Chapter VI

Comparison of the Concept of Internationalism of Jawaharlal Nehru, Sri Aurobindo and Rabindranath Tagore.

A comparative study of internationalism of the three Indian thinkers, who came from diverse occupational backgrounds, but lived in the same epoch reveal more or less similar concerns, similar objectives although the modes recommended by them to achieve these objectives were not the same. But the similarities in the views of Nehru, Tagore and Sri Aurobindo on several matters are so striking that one might mistake a quotation of Nehru as one coming from Sri Aurobindo.

All of them were the products of the Age of Renaissance in India (although Sri Aurobindo had doubts whether it could be compared with the European Age). All of them lived in India, which was not free but striving for freedom. It was an age when the benefits of British rule had begun to be questioned, although there were people in India who wanted to retain British connection. A related question was if India did not benefit from British connection, were the British people to be blamed or was the British system to be blamed? If the system was bad, what did we want to establish after the British were gone? What would be the objectives of the Independent India? That was Nehru's concern after the non-cooperation movement had been withdrawn by Gandhiji. 'A vague Swaraj with no clear ideology' would not help. 'A sound and stable nationalism could not be
created without it. At the same time a related question which was raised was that why did India lose her freedom? When this introspection started, the thinkers started not only looking at the immediate past but also distant past. Jawaharlal Nehru wrote his 'Discovery of India'. But Aurobindo and Tagore also had a close look at Indian history. When one looked at one's own history, it was found that there were other countries too which had suffered the similar fate. But there were lucky ones as well. It was also found that our history was related to histories of other countries. It was found by Nehru that there was one history, the world history of which Indian history was a part. It was found that whatever happened in India was not that unique but happening elsewhere also. Besides, whatever happened elsewhere had its impact on India and whatever happened here also its impact on world. Therefore cooperation to solve common problems was thus necessary and useful. Looking at causes of events in India and world also led thinkers to ask whether the causes were individual or systemic. Which systems were good and which systems were bad and why? There were compelling reasons to ask such questions. The last part of 19th century and 20th century were turbulent periods. Twentieth century brought two world wars and the most important revolution. The process of war and destruction brought about by it as well as sufferings of man in colonial world raised the question. Was this man's fate? Was man essentially bad? If it was that, then everything became clear, if it was not why did he suffer this fate? What was the objective of human life? How high could a man rise? Why did he
not actually rise? What were the barriers to his progress? How they could be removed? Was the world moving towards a greater perfection of man? What role could India play in this process? Should India perform this role? Why? Was India capable of performing this role? These were the questions that agitated the mind of Nehru, Sri Aurobindo and Tagore. The issues of nationalism and of internationalism were parts of this thought process. Nehru, Sri Aurobindo and Tagore have been considered internationalists even if we go by popular image. Their concerns were not narrow. They were always taking interest in whatever was happening outside India. This was due to several reasons. Their reading of Indian history, the impact of Indian philosophy and their temperaments made them internationalists. The study of Western history, thought and literature too contributed to make them internationalists. They recognized that the world was international in nature, was becoming more international and that it was a positive thing, a goal worth aspiring for, worth acting for. Nehru and Tagore travelled existensively to understand the world and to promote internationalism. Tagore even did it at the cost of the health. Sri Aurobindo too was engaged in the task of human salvation.

One can pretend to be an internationalist. There may be 'genuine' internationalism as well as 'phony' internationalism. These thinkers found examples of 'phony' internationalism as well. For example, Western nationalism sometimes took the shape of 'hegemonic' internationalism of which they were critical. They were critical of even Indians who subscribed to this theory. Nehru even considered the offer of 'dominion status' as
'phoney', although Sri Aurobindo would consider it as genuine if executed in proper spirit. In fact Nehru even considered it as an example of 'isolationalism' rather than of 'internationalism' as it restricted the interaction between the colonial power and the dependencies only. Even the 'limited internationalism' that we had because of our relationship with U.K. was not really useful to us. About that all the three thinkers were agreed. The United Kingdom did not give us what we really wanted: the Western sense of scientific temper, the Western humanism, rationalism. Benefits of law and order, unity were only incidental and not intended. Similarly, Sri Aurobindo and Tagore were also critical. On the contrary, British rule prevented interaction between India and other Asian countries. Nehru thought it also restricted our contacts to British only even in Europe. Only independence, thought Nehru, in addition to other benefits would provide us with benefits of true internationalism.

In fact these thinkers felt West was not blessed with the ideal of internationalism but of the malady of nationalism, a disease, (to Tagore's mind) an incurable disease. Internationalism as an idea had not yet taken root in Western psyche, although a few intellectuals and thinkers might sympathize with it. Nationalism was the highest ideal as far as common man was concerned. It was also not 'benevolent' nationalism. As Nehru said, in Europe, the concept of 'Nationalism' got identified with 'National Interest'. National interest was identified by politicians who simply did not understand the 'real' interests of people and interpreted it
narrowly (although this would be true everywhere). ‘Nationalism’ as an idea meant ‘love of one’s country’ but it could easily result in hatred of other countries. The capitalist system prevailing in Europe produced excesses in nationalism, resulted in imperialism and capitalism in collusion with nationalism resulted in conflicts between states, wars. Nehru considered nationalism in Europe as good up to a point. It led to unity, progress and created feelings of sacrifice. But then it became a reactionary force. But Nehru felt that internationalism for its basis required nationalism. Without independent nation state true internationalism could not be promoted. At the same time he was aware of the limitations and excesses of nation state and sought to overcome its limitations and check its excesses. To some extent these three thinkers considered ‘conflicts’ in West as flowing from Western concept of man’s relationship with God, with nature and with other human beings. Sri Aurobindo, considered nationalism as positive good, an essential step in the evolutionary process which was on the whole progressive, and ‘nation’ as real unit which was originally a political unit, an indestructible unit. But identification of ‘nationalism’ with the excesses of national ego resulted in conflicts between nation states. Tagore was more critical of the idea of ‘Nation’. It was a mechanical idea, a political contrivance. This he felt was the Western contribution. The poet would say, ‘enter the Western spirit and civilization’ but ‘exit the Western Nation’.

The West, these thinkers, thought, always thought in terms of ‘power’, ‘conflict’, and ‘big power dominance’. Even a disaster like world war would not change the mode of Western
thinking. All these three thinkers therefore were critical of the post first world war peace settlements. They smacked of the old world order only. The post-first world war world order was not based on justice. Even the 'mandate' system was 'phony'. Domination by big powers, the victors of the war continued.

The world body which they created had no promise for the independence for third world countries. It was dominated by nation states, of Europe and specially by big powers. As Tagore put it nicely, 'Nation is afraid of a new Nation'.

This hegemonic internationalism, these thinkers observed, destroyed the vitality of old civilizations of East. They became too dependent on colonial states, the people too afraid to speak against their governments. Nehru would even say without the benefit of this hegemonic internationalism, India would have progressed faster, as Japan did. Sri Aurobindo frankly criticized the idea of colonial rule as providential dispensation for imperfect people. But the colonial rule not only led to the loss of vitality in a people of a colony but also in colonizing power. It destroyed the progressiveness of 'progressive elements'. Further, the loss of liberty in colonies was bound to have impact on the mother country. About these also, all the three thinkers were agreed. Nehru was even seriously worried that Fascism was developing in U.K. The rivalry for colonies in a shrinking world led to conflicts between imperialist powers and wars.

The only good point of this hegemonic internationalism was that it proved to be a catalytic agent for resurgence of
nationalism in Asia and in some countries of Africa.

Further, according to Nehru, the capitalist civilization in order to defend the interests of capitalists when challenged by masses would abolish democracy and adopt Fascism, which violated human dignity and values, had no higher goals and would result in a worse form of imperialism or 'hegemonic internationalism'. Tagore would agree. He could not have disagreed, for in his view development of human personality was the highest goal, to some extent a divine will. The development of personality could not take place in the absence of liberty. Sri Aurobindo considered Hitler as the greatest menace for humanity and personally intervened through his Yoga to defeat 'Asuric' forces. According to Nehru, this 'capitalistic', 'nationalistic', 'imperialistic' approach of the West was not only disastrous for mankind, it was dated. It was against the spirit of the age, which was in favour of the principle of equality. Even the League of Nations, the way it was constituted was dated. It was also against the rising mass aspirations in Asia and in the world. But above all, it reflected, nothing but an outdated political structure. The World was becoming more and more interdependent. Development of Science, technology, communication, economic interdependence was bringing men together. But whether in politics or in economics the policies followed by statesman were 'nationalistic' with statesman not taking an enlightened view of even their self interest. Nehru gives several examples where statesman betrayed the cause of internationalism. Churchill's unwillingness to give freedom to colonies, England and France's betrayal of Czechoslovakia, of Spain, America's unwillingness to
join the war till Pearl Harbour, her isolationalism after the first world war, Soviet Russia’s ambivalent attitude towards Germany, were few such examples. In this increasingly interdependent world nation-state was too small. As he put it, the industrial world had moved beyond the nation-state. Similarly the capitalist countries were following ‘protectionist’ foreign policies in a world of increasing international trade. Even solutions sought to the ‘Great Depression’ were nationalistic solutions. In pre-independences days, Nehru even felt that capitalism was dated and must retire. But it was not willing to do so.

Sri Aurobindo also realized that the world was becoming interdependent and gave several examples but international idea had not become a ‘thing near to our vital feelings or otherwise a part of our psychology’. Other weaknesses of the idea were, that as the idea had already been born and wanted to effectuate itself, it allied itself with other movements and reduced its purity and efficiency in the process. Further the idea was fastened by exceptional circumstances like war. In general the circumstances favouring internationalism were also not that compelling.

However, the response of political leaders, also was not considered adequate by Sri Aurobindo. The League of Nations, represented what was only a shadow of internationalism. Based it was on ‘great power strength’ checked only by necessity of conciliating sympathy of lesser powers in the form of Assembly, the League could well be described as an exercise in ‘hegemonic
internationalism' and not 'democratic internationalism'.

Tagore too realized that the world was getting closely integrated because of the developments in science and in technology of communications. The men were coming closer to each other and there were only two roads. The road to destruction and the road to human unity. He too felt in these circumstances structures like nation-state specially in its negative aspect was an obsolete structure.

These thinkers were well acquainted with problems of western civilization but were not completely pessimistic about the future of that civilization unlike even some Western writers. But of course for them the problem was a civilizational problem. Not only the West had its own defects. It was self-righteous and arrogant. It was neither reforming itself nor keeping its windows open to East. Although Sri Aurobindo would say that in the period of Renaissance, our literature was entering West. Tagore would consider even award of Nobel Price to him as a symbol of recognition of East by west and indication that West was willing to listen to the message of East and Tagore attached great value to symbols. Nehru was worried that the materialistic and arrogant West must consider East as otherwordly, not fit to give any message and even considered East as unworthy of receiving message.

But Nehru felt that West not only could receive message from East profitably but should receive it. For after all as Nehru saw the crisis as civilizational. Man's history was replete with two types of struggles. One against nature (Nehru would not use the word 'struggle' but use the word 'understand') in which he
problems e.g. scientific development led to discovery of nuclear
weapons. But the more important struggle was the struggle to
conquer his own self. The calamities of the centuries had
suggested that he had failed in this struggle. Tagore would say
that rational man had emerged but moral man was yet to emerge.
Sri Aurobindo would say that a rational man simply would not be
able to solve problems like conflicts, wars, hatreds and
bitterness. Only a further evolution of man could help. Nehru
would feel that if only West could recapture her old spirit of
humanism, tolerance things would be better. Sri Aurobindo also
did not consider Western civilization as dead. Tagore too
appreciated the virtues of Western civilization but with the
onset of second world war, his pessimism could be seen in his
essay 'Crisis of Civilization'.

It was not as if only the West had lost some of her
vitality, East too had lost her spirit of scientific inquiry, her
capacity to make inventions in science, the flexibility and
openness of her social structure. India for example had become a
'closed' society internally, as well as in terms of influences
from abroad. Social taboos, rules and regulations, dos and donts
became her main concern, almost an obsession. The families of all
our thinkers defied this type of social organization.

But all these three thinkers believed that to solve
this civilizational problem, a kind of internationalism was
required in which West would contribute to the requirements of
the East and vice versa. Creation of a new civilization which
synthesized good elements of both was essential. However in the circumstances which they were facing, the thinkers felt West was not capable of giving leadership and that East should and ought to give leadership.

Nehru, Sri Aurobindo and Tagore did not assume that East was a monolith. Tagore even considered the contribution which could be made by Japan and China. In a way he talked of contribution which could be made by countries of South-East-Asia. But as Dr. Varma says Sri Aurobindo had not given examples of separate identities of Eastern countries. They also assumed that 'Western' and 'Eastern' civilizations were different, although how tellingly and with what scientific evidence remains questionable. But amongst the East, the pride of place was to go to India.

An important role was considered for India by Jawaharlal Nehru, in the pre-independence period itself. India's openness, her ability to synthesize various races as seen from her history could be a useful asset. It was an old and mature civilization which knew the purposes of life. Her freedom movement conducted in a unique way, always within sight of internationalism; which also stressed the importance of right means; and her goal of democratic socialism with a secular outlook, which could provide an alternative model to capitalist and socialist method of development were other ways in which India could contribute to the cause of internationalism. In the post-independence period Nehru was even more concerned about civilizational crisis as the world was facing the danger of nuclear war. In this period, Nehru contributed to preservation of world peace by following policy of
Non-alignment, by preventing escalation of tensions between superpowers in various ways and by forcing them to be more restrained. Nehru contributed to increased mutual comprehension personally by not only acting as mediators but by correcting wrong impressions about each other. Finally, India under Nehru by actively participating in various international institutions also promoted the cause of internationalism.

Sri Aurobindo too, believed that India could contribute to the cause of internationalism in various ways. She had knowledge of the purposes of life. Her tradition was not conflittual and materialistic but spiritual and believed in harmony. By putting up a strong defence, an 'aggressive defence' as he described it, against Western intrusion, she could not only save our culture and contribute to the cause of internationalism but help the 'West' in process.

In Tagore's view the best contribution which India could make in the direction of internationalism was by providing an example of racial synthesis. The problem of race, according to Tagore was the biggest problem, mankind was facing. The poet felt it to be his personal role to warn the people of the East against isolationism and at the same time against becoming poor copies of West, specially by adopting the Western concept of 'Nation' or 'Nation-state'. During non-co-operation movement for example he warned Indians against dangers of national chauvinism. Similarly, he was also against orthodox social practices of the East which were devoid of rationality. The poet at the same time wanted to warn the Westerners against their 'greedy',
'capitalistic', 'nationalistic' culture. The poet by his lectures etc. tried to create awareness in west about their weaknesses and help in revitalizing Eastern culture.

But none of the thinkers considered India's role in promotion of internationalism as 'hegemonic'. Geographically India was placed in a strategic location. History had provided her with a spiritual tradition, experiences in racial synthesis. All of them were convinced that India had a mission and she was capable of performing it. But all the thinkers considered that if the West had a disease, she had medicine with her itself. That remedy was the Soviet Union. All the three thinkers were impressed with the Soviet Union's achievements and their views were more or less similar. Soviet Union could contribute to the cause of internationalism by providing an example to third world countries but also by providing an alternative model to capitalism. Tagore even considered Russia as belonging to the East than to the West. Soviet Union's problems were similar to India's problems. Tagore always compared situation in Russia with India, how quickly the Soviet Union had progressed and solved problems of unemployment, better standard of living and problems of health but more particularly of education while the conditions of Indian masses had not changed. Similarly Nehru and Tagore were impressed by the Soviet Union's achievements in solving the problems of various nationalities. Tagore was more impressed by the solution of problems arising out of greed and Nehru by the end of class exploitation. Moreover, she had not indulged in any war with West or in imperialism. She had entered into compromises with West but without diluting socialism at home. 'Socialism in
one country was the best lesson Soviet Union could provide to the world, although Marxism as a theory preached revolutionary internationalism. All had a sympathy for Soviet Union too because she was a besieged state.

But they were not unaware of dangers of this 'new' civilization (which they felt had created a different type of man although different to what extent only the future could tell). For example too much of state control, uniformity, dictatorship of the party were some problems of this society. But the main danger was that this civilization faced constant threat from West. The Soviet model after all had developed not as a corrective to capitalist model but as its substitute. The way it had developed in a revolutionary situation only increased the apprehensions of the West. What impressed Nehru, Tagore and Sri Aurobindo was the stupendous task undertaken by Russia with a good deal of courage.

Nehru considered at one stage socialism as a substitute of nationalism. Initially he too believed that socialists were internationalists. But he was disillusioned by the socialists. This plus the resistance put up capitalism and its ability to reform itself hardly left any scope for revolutionary internationalism. Sri Aurobindo even come to conclusion at the abstract level that socialism was a further development of the national (state) idea and not of the international idea. Nehru, later developed the idea of national democratic socialism, in place of considering socialism as an alternative to nationalism.

If Nehru, Sri Aurobindo and Tagore were aware of the
problems of Western civilization, specially of the economic and political system of the West, they were equally aware of the problems facing Eastern civilization and particularly of India. Did East practice internationalism and if it did, what type of internationalism it was? All the three thinkers were aware of India's expansion abroad but it was a cultural expansion. They (Eastern countries) had not yet established nation states therefore problems created by them were yet to be faced. Nehru felt that East did not have a tradition of conflict. It did not have philosophy which preached conflict between man and nature and man and man. Nehru felt that the needs, the concerns of the East were different. Therefore East would not be conflict oriented, others too referred to this, although Nehru was not confident about future. However, they did not want to prevent the nation states of East from going the Western way both in its internal as well as external aspect. Nehru took care to see that freedom movement continued to have an internationalist orientation, Tagore's lectures in Japan and China were partly designed to prevent these societies from developing nationalism of the western type. Tagore had a preference for internationalism of the Eastern countries which was not motivated by greed and arrogance, which had no political ambitions, but was based on mutual exchange taking place on the basis of equality. Sri Aurobindo's concern also was to see that Asia does not produce a carbon copy of the West. He felt that if Asia repeated first, the occidental experiment of industrialism and then a second phase of socialism, 'her resurgence will bring no new meaning or possibility into the human endeavour.' Similarly Sri Aurobindo also was not
interested in 'resurgence of Asia' for 'redressing or shifting of the international balance'. It would be a 'step in the old circle'. But he was interested in revitalization of Asia and in Asian tradition. Of course she (Asia) was forced to learn several things from West but she ought to do it not blindly but looking at her tradition. Similarly India also had a lot to do. She had to resist the undesirable Western penetration but not by closing her gates but with an openness in which Indian would put up \textit{not static defence of our culture, but aggressive defence of our culture}, otherwise India would stagnate.

Therefore another concern of these thinkers was that not only India should not imitate West but that she should not go for isolationism. One of the important tenets of internationalism of these thinkers was that it meant rejection of isolationism. There was a fear that she might do that as it had done in the past. Nehru elaborated greatly on this point as we have seen and gave examples of stagnation resulting from isolationism, from India, Japan and China among others. Tagore who believed in the progress of the humanity, of each individual, of each nation and could not have advocated isolationism.

Thus internationalism of these thinkers had three objectives for India and other countries of Asia: to prevent the development of ego-centric nationalism, to avoid isolationism and at the same time allow each of these nations to develop its own way, not be a carbon copy of the West. This did not mean in Sri Aurobindo's view that these national units should develop separatism. He distinguished between separatism and
particularism. He was for the latter but not the former. If separatism was the final thing, then the whole purpose of evolution, which had human unity as a goal would be defeated.

Thus if we look at the perception of internationalism in Nehru, Sri Aurobindo and Tagore's thought, we find striking similarities. Their internationalism was not other worldly (not even for Sri Aurobindo). Their internationalism was a product of several sources. They saw the need of internationalism in terms of civilizational crisis facing the man. Internationalism could give a new culture, which could solve the civilizational crisis. Reform of political culture, leaders and structures was to be part of the solution. For example the Nation-state, they thought ought to be checked in its excesses and be reformed. The world was afflicted with the problems of power politics, great power dominance, conflicts, war, hatred and exploitation. They blamed the West for it. Naturally, they looked to East for solution. All these required openess, communication, mutual give and take between civilizations. That was their idea of internationalism, although they did not define internationalism in these terms. Further they wanted to prevent the unhappy experience of western politics in East, prevent the Eastern states going the Western way and at the same time prevent the emergence of isolationalist sentiment in East. This did not mean that they considered West as dead. There was the Soviet experiment, an alternative model of civilization. But even otherwise, it was possible for West to reform itself.

As the three thinkers relied on the concept of Asianism and Pan-Asianism as one of the pillars of internationalism.
although there was no agreement regarding exact shape it was
going to
take
talks. They did not want Asia to be an 'extension of
Europe', did not want European dominance to be re-established
and wanted Asian countries to develop in their own way.

All the three thinkers seemed to have a kind of value
based preference for a world in a hierarchic fashion. For example
at the bottom, would lie Fascism and Nazism of which all the
three were bitterly critical. Although an initial impression was
created that Tagore supported Mussolini and favoured Fascism. But
the misunderstanding was immediately cleared by him. A thinker
like Tagore, who favoured the unfettered development of human
personality, could not have supported Fascism. The Europe of his
days was definitely better than Fascism. The Soviet Union would
be above the present day Europe. The old Europe with its humanism,
tolerance would be placed above the present day Europe. Nehru,
Tagore and Aurobindo would place Soviet Union above old Europe as
it was a revolutionary experiment in civilizational change and
would therefore take a sympathetic look at the weaknesses and
excesses of the Soviet regime. Finally, at top would be a
situation where old Europe—Soviet Union and East would be
engaged in mutual exchange of various kinds on the basis of
equality. It would be something like this: Old Europe—Soviet Union—
East, Soviet Union, Old Europe, Modern Europe, Fascism—Nazism.

All these thinkers, did think of giving institutional
expression to their ideas on internationalism. All were critical
of reliance on institutions. Their emphasis was on man and change
in nature of man. Although Nehru thought of systemic causes and
systemic solutions, he too realized the limitations of institutions in terms of imperfections of human nature. Of the three, comparatively speaking it was Nehru who put highest emphasis on institutions and policy prescriptions. Even Sri Aurobindo who stressed the importance of a Superior man for bringing human unity, felt that in the first stage institutions were necessary. Tagore was most critical of Western reliance on institutions, particularly political institutions like Nation.

Nehru considered a world state taking the shape either of a world federation or a world confederation as the final stage in internationalism. Sri Aurobindo too considered these alternatives. Initially in favour of confederation, later on he came out in support of federation as the confederation would encourage too much decentralization and although would preserve the principle of liberty but sacrifice that of uniformity. Only federation would have a good balance between unity and diversity, uniformity and liberty. Tagore was not happy with the way the League was created and run but did not favour the system of nation states. May be Tagore was interested in federation of communities rather than of states. But he did not work out an alternative framework. May be his faith in man and not in institutions was responsible for it. Even Nehru did not work out his scheme of institutions as exhaustively as Sri Aurobindo did, although some of the schemes considered by Sri Aurobindo were dated, e.g., the idea of federation of empires and of empires and free nations. May be Nehru although an idealist was more a man of action. He was more interested in management of existing
institutions rather than in establishment of new ones. But even then he was regarded as an architect of Commonwealth. Nehru never lost his faith completely in institutions. Momentary failures of U.N.O. did not disillusion either Nehru or Sri Aurobindo completely. Sri Aurobindo would even say that if a proper structure was there (he did consider U.N.O. as one) when the opportune moment came, proper spirit would dwell in it. An interesting question would be, did these thinkers favour regional organizations? It is true that Nehru discussed the possibility of regional blocs and Asian Federation etc. But favoured universal organizations more than regional organizations. Many reasons could be there. On the whole he considered regional organizations as second best only (true of Sri Aurobindo and Tagore as well), though he felt that it could help solve minority problems. Of course, there were other uses of regionalism for Nehru. For example, Pan-Asianism could ward off reappearance of European hegemonic internationalism as well as as well as provide a stage in the direction of world unity (at least theoretically). Later on he realized that as exclusive focus on 'nation' as a unit (particularly on 'Hindu-Nation') revealed divisive tendencies, a focus on 'Region' as a unit could reveal divisive tendencies (Bandung led to his final disillusionment) and that a focus on 'world body' could diffuse regional acrimonies as focus on 'Region' was likely to diffuse intra-national acrimonies. Thus universalism could prove to be a solution to problems of regionalism as regionalism could provide solution to problems of nationalism. Sri Aurobindo did not want
any regional organizations at the cost of the world organizations. In Sri Aurobindo’s approach to human unity no exclusion was possible. Although he did consider the possibility of large continental aggregations as a stage in the final formation of a world union. However, he felt that continental blocs would result in clashes between continents. It may result in the possibility of world union being postponed. Although others suggested to Tagore the idea of political union of Asia for a political purpose, he was not for it. His concept of Pan-Asianism was basically cultural and not political. In case of none of the three thinkers, regionalism was an end in itself. Nehru’s concept of Pan-Asianism was cultural but more political. Sri Aurobindo’s preference was for cultural regionalism. Although he did visualize theoretically the possibility of regional political unit as a step in the direction of human unity, in actual practice, in his ‘A Post Script Chapter’ to the ‘Ideal of Human Unity’, he felt that regionalism was more an obstacle to human unity rather than a step in the evolution. Tagore had highest apprehensions about political regionalism. He was all for cultural regionalism and cultural internationalism.

Does the above discussion lead one to impression that Nehru, Sri Aurobindo and Tagore were in complete agreement regarding their views on internationalism. It does not seem to be the case. In terms of goals of internationalism in terms of relationship between nationalism and internationalism and in terms of instruments through which they sought to promote their goals, there were important differences. A related but important question would be, did these three thinkers believe in liberal or
hegemonic, or revolutionary internationalism?

But first, the question of goals of internationalism. There were certain things which they did not want in their concept of internationalism. Nehru for example ruled out Pan-religious movements, which he considered unhealthy. He did not want the goal of internationalism to be, the creation of materialistic civilization of West. He did not want domination of any country over any other country. He did not want any cultural imposition or any imposition by violent means.

In his internationalism, there would be place for nation states. He considered nationalism as a positive phenomenon upto a point and nation state as necessary for achieving certain objectives. But his nationalism was non-aggressive, non-isolationist and comprehensive and not class oriented. Nehru's internationalism always had a place for international interest along with national interest. But he realized internationalism would be accepted only if it was in harmony with nationalism. Although theoretically he quoted Gandhiji's view of sacrificing nation for the sake of humanity, in practice he rarely did so. More important was his assertion that after all true national interests were not against international interest and on most of the occasions what was required was an enlightened view of self interest which the politicians were not taking. Nehru became an internationalist to seek guidance for conduct of freedom movement. Thus his internationalism was supportive of nationalism. In return our nationalism could also contribute to the enrichment of
internationalism. Freedom movement was one such example. So in normal times internationalism and nationalism were perceived as in healthy interexchange with each other.

Nehru's internationalism had high goals. For example by cultural exchange between East and West, he sought to solve the civilizational problem of establishment of man's control over himself. This would automatically lead to end of conflicts between nations and world peace, which may ultimately bring about human unity.

But he did not aim at human unity directly and immediately. As a politician his concerns were different.

His immediate problem was prevention of world war between two superpowers because world peace would affect India. Escalations of tensions must be prevented. Similarly by following a policy of nonalignment he enlarged the area of peace. Mediation, active role in U.N. and commonwealth and promoting the cause of peace, disarmament, decolonisation, India under Nehru promoted the cause of internationalism. Nehru's reliance was mainly on policy prescriptions.

On the other hand Sri Aurobindo's internationalism mainly aimed at achieving human unity. If the problem of human unity was solved, many other problems would be automatically solved. He was not a politician but a philosopher and conceived the idea in an abstract way but his ideas were not unconnected with reality. In Sri Aurobindo's view extraordinary circumstances like war, increasing interdependence had strengthened the idea of internationalism. But more important than forces would be, man's inner urge of evolution and Nature's movement towards further
evolution, which with the help of gnostic human beings will lead the world towards the goal of human unity. Sri Aurobindo's Yogic Sadhana was supposed to help bring the divine forces here on earth and help in the process of evolution. Thus in Sri Aurobindo's view the phenomenon of internationalism had higher goal as compared to Nehru and was related to evolution of man and of nature and in addition was also a product of forces, circumstances etc. Therefore internationalism was supposed to be brought about in a different way.

Sri Aurobindo did not consider nationalism as an evil, but a positive step in evolution, towards larger aggregates. But the excesses of 'national ego' which was identified with nationalism created problems. This problem had to be solved. The ego had to be transferred to a higher entity. Transformation of nationalism into internationalism was required.

Rabindranath Tagore's internationalism also had its goal, the ideal of highest development of human personality. Many problems of world were due to lopsided development of human personality. The exaggerated importance given to political and economic needs created problems of nation states such as war. If a balanced personality was developed, many problems such as of war, imperialism would be solved and human unity would be established. The reason why such a goal could not be achieved was that the world was divided into nation-states which had conflittual relationship with each other and into civilizations 'Western' and 'Eastern' each of which shut itself from the other. Therefore internationalism meant free exchange of views,
articles and faiths. Thus Tagore's concept of internationalism was not a political one but also moral and spiritual. It was the will of the God that each personality developed to its fullest potential and therefore the internationalism which helped in the process was spiritual.

Sri Aurobindo’s concept of internationalism too was spiritual. But there was a lot of emphasis on divine element in man and spirituality. In Sri Aurobindo, greatest emphasis was put on cosmic and transcendental aspect of man. Tagore too did realize that man had divine element but the emphasis was on human part of human being and its development. The emphasis was on empirical and historical character of man. Man was the highest creation of God, therefore his highest development ought to be the goal of internationalism. According to Sri Aurobindo, man constituted a progressive step in evolution but not the final step. He had his inadequacies. Therefore the problems of the world. The goal of internationalism therefore ought to be creation of gnostic human being and gnostic communities. On the other hand, Nehru’s concept of internationalism was based on rationality. It was aimed at creating a more rational man, a more enlightened man who took an enlightened view of self-interest and a more scientific man. In terms of its goals, it was less ambitious. Nehru aimed at creating a ‘World Community based on scientific temper’. Sri Aurobindo aimed at creating ‘a spiritualized community’ and Tagore aimed at creating ‘a moral community’ and ‘universal man’, ‘a complete man’.

Finally, Nehru conceived of internationalism as ‘a corrective’ to nationalism, Sri Aurobindo considered
internationalism 'as a next step in evolution' and Rabindranath Tagore considered internationalism as 'a substitute' to nationalism. Nehru aimed at creating an 'improved' nation state because it had revealed certain theoretical and practical limitations. Sri Aurobindo too was conscious of the limitations of the 'nation-state' but felt that it was an essential step in the process of evolution. If this step was by-passed prematurely a reversion in evolution was also possible. Finally, Tagore, if we go by the spirit of writings considered 'nation state', both the idea and its behaviour in practice as undesirable and dispensable, specially in case of India.

Nehru was not in favour of 'hegemonic' internationalism. His perception of an important role for India was based on his perception that India had something to give. He felt a certain sense of responsibility, a duty - a duty towards the world, towards the underprivileged. In no way, he aspired for political domination or seek any thing for India out of its involvement. If she gained anything, such as peace and security, it was not at the cost of others. In fact Nehru felt that 'hegemonic internationalism' was bound to fail as it was not in harmony with the spirit of times. Nehru was an exponent of democratic internationalism.

Nehru did not favour revolutionary socialism either, although through out his life he remained an admirer of socialism, so much so that one stage, he considered socialism as a substitute of nationalism and then as an ally of nationalism. The world was too complex, national traditions of countries so
different from each other that neither socialism in general nor a particular brand of socialism could be applied to all.

Nehru could well be described as a liberal internationalist, although he did not agree with the liberal creeds in toto. He believed in progress, perfectibility of individuals, in harmony of interests of nations. Although he did find defects in the existing system of nation states. He did not see doomsday approaching. Systems could be improved, new systems could be created, better leaders could be selected, masses could be aroused to follow enlightened and not the 'narrow' nationalism. Statesmen had a choice in most of the situations. Nuclear war was not inevitable. Cold war could end. Russia could change. Capitalism could be improved. Ideological hostility could be avoided. New ideologies could be invented. Cold warriors could work together. Imperial powers and colonies could work together. State could be made to perform useful functions. There was always a scope for Statesmen to follow prudent foreign policies which served the nations but also the humanity. Of course, references could be found in Nehru’s writings which indicated his belief in inevitability of things. At times he appeared self-righteous and at times biased. But on the whole, Nehru’s thoughts reveal an immense amount of flexibility. Nehru was a liberal internationalist in another way also. He realized the growing economic interdependence of nations and considered these as positive changes and felt that the state system should be changed, modified in relation to these changes. That explains his faith in U.N.O. and commonwealth. Of course, he could be criticized for not doing enough. May be he felt leaders were not
enlightened. May be he felt that people of the world were not yet ready for such changes and he always believed in carrying masses along with leaders.

Tagore, too was a liberal internationalist. He did not believe in hegemonic internationalism. He denounced the governments by Nations, as they tended to be hegemonic, destroyed the freedom, vitality of subject peoples but in the process destroyed the freedom of their own people and prevented their best from coming out.

Although he was highly appreciative of achievements of Soviet Russia, he thought it to be a temporary medicine. He did feel that Russian example showed that socialism could bring out the creativity of man. But he believed in a world order in which each nation had its own individuality, its own contribution to make and therefore would not have preferred to have drab uniformity of socialism all over the world. In no case could an attempt to impose socialism by force would be justified. Thus Tagore was not in favour of revolutionary internationalism.

Tagore too was a liberal internationalist. But he went ahead of others. He recognized the excesses of the Nation System and was in favour of community of No Nations. Although he was critical of excesses of the Government by Nation in the West, as he put it, the government by Nation is neither British nor anything else; it is an applied science and therefore more or less similar in principles wherever it is used. It is no wonder that he was forthright in his criticism of Japanese imperialism. Tagore, of course was not an anarchist. What he objected to was
only Government by Nations but not to all forms of governments or to government in general.

Thus, Nehru, Sri Aurobindo did not favour hegemonic internationalism, either of the economic or of political type. It was good neither for country dominated nor for hegemon. It could not provide a stable framework of unity between states.

They also did not favour revolutionary internationalism. All of them had a soft corner for Russia as a country and for socialism as a system. But they felt that socialism could develop in a single country. Nehru tried to implement this ideal. They would not have approved of soviet Union acting as a hegemon forcing socialism on others. They did not believe in violent change and believed that different countries had different traditions and different requirements and there could not be a single solution for different countries.

All the three were liberal internationalists. They realized the growing interdependence of states. Nehru pointed out the inadequacies of political and economic structures in relation to pressure of circumstances, e.g. of the nation state system, the capitalist system. Sri Aurobindo would regard the change and transformation in the structure as a right step in evolution. They were aware not only of the inadequacies of the structures, they were also aware of the harshness, of the maladies of the nation state system. Tagore would not be unhappy if the nation state system was abolished, although he did not specifically demand it.

But their conception of internationalism was not
confined to a critic of the prevailing system of inter-state-system. They perceived the problem as civilizational problem of which the system of international relations was a part and offered civilizational solution.

All the three thinkers were optimistic about prospects of internationalism, in the world. The emergence of soviet civilization, the resurgence of Asia; the conviction that days of 'hegemonic international' were over and that a new age had begun; in case of Nehru his realization that capitalism could and did reform itself; and in case of Sri Aurobindo, his observation that state control in general was being accepted; the perception in case of Nehru and Sri Aurobindo that U.S. Soviet struggle was power struggle and their belief that these two ideologies could coexist; and in case of Nehru the belief that even a third model could be invented which could be acceptable to two superpowers; these together with advancement in science, communication, increasing interdependence, bitter experiences of war, augured well for the cause of internationalism. Tagore became pessimistic about western civilization in general in the last years of his life. But he still retained faith in man.

A better world order, a more peaceful world order a more rational world order, a more humane world order a non-exploitative world order, a more democratic world order, a more tolerant world order, a world order aimed at strengthening internationalism was what they were aiming at. They were convinced that it could not be brought about by reason or science; by religion; by political and economic systems and ideologies.
(although they had their own preference and views about utility of this or that system and ideology); by politicians; by unity of race, language etc. (their preference was for a world order based on variety); by economic advantages alone.

They believed that better man was what was required. They had their own vision of this man and their own schemes for bringing about an improved man.

For creating a stable but better world order, Nehru placed faith in systems, forces, leaders and masses, although he placed greater faith in the first two. Of course right policies enunciated by enlightened leaders were of no less consequence. Sri Aurobindo placed faith in forces, circumstances, systems, leaders, masses but put highest faith in evolutionary process and gnostic human beings for realizing a better world order. Finally, Tagore for the realization of better world order, put more faith in men and supermen—(the architects and dreamers)—(hence in the evolutionary process) than in forces, systems, although he was aware of the damage done by some systems. Tagore’s conception of a new world order was partly rational and partly spiritual, but more rational than spiritual. Nehru’s was rational and Sri Aurobindo’s was basically spiritual.

A critical review of their concept of internationalism is in order.

(1) All of them talked of ‘East’ and ‘west’ as monolithic blocs possessing certain common characteristics. For example the East was presumed to be ‘spiritualistic’ and the West was presumed to be ‘materialistic’. These traits were not well defined. The weaknesses of the West were presumed to be civilizational rather
than systemic. Only Nehru talked of 'West' as industrialized societies and 'East' as yet to be industrialized, and the weakness of the West as springing from the capitalist-industrialist system. Tagore and Sri Aurobindo put more emphasis on certain bad instincts like greed and good instincts like self-sacrifice than on systems. Further, how could one prove that West was 'materialistic' and the East 'spiritual'? They generalized on the basis of their perception of the way of life in 'West' and in 'East'. If one looks at today's life in India it could hardly be described as 'spiritualistic'. They generalized on the basis of limited data. Further, the 'spiritual' life was presumed to be better than 'material'. Pride in wealth was considered to be a matter of shame by Tagore.

(2) In politics also the 'West' and the 'East' were presumed to have distinct traditions. It was presumed that the Western tradition was of power, of conflict, of hegemony and the Eastern, of peace and harmony. Whatever strife was there in 'East' was produced by 'West'. Left to itself, countries of East would behave peacefully in world politics in general and in relation to each other in particular. Further, it was presumed as a matter of faith that the civilizational qualities would help ward of evils of systems prevailing in West, in case they were introduced in East. Of course, all our thinkers warned against blindly introducing Western systems in East.

Only on this basis can one understand Nehru's claim for Asian leadership in a new world order, otherwise if nation state system or capitalism produced bad consequences in West, would
This belief in peaceful tradition in East in politics was to lead to disillusionment of both Nehru and Tagore. Nehru gave up emphasizing 'Asianism' after Bandung and Tagore had to write critical letters to his Japanese poet-friend for asking him to support Japanese aggression in China. In reality as Stephen Hay's book reveals in case of Tagore, there was no consensus in Japan and China about the 'oriental' civilization being 'spiritual' and 'occidental' being 'materialistic'. In addition, people in China and Japan wanted more of 'material' civilization than less. Advice of Tagore was taken to be one coming from 'a defeated country', a country which had lost independence. The Japanese were more interested in preserving their independent nation-state and strengthening it and one observer even advised India to be imperialistic rather than be a weak, a meek country. The Chinese were interested in preserving their independence and in country's unity and wanted to strengthen their country. A powerful China, one like the Western nation state, the Chinese felt was what they required than a China sermonizing spiritual messages to the world.

Moreover, as far as Pan-Asianism was concerned the Chinese and Japanese were interested in political Pan-Asianism with their respective countries as leaders.

As Hay has observed, Pan-Asianism and nationalism strengthen each other in early stages of development but at a later stage when demands of particular nationalism and rivalries between nation states become active, Pan-Continental ambitions lose their force.
(3) Nehru, although initially critical of 'nationalism', in post-independence period realized the vitality of nationalism as a force. Sri Aurobindo too described 'nation' as real unit, though initially a political unit. But Tagore's perception of 'nation' as a mechanical unit does not seem to be convincing. As a matter of fact internationalism has difficulty in developing because nation is so real.

(4) The internationalism of Nehru, Sri Aurobindo and Tagore was pro-Soviet internationalism. They lived in a particular period and Nehru and Tagore visited Soviet Union at a time when they could see the best of Soviet Union and when its worst was yet to come. But even then I personally feel their our colonial background prevented them from properly assessing the merits of West and demerits of Soviet Union. For example, their criticism of what happened in Soviet Union in 1930s was very mild.

(5) Nehru, Tagore and Sri Aurobindo's conception of internationalism was also inspired by the needs of Indian Renaissance. Having suffered the inferiority complex resulting from our colonial slavery, they tended to overemphasize the weaknesses of West and the strength of Asia and of India in particular. Thus although, functional in results, their viewpoint merits academic criticism.

(6) A definite criticism which can be made of these three thinkers was that they seemed to express the idea of inevitability about several things. For example, although Nehru and Sri Aurobindo talked about cyclical interpretation of history, accepted the possibility of reversals, in actual design...
of present and future, they did not show such possibilities. For example, a unit larger than nation was considered inevitable such as regional blocs, world federation or confederation. But the possibility of breakup of large units such as federations or break up of the nation-state was not thought about. A more centralized order was supposed to be the order of future but a decentralized, a more feudal set up was not visualized. Tendency toward integration was noticed but a simultaneous existence of tendency of integration as well disintegration (which seems to be the case at present) was not imagined.

(7) A funny theory put forward by Tagore and Nehru was that nationalism, imperialism results from surplus energy when the task of social reconstruction is completed. Therefore Europe has been engaged in nationalism and imperialism, whereas Indians as they could not complete the task of social reconstruction had no surplus energy left to create a nation-state or an imperial state. Similarly, Nehru talks of imperialism of the European countries as resulting from the situation where the primary needs of the people had been satisfied. It was thought that, Asia was not likely to be imperialistic as long as the primary necessities of their people had not been satisfied but once these needs were satisfied, it was not easy to predict about the non-imperialist inclination of Asia.

According to these authors, then there was a hierarchy of needs, in which politics had the last place. A society giving first priority to politics was not visualized. Similarly, man’s pursuit of political needs along with other needs was not considered. If it was contended that Nehru and Tagore believed in
this hierarchy of needs, it is understandable. But if it was contended that all societies too in their thinking and action faithfully followed this hierarchy of needs, it would not be an acceptable argument. Even today we will find societies which have their basic needs satisfied and yet are not imperialistic and there would be other societies engaged in imperial adventure, when their basic needs were yet to be satisfied.