

Conclusion

The findings that come out of the above discussion, then, may be briefly and summarily pointed out in the following lines:

Both W.B. Yeats and Rabindranath Tagore were born and grew up under colonial rule which through ruthless exploitation and plunder in the material world, gave birth to a reactive force of protest and resistance to the dominating hegemony.

While torture and plunder were in force, the colonized world however, was gathering new ideas and enlightenment which had been brainstorming in the sense that it unveiled a new horizon of liberal humanism and for the first time sowed the seeds of self – reliance and nationalism. In a sense, it compensated the loss of the material domain and somehow a desire was born and developed in the spiritual domain to redefine and rediscover the heritage and glory of the nation.

Gradually a political awareness came into being, but two things are notable about it. First, it was, at least in the initial stage, imitated from the rulers, and as such, had been a derivative discourse. Second, even though it was an awareness, it was ultimately to be executed in the material domain, in the demand and achievement of different rights and opportunities in daily life. The unfulfilment of those rights and demands drew forth further commotion, protests and political claims and thus it went on, almost in a chain reaction.

Both Yeats and Tagore imbibed that political consciousness of nationalist struggle and at times, played crucial roles in its further development, both in theory and in practice. But one thing that troubled both was the confinement of politics to the material world, to its

temporary loss or gain. Self-reliant as they had been, both Yeats and Tagore, searched for a newer world and cultivated the spiritual domain of the nation to revive the unknown, unremembered resources and recycle the unmitigated energy of the past so that the present could be rebuilt and refashioned, gathering courage, design and inspiration from the running waves of that national heritage, as per need. This is revivalism.

But revivalism could not have the same shades of colour in the two artists. Digging up the ancient heritage of Ireland, Yeats found both beauty and mystery. But his spiritualism drew him more to the latter and accordingly, the fairy and the mythic, the ghostly and the occult crowded in his pages. It was definitely one way of rebuilding the Irish nation, but it was esoteric and romantic and the moment it came to bear the crisis of the present, it broke into pieces and shattered, just as , to take the familiar Yeatsian metaphor, the dream breaks by the bustle and chaos of the street.

Yeats appreciated but preferred to watch the birth of the “terrible beauty” from afar; his ambivalence could not allow him to come and breathe in the common stream of sweating public. He eulogized the aristocrats, and even the peasants who frequently figure in his works, are ‘romanticised’; they belong to the poet’s dream world, not to the one of dust and reality. Tagore also revived the beauty and glory of Indian civilization, but influenced as he had been more by the divine, the rich religious culture of the country, he bore the teachings of the *Upanishadas*, the epics, the Buddhist scriptures. He carried the message of love and light and tolerance and acceptance of India and welcomed all to her festival of humanity. From there originated his love of the common people, the lowly and the lost. Yeats also recognized this attitude in Tagore. In the introduction to *Gitanjali*, therefore, he wrote:

I have carried the manuscript of these translations about with me for days, reading it in railway trains, or in the top of omnibuses and in restaurants, and I have often had to close it lest some stranger would see how much it moved me. These lyrics – which are

in the original, my Indians tell me, full of subtlety of rhythm, of untranslatable delicacies of colour, of metrical invention – display in though a world I have dreamed of all my life long. The work of a supreme culture, they yet appear as much the growth of the common soil as the grass and the rushes. (ii)

Tagore tried to awaken all, through his poems and plays and songs and speeches. He endeavoured to arouse the sleeping nation to the recovery of self esteem and self power and initiated the Swadeshi movement, and introduced the rural reconstruction programmes. He wanted to bind the East and the West in a common cultural bond and to that effect, established the Visva-Bharati university at Santiniketan. In other words he overcame the traps of narrow nationalism and longed for the emancipation of all suppressed men in general. He attempted to recover humanity from the crisis of civilization and therefore, spoke of the universal religion of Man.

Yeatsian struggle was not so general but area specific and culture specific. But a victim of unending Catholic campaign and charges against him, he nevertheless tried for the unity of culture in Ireland and participated in the rebuilding of the cultural domain in a notable way, whatever controversy may lie there about his overt Protestantism. The external political domain of Irish politics might have a formidable cleavage between the Catholics and Protestants on racial grounds, but Yeats craved for a common culture and he intended to have it purely on spiritual terms. Thus he could write:

While I still may, I write for you
The love I lived, the dream I knew.
From our birthday, until we die,
Is but the winking of an eye;
And we, our singing and our love,
What measurer Time has lit above,

And all benighted things that go
About my table to and fro,
Are passing on to where may be
In truth's consuming ecstasy,
No place for love and dream at all;
For god goes by with white footfall.
I cast my heart into my rhymes,
That you in the dim coming times,
May know how my heart went with them
After the red-rose-bordered hem. ('*To Ireland in the Coming Times*', C.P., 42)

Therefore Tagore himself wrote in appreciation of Yeats:

In Yeats's poetry, Ireland had its heart expressed. . . . Yeats had made his poetic impulse flow through the old, archaic route of Celticism. As it had been most natural and appropriate for his poetic talent, he earned such unparalleled repute. He touched this world through his entire living, not through his eyes and knowledge merely. Therefore, that world appeared to him not as piles of matter, but as a living spirit. At the mountains and fields of Ireland he met that play of eternity which can be reached only through meditation and inner realization.

[“Kabi Yeats” (Poet Yeats), *Rachanabali* , 12, 374]

Tagore also discarded materialism and its ugly designs of greed and dominance. In an essay written in 1905, “*Bilaser Phans*” (The Stranglehold of Luxury) he commended the values of Indian civilization and its simplicity in contrast to the Western desire for unending consumption that had opened doors of thousands old social maladies. Speaking of older times he commented:

In those days, acquiring wealth did not dominate the individual's aspirations as it does today. The status of wealth was not very high in society and wealth was not considered the highest source of power. . . . Hence our people did not suffer from the poverty of spirit which results from privileging wealth above all else." (Roy Chaudhuri 26)

This showed his essential spiritual idealism.

Towards the end of the World War I, in Ireland there was the outbreak of military terrorism, known as the Black and Tan rule, followed by the Civil war. Yeats was patiently and painfully watching the change, the 'terrible beauty' had brought in. He himself underwent changes, after the Easter revolution of 1916, in attitude, in style, in his shift of perspectives from the romantic to the modern. Later in 1922, in the Parliament of Irish Free State he was given the place and honour of a Senator, and he played an important role there too.

The attitude and style had been shifted continually, in Rabindranth also. He examined the philosophical critique of extremist Politics in *The Four Chapters*, and then gradually came down to the misery and distress of the common men during the fiery years between the great Wars. His love of India and her culture never got diminished, but his stand grew more wide and international as he travelled in various countries and met various people who recognized him as the world's poet. He was of course worried about India's gain of political freedom, but for him, the more important and immediate need was to get his countrymen educated, awakened and aroused in the true sense of the terms. Thus he made his appeal in the famous lines:

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;

Where knowledge is free;

Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;
Where words come out from the depth of truth;
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of
dead habit;
Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever widening thought and action
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.

(The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore, vol. 1, 53)

But in spite of this long discussion on the contribution of Yeats and Tagore to the spiritual domain of nationalism between the years 1890 and 1920, the study is not yet finished and nor is the topic exhausted. Many other great poets and authors of similar temperament questioned, criticized and contributed to the anti-colonial, nationalistic development during the same period in Asia, in Africa, in Latin America and Australia. Much of those responses may throw new light on the issue, when compared with the responses, left by Yeats and Tagore. That may be the field of a future work, wider in scope and objectives, to overcome the limitations of the present one.

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