation, which led to further moral degeneration and catastrophes like world war. But unfortunately as he put it, 'the idea of Nation is one of the most powerful anaesthetics that man has invented. Under the influence of fumes, the whole people can carry out its

26 Ibid., p.19.
27 Ibid., p.19.
systematic programme of the most virulent self-seeking without being in the least aware of its moral perversion—in fact feeling dangerously resentful if it is pointed out'. He thought it was his duty to educate the West regarding the absurdity of Nation. He had an intuition that death-throes of the Nation had already commenced. That was going to be a good end-product of this terrible war.

In Japan the poet and philosopher's canvas was larger. He talked of many problems of Western civilization such as, 'the conflict between the individual and the state, labour and capital, the man and the woman; the conflict between the greed of material gain and spiritual life of man, the organized selfishness of nations and the higher ideals of humanity; the conflict between all the ugly complexities inseparable from giant organizations of commerce and state and the natural instincts of man crying for simplicity and beauty and fullness of leisure—all these have brought to a harmony in a manner not yet dreamt of'.

But emphasis was on nationalism. He advised Japan not to be a carbon copy of the West. 'What is dangerous for Japan is not the imitation of outer features of West, but the acceptance of the motive force of Western nationalism as her own'. He warned the Japanese that, 'nations who sedulously cultivate moral blindness as the cult of patriotism will end their existence in a sudden and violent death'.

In the past conflicts between states did not affect the people at large as they were the outcome of individual ambitions.

29 Ibid., p.33.
30 Ibid., p.47.
But now, 'where the spirit of Western nationalism prevails, the whole people is being taught from boyhood to foster hatreds and ambitions by all kinds of means'. He did not consider Western civilization as basically bad. Europe was great in literature and art. But more important, 'in the heart of Europe runs the purest stream of human love, of love of justice, of spirit of self-sacrifice for higher ideals'. In Europe there have always been people who stood up for their ideals of liberty and humanity and who criticized their own nations. 'Europe is supremely good in her beneficence where her face is turned to all humanity; and Europe is supremely evil in her maleficient aspect where her face is turned only upon her own interest, using her power of greatness for ends which are against infinite and eternal in man'.

But the political civilization of West which had sprung up was bad, devoted exclusively to one purpose, exclusive because it did not believe in free exchange between peoples on the basis of equality and was inhuman.

On the otherhand, the East was different. To put it in his own words, "we did not stand in the fear of each other, we had not to arm ourselves to keep each other in check; our relation was not that of self-interest,... ideas and ideals were exchanged, gifts of highest love were offered and taken; no difference of languages and customs hindered us in approaching each other heart to heart; no pride of race or insolent consciousness of superiority;... and races belonging to different..."

31 Ibid., p.48.
32 Ibid., p.40.
lands and languages and histories acknowledged the highest unity of man and the deepest bond of love".  

Similarly, Japan's unity was commended because 'it has not evolved from comradeship of arms for defensive and offensive purpose or from partnership in raiding adventures'.

But Japan and East as a whole should not imitate West in her present state of affairs, for it was not an ideal state of affairs with 'nations fearing each other like the prowling wild beasts of night time; shutting their doors of hospitality; combining only for purpose of aggression or defence; hiding in their holes their trade secrets, secrets of their armaments; making peace offering to each others barking dogs with the meat which does not belong to them; holding down fallen forces which struggle to stand upon their feet; with right hands dispensing religion to weaker peoples, while robbing them with their left—is there anything in this to make us envious'?

Europe at present according to Tagore was offering both food and poison but poison far more powerful than food. East had not only, to avoid poison but fight the evil and surprisingly with the help of West meaning the Western standard of perfection.

Similarly, he gave lecture on 'Nationalism in India' in U.S.A. According to him, the problem in India was social and not political. It was a problem of adjustment of races. His advice to West was to take lessons from India and find a basis for unity.

33 Ibid., p.35.
34 Ibid., p.44.
36 Ibid., p.55.
which was not political, for after all the history of man was one.

But the lecture also conveyed Tagore's hope and faith in America. Europe had become arrogant of her achievements and had gone blind. On the other hand, in America, while addressing Americans, he said, national habits and traditions have not time to spread their clutching roots round your hearts. You have constantly felt and complained of your disadvantages when you compared your nomadic restlessness with the settled conditions of Europe... But in this present stage of transition, when a new era of civilization is sending its trumpet call to all peoples of the world across an unlimited future, this very freedom of detachment will enable you to accept its invitation and to achieve the good for which Europe began her journey but lost herself mid-way. Tagore considered that America even had the opportunity to lead the world because she did not have an unclean image like Europe.

India too was sailing in the same boat. She did not have a real sense of nationalism (political). In fact her track record was slightly better, as in America and Australia, extermination of the original population took place but not so in India.

Tagore expressed disagreement with political parties in India which believed that constructive social activity had been completed and that energies had to be employed in political direction. On the other hand, Tagore felt that India did not have any basis for nationalism. Caste system was an important obstacle. Secondly the social restrictions and resulting habit of intolerance made it worse. Tagore was afraid this habit was likely to penetrate into politics also.\textsuperscript{37} If the British

\textsuperscript{37} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 73-75.
succeeded in creating a nation-state in India, it would be a negative contribution. His lectures on 'Nationalism' however were ill-timed. Though he was right, prophetically right in what he said as Kripalani observes, time was inauspicious. Europe was facing a great calamity, thousands were dying for what they thought was a great cause. Sympathy for Britain was rising in United States and very soon American lives were to be sacrificed. Similarly, his criticism of Japan for imitating the modern industrial civilization, his criticism of nationalism, of military ethos prevailing in Japan, his criticism of Japan's treatment of Korea, Japan's adoption of nationalism, politics and war, and of militant imperialism which he saw on every side in Japan, Japan's effort to imitate modern Europe and Germany and its non-adoption of spiritual cult and its refusal to become close to old Europe and India—all invited poet's criticism. But all these criticisms were not liked by Japanese. A Kobe resident writing in 'Japan Chronicle' mentioned, "Tagore's contempt for mere nationalism is naturally the bitterest pill for the Japanese to swallow, since from cradle to grave the importance of being Japanese is firmly impressed upon them. How can they put nationalism behind them? Surely such a doctrine can only be preached by a man whose country has lost independence."

Further, Japanese of those days were interested in developing material civilization in Japan, and not in reviving spiritualism. Some even doubted whether it was necessary for

40 Ibid., p.79.
India. A right wing Journalist Mitsui Koshi even argued that the vitality of the ancient Indian thought was based on the conquering spirit of Aryans and suggested that if Tagore really wanted to revive that thought he should look for inspiration to nations like Japan that were repeating the experience of conquering weaker peoples. Similarly schemes of Pan-Asianism had appeal for Japanese only if they were of political and military nature and had Japan’s leadership. Some were interested in helping India get independence with Japanese help. The real contribution of Tagore was considered to be in the area of better Indo-Japanese relations. An important cause of failure of poet’s visit was that Japanese considered India as supine under imperial power and Japan as independent power with a burgeoning empire of her own, and therefore poet’s message as of being no relevance to them. Similarly not all considered Eastern civilization to be better than the Western. Some considered even Western to be better. The prevailing mood among intellectuals was that indigenous and Western tradition could be combined successfully and Japan had already done that.

However his trip to Japan was not totally barren. He conceived the idea of a world university here. The idea was conceived in a meeting with Paul Richard, who with his wife ('The Mother' of Aurobindo Ashram) often visited poet. Paul and Tagore exerted some influence on each other. Although their ideas did

41 Ibid., p. 87.
42 Ibid., p. 114.
43 Ibid., p. 116.
44 Ibid., p. 116.
46 Ibid., p. 123.
not converge completely. A comparison of books ‘Nationalism’ by Tagore and Richards ‘To the Nations’ show that at this date Tagore rejected nation as something evil in itself, whereas the Frenchman accepted it as a necessity but sought its transformation, declaring what man is in the nation, the nation is in Humanity. Probably Rabindranath’s concept of unity of Asian civilization subsequently exercised influence on Richard’s thinking, so Richard’s view of an upward progression from loyalty to country to humanity exercised influence on Rabindranath’s thinking.47

On return to India in 1917, the poet found that the situation in the country was getting out of hand. Tagore was equally critical of terrorism by youth and of the state repression. He wrote in a letter to Mr. Gourlay in 1918, ‘when I wrote to you last I thought it would be of no loss to anybody in the world, if I gave up my attempt at rectifying wrongs and stuck to literature. But occasions come, when to remain in shelter of one’s own special vocation becomes a crying shame’.48

The idea of Vishva Bharati became concrete on Tagore’s next trip to U.K. and U.S.A. in 1920. The official reception of Tagore on this trip was cool because of Tagore’s criticism of Amritsar Massacre of 1919 and his renunciation of knighthood.

On his return to India, Tagore found that the non-cooperation campaign had excited patriotic zeal in people which had not been felt for a long time. It resulted in exaggerated sense of self-importance and contempt for everything foreign.

47 Ibid., p. 127.
Tagore found it painful. Only a few months earlier, Tagore had written to Andrews, 'the complete man must never be sacrificed to patriotic man or even merely to moral man. To me humanity is rich, large and many sided'. Again, 'for me patriotism is the same as humanity. I am patriotic because I am human and humane. My patriotism is not exclusive. I will not hurt England or Germany to serve India ... A patriot is much less a patriot if he is a lukewarm humanitarian'.

Other aspects of non-cooperation did not appeal to him, e.g. burning of foreign cloth by excited crowds. As he put it in a remarkable phrase, 'it shouted to him, it did not sing'. He did not think Khaddar as panacea for India's poverty. In 1921, Tagore and Gandhiji had a meeting. In a gist of conversation he gave to Elmhirst, Tagore is said to have told Gandhiji, 'the whole world is suffering from a cult of selfish and short sighted nationalism. India has offered hospitality to all nations and creeds. India has much to learn from West... we have to learn to collaborate among ourselves'. As Roman Rolland put it, 'Non-cooperation clashed with his way of thinking, for his mentality, his rich intelligence, had been nourished on all cultures of world'. 'The infinite personality of man (as the Upanishads say) can only come from magnificent harmony of all races'. Just as Goethe in 1813 refused to reject French civilization and culture, Tagore refused to banish Western civilization. Finally, Tagore's fear that 'blind obedience might

49 Ibid., p.290.
50 Ibid., p.293.
51 Ibid., p.294.
52 Ibid., p.294.
crush in the name of some outward liberty, the freedom of the soul."  

In 1921, Visva Bharati was formally inaugurated. Initially planned as a hermitage, it became the bee-hive. Kripalani notes, 'whether this beehive produced more honey than buzzing, it is difficult to say. The atmosphere was stimulating... and the poet attached value to symbols. The stimulus, however was enough for poet to imagine that the world was becoming one and that he had only to travel more to win man's hearts for his ideal. There is hardly any illusion more exhilarating than the consciousness that one is healing the world's wounds and Tagore was neither first or last great man to come under its spell'. Tagore now wanted to visit China and went there in 1924. The idea was to establish cultural links between two countries. Tagore was hardly known in China and reports circulated there that he was a reactionary and enemy of Western civilization and opposed to scientific thought and material progress. His lectures there did express his opposition to war, national rivalries and fetish of material progress and blind imitation of West. He warned them, not to be dazzled by spectacle of power and wealth won through violence and exploitation. He observed, 'nations that have relied thereon either have been destroyed or even now returning to barbarism. In the long run, society is sustained by moral values which may change from time to time but remain moral none the less'. He advised them not to hate Japanese.

53 Ibid., p.296.
54 Ibid., p.302.
55 Ibid., p.312.
His visit to China and Japan led to the first conscious attempt in the history of Asia to formulate the idea of Asian Unity by an organization of an Asiatic Association in Shanghai. A convention was held, a predecessor to Asian Relations conference held in Delhi 23 years later. Surprisingly, no mention was made at this conference about Tagore's contribution.

Further the visit provides us with one more opportunity to understand Tagore's vision of internationalism and instruments recommended for it. For example in one of his lectures, he talked of his ultimate ideal being a pluralistic world, bound not by political or economic ties but by mental recognition of diverse expressions of human spirit. He said, 'differences can never be wiped away...Let humanity come together, not in a uniformity that is dead but in a unity that is living'.

The great problem of the 20th century, he said in one of his lectures was, 'concentration of power in outside arrangements, whether political, commercial, educational or religious, which obstruct the inner life of people'.

Putting faith in materialism and conventions meant belonging to dead past and 'revelation of spirit in man is truly modern: I am on its side, for I am modern'. He said, he was not against West but wanted to strengthen the Eastern civilization.

But Tagore did not know the trend of thinking in China nor its requirements as Chinese saw them. Not all of them saw beauty in Chinese civilization, which was feudal and based on exploitation. They also felt that their present position was...
brought about by their indifference to public affairs and politics. Shen Yen-Ping, a literary figure said, "Oppressed as we are by militarists from within the country and by imperialists from without, this is no time for dreaming... To loudly sing the praises of Eastern civilization at such a time is like "repelling bandits by reciting five classics". Some philosophers found Tagore's Hinduism too abstract and too devoid of ethical and political content.

Sun-Yat-Sen approved of Asian unity but only to fight the West. Marxists were also critical of Tagore. Chen Tu-hsiu in an article on 'Tagore and Eastern Civilization' asserted that he held no brief for Western civilization but found that Eastern civilization rested on several false assumptions: it exalted the prince and despised the people, exalted the man and abused the woman, it taught to live contentedly in poverty in the midst of suffering. Chu Chiu-pai felt that government was indispensable for good life. Only after state was organized that moral responsibility could be recognized. State could ultimately wither away but till then class struggle must take place, workers must take over. 'To jump over this state... and directly to deny the system of nation-state is impossible'. Finally, many Chinese felt that Tagore's attempt was to introduce another dose of Indian influence in China, which none of them wanted.

On the whole, neither the Japanese nor the Chinese responded to Tagore's call for strengthening the Eastern civilizations or for Pan-Asianism. Hay sums up the arguments for

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58 Ibid., pp.170-171.
59 Ibid., p.215.
60 Ibid., p.227.
61 Ibid., p.230.
their opposition very beautifully: "Japan had repelled the threat of foreign conquest to which India had succumbed and of which China still greatly feared. These radically different military situations also help to explain the almost total absence of Pan-Asian sentiment in China, in contrast to its vigorous expression by Japan's expansion minded ultranationalists. An exception to this rule was Sun Yat Sen whose image was sinocentric as theirs was Japanese centred. The young nationalists, however, saw more clearly than Sun that Japan posed a greater imperialist danger to China than did far-off nations of the West, that in any struggle with their Eastern neighbour, they could expect no material help from India and that the kind of spiritual aid Tagore tendered from India would be positively harmful to their cause."  

The Chinese felt that local imperial polity had declined and if they did not establish a viable nation state they would become a victim of foreign imperialism.

Finally, the West for young Chinese intellectuals in 1924 was no longer one but two: the old West of Britain, France and U.S.A. and the new world of Bolshevik Russia. They were interested in Russia whose social political and military problems were same as those of China. Spirituality had weakened India. They did not want materialism of the old West but of the new West.

Then followed the trip to Argentina and return trip to India via Italy. Tagore was flattered by Mussolini and was invited to come to Italy, which he decided to visit in 1926. His speeches were distorted and used to boost Fascist regime. Only

62 Ibid., p.243.  
63 Ibid., p.245.
when he reached Switzerland, he could understand how he was duped. Similarly, he also came to understand the real nature of Fascist regime. Tagore also wrote a letter to *Manchester Guardian* explaining his visit to Italy and condemning Fascism in no uncertain terms. Tagore's visit was extended for up to 5 months in Europe.

In 1927, he went on a 9 month tour of South-East-Asia. In 1928, another visit to U.K. was planned but given up because of ill health. In 1929, he travelled to Canada and U.S.A. and from there to Japan.

In a stay of one month, he saw them under hysteria of imperial ambition. He warned them against 'ghosts of ideals which no longer have a reality'. True education had only one object—'freedom from the ignorance of the laws of universe and freedom from passion and prejudice in our communication with the world'.

In 1930 he visited France, Germany but his most important visit was to Russia. He had considered that trip even when he was in China but it could take place only in 1930.

The author looked upon the visit as one without which 'life's pilgrimage would have remained incomplete'. He was impressed by the courage of Russian experiments. 'The cry of Russian Revolution is also the cry of the world. At least this nation of all others in the world today is thinking of the interest of the whole of humanity over and above the national interest.'

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65 Ibid., p.349.
Kripalani tries to understand Tagore’s admiration of Russia in terms of Gandhi’s understanding of Tagore and his vision. Gandhi described Tagore as Great Sentinel of rights of man, of every individual, white, brown or black, to a full development of his personality. 66

The speed of the revolution and the enormity of change impressed him, more so when he compared it with conditions in India. Talking of Russians, ‘only a decade ago the masses here were as illiterate, helpless and hungry as were our masses, equally blindly religious, equally stupidly superstitious... who could be more astonished than an unfortunate Indian like myself to see how in these few years they had removed the mountain of ignorance and helplessness?’ 67

The achievements also impressed him, as it contradicted Tagore’s previously held beliefs. At one time he had believed that it was divinely ordained that majority should toil so that privileged minority might bloom like lilies of the world. He described masses as lamp-stand bearing the lamp of civilization on their heads; people above receive the light while their own backs are smeared with trickling oil. He had felt that poverty and inequality were the signs of progressive society and essential for civilization. ‘Civilization begins only when man extends his vision beyond the clouds of mere livelihood’. 68

Though, he said, he felt ashamed to think in this fashion. He found the solution only in Russia and through education. The

66 Ibid., p.350.
67 Ibid., p.351.
68 Ibid., p.351.
thing I like best in Russia is the complete banishment of barbarity of pride of wealth', the barbarity which he noticed in capitalist civilizations of West. Only in Russia, he fully realized the meaning of famous words of Upanishads: 'na gridah—Do not covet. For Tagore believed that pride in wealth was a great shame. Thus Tagore's appreciation of Russia was derived from his basic outlook.

Tagore was not a believer in communist ideology. Marxism with its faith in diletic materialism was foreign to his mental approach which believed in harmony and co-operation rather than contradiction and conflicts in the process of history. He did not like violence also. But knew that certain amount of barbarism was inevitable in a revolution as in a war. He was critical of dictatorship and of party dictatorship in Russia. 'But its positive aspects was education, reverse of force'. The education which resulted in creative personality. Here was an education system related to life. One of his most interesting visit in Moscow was to a commune of orphaned children known as 'Alice Kingina a Commune of Young Pioneers'. The way the young orphans were looked after impressed Tagore. On his return trip Tagore went to U.S.A., for his last visit.

A question may well be asked why Tagore, who was so highly impressed by Russian experiment was critical of non-violent non-cooperation movement in India. The answer could be found out from one of his early patriotic songs where he had exhorted his country man to set fire, not to foreign cloth, but to the inertia of centuries, the accumulated rubbish which human
spirit collects in its march through history. Probably, what he recoiled from what he felt was a medieval and reactionary element in Mahatma's ideology and social ideology, which he was afraid would be misused by his followers. Then he himself had passed through a phase of patriotic conservatism when he had harped on glory of India's heritage and had imagined the mannerisms of her social tradition to be the language of her spirit. He soon learnt to distinguish the mask from the face and came to realize that India was part of humanity and must march with the rest.

Tagore's original perception of Russia was the British Perception, of fear and of Russian invasion. The Bolshevik revolution increased the fear of British.

On the eve of Revolution, Tagore had written an article in 'Modern Review'. In it he observed that nation worshipers of Europe had no legacy to leave but that of war. The dawn of tomorrow was to come from Russia with her ideals, her self sacrifice, with her refusal to follow the path of Real-Politik. 'No doubt', he observed, 'if modern Russia did try to adjust her tradition of nation worship, she would be in a more comfortable situation today.... It is not unlikely that as a nation she will fail but if she fails with flag of her true ideals in her hands, her failure will fade, like the morning star, only to usher in the sunrise of New Age.' The assessment made by Tagore in the above mentioned article 'At the Cross Roads' was not to be changed.

69 Ibid., p.356.
In Russia, there was emotional support for criticism of the West for they too had suffered because of West. So Tagore too felt a kind of sympathy for Russia.

But now there was no fear of Russia. Instead, he asked what had India to fear from Russian Revolution, because the forces which the Revolution seeks to destroy are those which oppress India too.71

Tagore was impressed by Russian achievement because of her determination, against all odds, in a short time they had achieved so many things. What they wanted was undisturbed peace. The Soviet objective is not to extend their spheres of influence or territorial expansion, the poet wrote in one of his letters, but to create on a broad scale, by the best method, the ways and means of education, health and provision of food for the people.72 The poet believed that education was the solution to all problems. The Soviet Society also impressed him because it was free of racial discrimination.73 There was no individualistic egoism. The whole country was united by a common purpose.

Daniel -chuk observes that only in Soviet Union, did the author find the realization of his social ideals.74 Moreover, it was a creative society and had no fear of novelty in anything in social relations, politics or art.

The poet faced certain dilemmas as well. For example, as far as relationship between individual and society was concerned, the Soviet society was balanced more in favour of society. But he

71 Ibid., p.254.
72 Ibid., p.255.
73 Ibid., p.251.
74 Ibid., p.262.
rectified by saying that the spread of education was directed towards developing mind and creating a harmonious personality.\(^7\) \(^5\) An important observation was made by poet in this connection that the dictatorship in the West tried to paralyse mind, whereas the dictatorship in Soviet Union had as its objective the development of mind. Similarly the author compared U.S.A. and U.S.S.R. as well. In the first there was the persuit of dollar and the latter was freed from greed. Tagore did not approve of use of force but as there is ceaseless manoeuvring all round to wreck the entire experiment'.

Tagore's admiration for Soviet Union never vanished. He considered it as an effort to change the very basis of civilization.\(^7\) \(^6\) He continued his eulogy in U.S.A. as well, which did not make him popular there. Of course, in one of his letters he said that Bolshevism was a treatment and a medical treatment could not be permanent.

The last year, of Tagore's life 1936-41 did not change either his critical attitude towards West and favourable estimate of Soviet Union.

Italy's attack on Abyssinia, Japan's on China and Munich agreement provoked poet's deep indigation. He became highly critical of Fascism.

But it was not as if poet was critical of European states only. If the Asian states behaved in the European fashion, he was ruthless in his criticism of their actions as well. That is why when poet Noguchi, asked him to approve, what Japan was

\(^7\) Ibid., p.269.
doing in China and described it as an action for liberation of Asia, the poet refused to do so. He was provoked to reply, "You are building your conception of an Asia which would be raised on a tower of skulls. I have as you rightly point out, believed in the message of Asia... The doctrine of 'Asia for Asians' which you enunciate in your letter, is an instrument of political blackmail, has all virtues of the lesser Europe which I repudiate and nothing of the larger humanity that makes us one across the barriers of political labels and divisions." Similarly, much as he admired Soviet Union, he was critical of Soviet action in Finland. He wrote in a poem, 'Finland lies shattered to pieces by Soviet bombs' and wrote in an article in Alka, 'Even if Russia wins this unequal combat she will never be able to overcome her shame'. Of course, his basic faith in Soviet Union remained, 'they (soviets) will succeed, they alone to curb the beast'.

In one of his last works, 'Crisis in Civilization' Tagore appeared disillusioned with the Western civilization, between its profession and practice, with the imperialistic exploitation of colonies and refusal of Britain to give independence to India, its spirit of violence and recurring wars. Tagore now hoped, dawn will come from East.

The next important issue is what type of new world order did Tagore want to create, for Tagore's concept of internationalism would be part of it. His internationalism thus

79 Ibid., p.62.
has to be understood as a part of certain philosophical outlook on nature of man; nature of universe; and on relationship between man and universe and between nation and nation. From this would be derived the objectives of his educational system.

In formation of views on these matters the poet was influenced by several sources. There was the influence of Upanishads. He imbibed his spiritualism or humanism partly from Upanishads. But his emphasis on humanism, on personal morals; his emphasis on goodness, patience and non-violence; his concern for all living things had some buddhist impact. The poet's attitude to nature was partly influenced by classical sanskrit literature. The humanistic and secular ideal of poet was influenced by medieval religious and spiritual tradition rooted in the minds of our common people which was under the influence of Indian Saints. But this was not all. His faith in rationalism, experiments, a certain scientific outlook, democracy etc. was derived from his contact with European literature and culture.

Rabindranath Tagore was a many splendoured genius who was simultaneously a poet and an artist, philosopher and social reformer, educationist and man of faith. The golden thread uniting all these expressions of his thought and action is provided by his deep and abiding humanism which permeates not only his poems and songs, novels and plays but also his writings on politics and economics, society, religion and education. His faith in humanism did not remain a mere intellectual belief. It was the principle that governed his speech, thought and action throughout his long and eventful life.
Unfortunately, we don't find a systematic exposition of his philosophy of life. As Dr. Radhakrishnan says, 'even sadhana is a book of sermons or mystic hymns or perhaps meditations. It is a sigh of the soul rather than a reasoned account of metaphysics; an atmosphere rather than a system of philosophy.'

The Western philosophy believes in dualism of self and no-self and opposition between them. Between self and nature there is opposition. Man struggles with matter with help of God. It results in making God, a finite one. It means God may fail also, along with man.

Nature belongs exclusively to inanimate things and to beasts. According to it everything that is low in scale of things is merely nature and what ever has stamp of perfection on it, intellectual or moral is human nature. As Tagore put it, 'it is like dividing bud and blossom into two separate categories and putting their grace to the credit of two different and antithetical principles'.

Indian philosophy on the other hand believes in kinship with nature, an unbroken relationship with all. Human consciousness, animal life, inanimate nature are different grades of the same energy. Self and non-self are no rivals but different expressions of the same absolute, different modes of its existence.


Because man has been created by Absolute, he is divine. Of course different things express divine in different degrees. In man it may reveal in a higher degree than in animal. The whole world is progress of pilgrims in their quest for infinite.

The object of God in creating universe is to have pleasure. Therefore although all human beings have similarities, they have differences as well. Each one has individuality which is most valuable because it is not universal. 'The universal is ever seeking its consummation in the unique'.

Tagore placed life here as of supreme value. Tagore found support for his view in Isa Upanishad, 'in darkness are they who worship only the world but in greater darkness are they who worship the Infinite alone.' Only by rich life of work, can man fulfill his destiny. Therefore Tagore is not averse to machine, does not consider poverty as virtue, but wealth should not begin to become the main principle of life. Man has to satisfy his self interest but in harmony with others. Man combines in himself both higher and lower parts. But there should be a harmony between them. The lower should not dominate although lower is also necessary and it may dominate as it has in West in recent times, when greed and acquisition of wealth have become the major motive forces. When man makes his weapons his Gods, he is defeated. There are other needs such as for his intellectual artistic and ethical hunger. Then there is need for love and for union with others. God finds fulfillment in creation. Therefore we can meet God through his creation. Also we must share in his

83 Ibid., p.58.
work and fulfill our obligations in a spirit of reverence.

The idea of the whole world as one world removes fear. But it is not realized, because men tries to see things through his intellect. It not only divides subjects and object, man and nature but sees strife between them. But the idea of oneness if realized can unite. More intellectual approach to life is not enough.

No man is perfect. What is true of individual is true of nations as well. Tagore believed that human society progresses from imperfection to perfection. Imperfection is a condition of progress. But it is not the last thing. Tagore see even utility of war. 'War is not merely death and disease, it has birth pangs of new internationalism based on self sacrifice and disinterestness'. That is why when Tagore sees postwar peace treaties and world body like League of Nations aim at preservation of the old order, he is very unhappy.

Societies which are selfish are imperfect. Patriotism devoid of considerations of humanity is nothing but selfishness enlarged. European nations are greedy. They want to go on adding to their wealth. 'Satisfaction of the infinite can not be reached by a summation of finities'. The Western nations deny brotherhood both in national organizations and international relations. A reason may be that Christianity lays stress on sinfulness of man and believes that man can not become God. At the most he can become virtuous by influx of divine energy. Whereas in our

philosophy God dwells in man. Man can and must become Brahma. That is the ultimate destination of man. West condemns as a piece of blasphemy, any implication of man's becoming God.

Western societies accumulating wealth at home and colonies abroad are misguided nations. The greatest test of vitality of a nation is its capacity for self-sacrifice. This is in corollary to individual's road to salvation, for better man, for transformation. 'For the flower to develop, the bud has to die; for the fruit the flower, for the seed the fruit; for the plant the seed. The child leaves the womb of mother in order to achieve growth of body and mind... All progress is sacrifice'.

In no case domination of one nation over others is justified. The universe should be viewed as a single family where different nations are its members, each contributing its quota to the welfare of the whole. In Rabindranath's image, 'as the mission of the rose lies in the unfoldment of the petals which implies distinctiveness, so the rise of humanity is perfect only when the diverse races and nations have evolved their perfected distinct characteristics but all attached to the stem of humanity by the bond of love'. All nations are sacred to themselves and to each other because they are sacred to the whole. Therefore the love of nation as embodying a part of the essence is not incompatible with love of mankind as a whole. As a matter of fact independence is justified in terms of its contribution to world welfare. Therefore no nation should destroy others. Then only international

88 Ibid., p.88.
commonwealth of free nations would be established. But that is why imitation is bad. India by imitating has become denationalized and devitalized.

Nations should preserve their identity but at the same time should not be selfish. Radhakrishnan describes the poet’s philosophy in these terms: "as morality in individual relations means the subordination of inclinations to the law of duty, so international morality means the subordination of selfish advantages of nations to the claims of humanity and the world at large. Selfishness is sin whether in individuals or in nations." 90

As individuals highest development should be his goal, it is God’s goal as well. Therefore neither tyranny of state nor of society over individual is justified. Therefore tyranny of high caste over low caste, of man over woman, of one race over another is not justified. Therefore contempt of Western culture about Eastern culture is not justified. Similarly the neglect of Western culture by East also would not be justified. They contribute towards each others welfare and to the welfare of the whole.

Tagore was conscious of the growing technological unification of the world. But it had not led to the emotional integration of the world. On the contrary, separatism was growing stronger. 91 Tagore feels that inequality between nations, failure of nations and of civilizations to contribute to each other’s

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90 Ibid., p.286.

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welfare in terms of their best contributions was responsible for this.\(^2\)

How could a new world order be created? On what basis? Tagore would put faith in man. Man at his greatest is a path maker and a path finder. Social and unselfish essential nature, he offers a promise. No doubt as long as he is occupied only with physical needs, he is an animal. But he is a rational animal. He can know his needs. He has greater consciousness about himself. Moreover in his consciousness, there is a dualism of what is and what ought to be. In the animal world this is lacking. According to Tagore, 'what is desired dwells in the heart of the natural life, which we share with animals; but what should be desired belongs to a life which is far beyond it'.\(^3\) From the life of desire man has a capacity to go in the direction of life of purpose. This life is the life of moral world. It makes us conscious of our personality as man. It is as poet described it, his 'second birth' whatever that comes between man and its moral world is an evil. Our intellect helps us get knowledge of large number of things around us. But even here only when it is freed from bondage of self interest that true knowledge and universal reason can be discovered. But it is not enough we have our desires, they have to be tamed, disciplined. We have to be freed from self-desire. We have to become moral men to live in a moral community to become perfect men. Wars result because man has not become a moral man. Science is a product of reason. It

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92 Ibid., p.40.
can increase contacts within and between societies. But it does not teach discipline to man. It can not create a moral man and without that harmony would not result. Man in an effort to discipline himself creates institutions. But if they are conceived out of reason in association with life, how could they be perfect? What is the solution?

Tagore puts faith in dreamers and architects, who are the archetypes of Ideal Man or supreme Man for whom the soul of man aspires. In 1936, he said, 'the supreme man is yet to come'. A community of supreme men belonged to future, though it was the instrument of bringing about human unity.

What type of internationalism did he advocate? Was it liberal or hegemonic or revolutionary type? Tagore was definitely against hegemonic internationalism. His philosophy is based on existence of separate personalities of individuals and nations and therefore would not admit of hegemonic internationalism. Hegemonic internationalism was the product of West. Desire for hegemonic internationalism led to wars. In his poem 'Naivedya' the poet wrote, 'In the name of nationalism the states are running after death, towards the hidden path of self interest'. Empires can only be maintained by force and therefore the task to establish world unity by force and subjection has failed in the past and will fail. If hegemonic internationalism is the product of aggressive nationalism, it also contains its own seeds of destruction. It carries within itself new nations. Therefore hegemonic internationalism can not create a permanent

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95 Ibid., p.25.
structure. Moreover, aggressive nationalism resulting in hegemonic internationalism would not be satisfied till there was only one world power left. So hegemonic internationalism becomes an endless contest. It can not result in peace, it can not bring about human unity. Hegemonic internationalism results from inbalanced personality. What is required is balanced man.

Tagore's real anxiety was that this Western disease called nationalism was now spreading to East. Was something wrong with the nature of nationalism itself?

In any case if the principle of nation-state was to be employed, it should be extended to non-European nation states. Otherwise, there was no chance of peace. The international order had to be democratic order. The argument that self-determination could not be given to non-West because it required long experience, was not proper. The internationalism which Tagore favoured, in which West and East had to contribute to each other's welfare then, would not be of any use. Both West and East had their own merits. It was not a one way affair. Further, self-determination applied right to commit mistakes as well.

Was Tagore interested in Revolutionary internationalism? Although he did not discuss the implications of soviet experiment in terms of internationalism, he did pay compliment to Soviet Union by saying that it was one country which was also considering human unity in addition to looking at its own self-interest. The nature of the regime was such that it was looking at the good of its own people even at considerable risk to itself. Its bold experiment in education was an evidence of this.
Elsewhere rulers were not willing to educate or even when they were educating, they had apprehensions. Tagore saw that Soviet regime was giving education to several non-Russian nationalities. Even otherwise Tagore saw the problem of racial unity as a major problem of world, and he considered Soviet example as a success story.

Further, Tagore felt that the experiment was an attempt to eliminate the greed factor. Tagore was impressed by the tendency of non-displaying of wealth. Russian experiment was a correction to European capitalistic, nationalistic civilization, both internally as well as externally. The mass education mass upliftment and reduction of class barriers and non-expansionist world policy were other achievements, although Tagore was critical of Soviet action in Finland.

It does not mean that Russian experiment could be universally applied. That would be against the tenor of his whole philosophy. Change brought about by violence internally or externally could not be approved by poet. Even though Tagore tried to understand the excesses committed by the regime in terms of the revolutionary situation prevailing inside Russia and in terms of siege by the capitalist countries from abroad.

But Tagore did not approve of the dictatorial nature of the regime. He could not have. Further he felt that time was not ripe to evaluate Soviet experiment in terms of its economic philosophy. Finally, he felt that Soviet experiment was a medicine for a sick civilization of Europe, which could not continue for ever.
However, between the nationalistic, capitalistic, imperialistic civilization of West and the new Soviet civilizational experiment, the poet's preference was for latter. Gone was poet's fear of Russia, a legacy of British. On the contrary India faced similar problems and had a great deal to learn from the Soviet Union. This thinking was not only confined to educated Indians. A section of the Chinese intellectuals was also thinking on the same lines. Thus for them the West, still had attractions but not the old West. The Russian pilgrimage affected Tagore in one more way. He became more conscious of realities of common life. He felt he had a better understanding of situation in his country and of the world. Many poems from 'Parishes' to 'Prantik' also reflected the poet's strengthened concern in a mature way.

Was Tagore then a liberal internationalist? As we have seen Western Thinkers belonging to this tradition have been advocates of reform in the nation state system and have favoured prudent foreign policies based on enlightened self-interest. Tagore was a strong critic of the nation-state system. As a matter of fact he considered the development of nation-state system along Western lines as a curse. He favoured the Eastern system of 'society' rather than of 'Nation'. Government itself was in a way a necessary evil. State could be justified only for the purpose of defence, otherwise it made the society dependent. In India for example he considered the problem as social rather than political. What India faced was a problem of social disintegration resulting from gulf between upper castes and
classes and lower castes and classes and from the horizontal division between Hindus and Muslims. Social reconstruction was the remedy and Tagore did not think that government had much role to play here.

When government assumed the form of 'Government of Nation' it was still worse. The European experience indicated to him that it led to imperialism and wars. He almost identified nationalism with imperialism. He argued further that the 'basis of nationalism was wanting in India', because of our 'social inadequacy' as reflected in our lack of racial and communal unity. Hence as we have seen the basic problem according to him was not the growth of political freedom but of social cohesion, a theme that he underlined again and again. 'A nation in the sense of political and economic union of people,' defines Tagore, 'is that aspect which a whole population assumes when organized for a mechanical purpose'. A nation in his conception had thus no organic relation with society and had therefore no integral and natural social function.

An important reason behind Tagore's approach to the problem of national unity as to all social and human problems was that he believed in moral and spiritual approach. He did not believe in achieving an end or winning a goal without paying the full price for it, without suffering and sacrifice, without the development of inner powers as much of individual as of the social aggregate.

A liberal humanist outlook could be seen in Tagore very early in life. When he applied his mind and imagination to socio-political problems, the same vision could be seen. During first
world war, when he turned away from nationalism altogether, it slowly began to dawn on him that the salvation of India lay in collaboration between peoples and races. Internationalism was the only answer to menace of nationalism. It was an answer which naturally came to him, as it was in tune with the basic ideology of India (spirit of harmony as the basic law of life and universalism of human spirit); because he thought that integration of races, peoples, cultures were the lessons to be learnt from history of India; because he felt that basis of nationalism was lacking in India.

Thus at one stage poet not only became critical of nation-state system but thought it to be dispensable. He did not consider even political independence as absolutely necessary. He would be happy with a commonwealth of various peoples or societies or civilizations, of course he did not discuss the details of any such proposals, partly because he was an idealist but more because he did not have faith in institutional means. Thus at this stage his internationalism would by-pass the stage of nation-state altogether. Only later did he realize that psychological approach to international problems had to be supplemented by other means.

It is true at philosophical level, looking at his thinking one can not visualize nationalism as being opposed to internationalism. He would visualize each nation contributing to the beauty of the world community. He would give examples of societies internationalistic as well as nationalistic. But the general experience raised apprehensions in his mind about
nationalism. In any case independent India must have domestic and international mission.

Tagore's internationalism was not a political creed or institutional device for achieving specific political ends in a given international situation. It was not internationalism of a purely intellectual kind. It was not mere cosmopolitanism. His internationalism had a moral, spiritual basis. Exclusiveness or non-cooperation in any form, racial or religious, territorial or national, social, economic or cultural had no place in it. Aggressiveness in any form, in the form of national necessity or under the claim of racial, cultural or economic superiority was regarded as immoral or inhuman. He criticized European or Japanese or Soviet imperialism equally.

The corner stone of his internationalism was his faith in humanity. Internationalism was considered desirable because it would improve the lot of humanity all around in different ways. It would allow man to develop his fullest potentiality. It would help him to be a 'universal man', a 'complete man'.

An important component of Tagore's conception of internationalism, was distinctiveness of 'Western' and 'Eastern' civilizations, the need for increasing contacts between two to solve problems of mankind and healthy exchange of contributions from these two civilizations towards each other's development. Tagore did not distinguish these civilizations in terms of contrast like 'material' and 'spiritual'. As a matter of fact in poet's view Western civilization was also 'spiritual'. European civilization was also good. It still had contributions to make such as on practical side of things. But the 'political' turn in
the direction of 'Nation' with its effects was dangerous. But European civilization was still not dead. There were men in Europe who were critical of what their nations were doing. Tagore hoped that Europe could still recapture her humanism, her moralistic spirit. Only in last days of his life was the poet disillusioned about vitality of European civilization. Although he could never lose faith in man. But in the last stage of his life, he was convinced that leadership for regeneration would come from East. He also did not mean to say that every thing was nice with 'Eastern civilization'. It had to develop its own identity, rather than become a carbon copy of the West. Then only it could usefully contribute to the creation of new synthetic civilization. As a matter of fact one of the objectives of the poet's Asian visit was the revitalization of 'Eastern' civilization. As Hay puts it, 'no man in his own lifetime had tried harder than Tagore to establish the "world-wide commerce of heart and mind" and historians reviewing his life will judge more fairly by what he tried to do than by what he failed to achieve'. In fact if he failed in his mission in Asia, it was partly due to the timing of visits and partly because the requirements of different societies were different. Also as Hay suggests, ' the history of other Asian societies suggests.. that only in early stages of development do nationalism and pan-Asianism reinforce each other, at a later stage, as the practical demands of each particular nationalism and the territorial and ideological rivalries among nation states became

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more intense, less and less is said about Pan "continental ambitions". 97

What about India’s contribution to the cause of internationalism? One of the major objectives of Tagore’s travels, lectures, appeals, exchanges of scholars was to help Asian countries develop a balanced reaction in relation to West. It must not turn out to be pale copies of West. Nor should it violently reject West lock-stock and barrel.

Secondly, as against the Western tradition and practice of conflict between races, the ancient India provided a successful example of racial synthesis. But the India in which Tagore was born was weak. She had to be revitalised if she was to perform this role.

Thirdly, in particular he considered it as India’s role to warn countries like Japan against adopting the nationalistic cult of West.

Fourthly, after non-cooperation movement the poet thought it to be his role to warn the Indians also against nationalistic chauvinism.

Fifthly, the poet felt that occupying the geographical center, India was destined to carry out the mission of realising the unity of Asiatic peoples.

Sixthly, the poet indicated that the spirit of the times indicated that not West but East was going to illuminate and India was going to play a leading role in it.

One of the instruments used by poet to promote the cause of internationalism was education. SANTINIKETAN, Visva-Bharati

97 Ibid., p.330.
and Sriniketan were the educational trinity through which Tagore endeavored to develop his educational theme. The school came first. The university came after the first world war. The school was partly conceived as an experiment in India’s spiritual wisdom. Visva-Bharati, was set up to achieve the goal of ‘one world’. It was realized in concrete form through concrete cooperation between East and the west, to increase the knowledge about each other on the basis of equality and mutual respect. Ignorance of nations about each other was responsible for conflicts. It was an attempt to understand without national arrogance or national bias, and contribute to race reconciliation and world peace. Later on however the emphasis shifted from human unity to synthesis of asian cultures, as it was felt that East must consolidate first. Therefore it became a leading center of Indian studies and then of Asian studies. Of course, ultimately a question may asked whether knowledge is sufficient to built unity. But one would agree with Tagore unity could be secure only on the basis of knowledge. Sriniketan’s main objective was to give practical education, which was related to life.

A Critical Review:

(1) The poet’s identification of imperialism with nationalism has come in for criticism. Critics say that at a particular stage in history of nationalism, imperialism resulted from nationalism i.e. a stage of capitalistic nationalism.

(2) Some critics do not accept the contention that nationalism is a mechanical device.
(3) Thinkers like Sri Aurobindo would regard nationalism and nation-state as not essentially bad. Sri Aurobindo would regard nation-state as a step in evolution. 

(4) Even Marxists would regard nation-state as an essential step though would finally dispense with it.

(5) Tagore’s concept of internationalism has not been concretised.

(6) His concept of monolithic ‘West’ and monolithic ‘East’ has been criticised. Similarly, the terms ‘materialistic’ and ‘spiritualist’ have been described as vague. The concrete contributions which could be made by ‘East’ and the ‘West’ have not been specified. Similarly, the ‘West’ and the ‘East’ as well as individual countries within these countries have not considered their needs in terms of Tagore’s thinking. Therefore his message was not that well received.

(7) The basis of any new world order as considered by Tagore, such as moral man may be challenged. But even if it is considered right, he has not specified, the road to creation of such a man.