

Chapter 3

The Context of Tagore's Arrival in the Field of Indian Nationalism and his Transcendence

The analysis of the history of Indian nationalism customarily begins with reference to the last twenty years of the nineteenth Century. It is true, however, that in the pre-Congress era and in the early years of Indian National Congress as well, the nationalist leaders did not look for complete independence of the country, neither did they employ the methods of mass-mobilization, nor did they demand extra constitutional rights and privileges, which they frequently practiced and claimed later. Why should this period then be considered as a part of the story of Indian nationalism at all, is itself a pertinent question.

In defense it has been said that for many historical accounts the history of Indian nationalism is synonymous with the history of the Indian National Congress, and therefore, anything related to Congress activity and discourse is part of the history of Indian nationalism. Congress has been acknowledged as the first body politic organized on a large national scale, as it sought to bring forward the interests of an integrated India and not of any specific region (Bengal, Bombay or Madras), group (landlords or Zamindars) or caste (Hindus or Muslims). With it, the one India concept came into being, at least in the concept level, if not in reality or practice. This new nationalistic outlook is historically known as Moderate Nationalism. The elements and component features which make it moderate are manifold and vibrant in their impact.

At the outset it was a nationalism that raised very simple demands like expanding the powers of the Provincial and Central Councils and introducing elected members into them, holding the Civil Service examination in India as well as in England, separating the judicial and executive functions, extension of trial by Jury to areas not covered by this, reduction of the increasing burden of the 'Home Charges'(particularly those charges debited to India, that arose out of British Military adventures), income tax reform, opposition to increase in the salt tax, extension of Permanent Settlement, reform of the Police, repeal of forest laws etc. (Bandyopadhyay 31). The target behind such demands was primarily to liberalize the ruling bureaucracy of India, and to accomplish that, as it was thought, the Indianization of Indian civil Service was of paramount importance. Only the Indianized Civil service was supposed to introduce some measures of a responsible Government. Surendranath Banerjee, who became the president of Indian National Congress for two terms, frequently raised these twin issues of civil service reform and responsible Government and emphasized in his autobiography, *A Nation in Making: Being the Reminiscence of Fifty Years of Public Life* that these "lay at the root of all other Indian problems and their satisfactory settlement would mean the solution of them all" (126).

In a similar tune Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Congress President in 1905, declared in a public address on 25th July, 1904, that

It is with me a firm conviction that unless you have a more effective and more potent voice in the government of your own country, in the administration of your own affairs, in the expenditure of your own revenues, it is not possible for you to effect much in the way of industrial development. (Karve and Ambekar 178)

Congress as a body accepted this stand and affirmed it to be "one of the most important practical steps towards the amelioration of the condition of the people" (Zaidi A. Moin, *Congress Presidential Address*, vol. 1, 138). This stand point was 'nationalist' almost

by default, as the petitioners were Indian and the petitioned British, but it was ‘moderate’ because it stood entirely upon petition and ventured nothing else. Moderate leaders almost habitually referred to the 1883 Government of India Act and the royal proclamation of 1858, – both of which assured that natives would not be deprived of placements in the bureaucracy, and appealed time and again to have that which was always promised but never actually granted. Daniel Argov, categorically points out that until 1908, all Congress reports had a cover sheet consisting of quotations from these Acts and from British officials, under the title “Some of England’s Pledges to India” (39). Quotation for Congress, in fact, turned out to be an essential device in the art of persuasion and as Seth comments in his article, *Rewriting Histories Of Nationalism: The Politics Of ‘Moderate Nationalism’ in India, 1870-1905* , “in the speeches of many Moderate leaders, such quotes often consisted one third or more of the text” (Bandyopadhyay 33). In 1917 the moderate body of the Deccan Sabha, in an address to the Secretary of state for India, Edwin Montagu and the Viceroy, Baron Chelmsford, acknowledged ‘ the frequent reproach’ that Indian politicians are too fond of quotations, and went on to explain the reasons behind:

First, that we can never command the weight and authority of your great men, secondly, that neither the strong language nor the stronger arguments used by the British statesmen may be permissible to Indian politicians, and third that the quotations may enable the statesmen and rulers of the present day to mark the departure from great traditions which we in India have so much reason to regret and to deplore.

(Address of the Deccan Sabha, mimeographed, qtd. in Bandyopadhyay 33)

A simple look into the lines explains well why moderate nationalism is called moderate mendicancy. First of all it openly acknowledges its inferiority; in the second place what it strives to suggest is not “any practical or tactical strategy” (Seth 98) but a nervous

apprehension and finally what it intends is nothing but a polite reiteration of what the petitioned is happy to ignore with a willing suspension of remembrance. Most of the times, this polite cravings and prayers went so far as to betray the basic spirit of national protest and resulted in mere submission and welcomed subjugation. Thus Congress resolutions opposing government action or rather inaction would not ‘condemn’ but rather ‘regret’ and proposals of remedial measures would not ‘demand’ an immediate satisfaction of grievances but would only ‘suggest’ and at the most ‘urge’. The weak phraseology and submissive diction of the moderates itself exposes their lack of confidence and self respect which their extremists friends later criticized outright as “the general timidity of the Congress, its glossing over hard names... its fear of too deeply displeasing our masters” (Zaidi A.M., 1976, 249).

Of course the moderate leaders had some reasons behind their petition and prayer. As nationalists they did believe that India would be ready for self government in due course of time in future. But it is also true that they had greater faith in the concept that the British had been preparing Indians for eventual self government. Loyal, as they had been to the British up to their marrow, they had been more than confident about the present and forthcoming benefits of the British rule in India and did never hesitate to enumerate this publicly. Against the charge that Congress represented a small and unrepresentative elite section that had managed somehow to remain unaffected by the exploitation of British rule, Badruddin Tyabji in his 1887 presidential address to the Madras Congress countered that it was this elite only which had the ability to recognize the ‘blessing of the British rule’:

Who...will better appreciate advantages of good roads, railways, telegraphs and post offices, schools, colleges and universities, hospitals, good laws and impartial Courts of Justice? – the educated natives or the ignorant peasants of this country?

(Zaidi A.M. 1985-89, vol.1, 44)

And Surendranath in the fourth annual session of Indian National Congress at Allahabad, expressed in clear terms the verdict of this chosen elite group:

The people of India are at present neither asking for, nor thinking of representative government, but what they do insist on is that an appreciable portion of the advisers of Government should be their elected representatives. (Zaidi 1976, vol. 1, 249)

The people of India never demanded that. In fact, they did not know how to demand anything. They required nothing more than '*roti, mocan, kapra*' and a little peace in any age. The British rule denied that too. This caused grievance. But who had been trusted to convey that grievance and to seek solution by logical and rightful demand, did not agree to make any demand. Such loyalty was not a political tactics, but it grew into a habit. And it was ominous. Though undeniably it prepared the very ground from which protest gained its voice, moderate nationalism itself, invited the flow of criticism to its callous instinctive submissiveness. Rabindranath Tagore criticized it in this very point, as he believed in the power of truth and force of courage. He recognized the primal flaw, the Achilles' heel, so to speak, of the moderate politics, – that is, its detachment from the mass. And he desired to arouse the sleeping multitude, to enliven its latent power through spiritual and social awakening. Spirit became his primary concern not only because he was a poet, but because the heritage and history of Indian civilization convinced him that once aroused in spirit and empowered in mind, the individual can overcome all threats of further subjugation. Fire of truth, fanned by the glitter of beauty not only overwhelms the baser greed for material gain and mendicancy, but in fact prepares for an assured upsurge, for one and all, for mankind in general. Man learns to live not only for him but for others. His spirit awakens his social instinct. His social entity builds the nation. His internationality then breaks the narrow confines of nation and

emerges into the universe, creative and free. It is this abode of perpetual freedom that Tagore intended his countrymen to aspire in *Gitanjali*, No. 35:

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, ed. Sisir kumar Das, vol. 1, 53)

But the mind lost its composure. Not only the head but the entire body of the country was about to be crushed under the grind of plunder and exploitation. The grievances were not one or two, or sporadic in nature, they came in swarms from all corners of national interest and sowed the seeds of agitation.

Pointing towards the poor and exploited Indian population under the Company rule, it was assuringly declared in the 1858 Queen's Proclamation that, "In their prosperity will be our strength, in their contentment our security and in their gratitude our best reward". But the Queen's rule in reality, exposed the ruthlessness of an imperialist administration bent upon full commercial penetration of the land. In contrast to the seven famines of the first half of the nineteenth century, the second half saw as many as twenty four famines that demanded a death toll of more than two millions of people. It was, as Digby explains with data, "four

times more in number in comparison to the record of last one hundred years and four times more widespread” (106).

Still people could fight back and survive on their almost magical sustaining capacity. But to add fire to the fuel, export of raw materials rose by leaps and bounds, particularly in the food grain sector. The export of rice and wheat “rose from 858,000 pound in 1849, to 3.8 million pound in 1858, 7.9 million pound in 1877 and 9.3 million pound by 1901” (Dutt Rajani Palm, 105-106). This was again aggravated by the magic of ‘public debt’, which is well caught and exposed by Podder in his analysis:

When in the year 1858 the government of India passed from the East India Company to the British Government, the latter incurred a debt of 70 million pound. But the wellbeing of the people of India was so well looked after that it got doubled in 18 years, from 70 million to 140 million; and by 1900 it reached the menacing figure of 224 million pound. This vast amount accrued and continued to accrue from the fantastic practice of charging to India every conceivable and inconceivable charge, even for items of expenditure with which the colonial administration in India could not have the remotest connection, such for example, as the reception given to the Sultan of Turkey in London, maintenance by England of Diplomatic establishments in Persia and China, war on Abyssinia, etc. (2)

No doubt, introduction of industrialization, advent of railways, roadways, post and telegraph and a strong administration provided Indian society at this period, with a necessary jerk and jolt, dragged it out of an age old slumber into motion and commotion of a big, vast world. But the ulterior motive, from the British point of view, was not reformation of India, but business. The real intention was to “make commercial penetration of India by the English manufacturers easier” (Dutt Rajani Palm 112) which could then be comfortably used to

tighten the grip of Empire. The plan succeeded. England in an electrifying speed, climbed up the peak of prosperity, while the naïve, destitute people of India, dependant upon the soil but hard-hit by draughts and famines, plagued by poverty and debt, ravaged by colonial exploitation, had been thrown into a ditch of suffering and despair, and awaited miserably the first glimmer of nationalism and resistance., which came in 1857 Mutiny and then in regular installments till 1907 Surat Congress, after which extremism became an open route.

But while British exploitation itself turned out to be the melting pot and anvil that erased all individual marks of difference and brought many Indias within the country under one canopy, the British historians and political activists did not agree to acknowledge it. They clung to and harped on the old monotonous tune that India did not have the potential to emerge as a nation. The central exponent of this thought, Sir John Strachey, ex-lieutenant of the united provinces, remarked:

This is the first and most essential thing to learn about India that there is not and never was an India, or even any country of India, possessing, according to European ideas, any sort of unity, physical, political, social and religious; no Indian nation, no people of India of which we hear so much. (*India*, 5)

With regard to the possibility of the growth of Indian nationality, Strachey was equally pessimistic: “We might with as much reason look forward to a time when a single nation will have taken the place of the various nations of Europe” (ibid, 8).

What Strachey said had been continuously echoed and re-echoed by nearly all Anglo Indian writers and administrators down to Lord Ronaldshay, ex-Governor of Bengal , who elaborately explained the situation:

Anyone seeking to understand the problems with which British statesmanship is confronted in India is foredoomed to failure unless he first learns to think of India

not as a country, but as a continent, and of the Indian people not as a nation, but as a vast and complex mosaic of peoples, differing from one another as widely as do the countries in which they dwell. To think of India as one would think of Great Britain or of France is to think of a purely imaginary India which has no existence in fact; if an analogy from Europe were drawn at all, it is to be found in Europe itself, and not in any one of its homogeneous nations . . . common language, common faith, common institutions-have never been found in India. Successive waves of invasion through centuries of time have left upon her soil fragments of many of the races of mankind, widely differing in speech, in religion, in custom, in tradition – races which have never fused but remained to this day peoples apart. (*An Eastern Miscellany*, 191-193)

But while following the major premise of this argument, the later historians belonging to the same school, had been careful enough to notice some changes also. Thus, Charles Wentworth Dilke, writing in 1890 cautioned: “While India is in many matters stationary beyond the possibility of European comprehension, it is in other matters a country of rapid changes”

(*Problems of Greater Britain*, 403).

The chief operating force behind these ‘rapid changes’ of course was, “the glimmering of the idea of nationality” which Dilke easily found “in India at the present time” (ibid, 406). The glimmer, gaining rapid blaze in a short time, opened new vistas of controversy. On the one hand, though a little bit weakened, there was still a conviction about the impossibility of India ever becoming a nation and hence her perpetual need to have a strong hand of foreign power, the pressure of some external force, that only could save her from automatic disintegration. On the other, it was argued with equal, if not more, vehemence that such disintegration would never come “as India has either become or is on a fair way to becoming a united nation” (Dutt S, 10), and the British rule, at the most, has played the role

of a *dues ex machina* only, in its formation. The 'external pressure' factor was neither required nor welcome anymore, except to reveal its hidden agenda of plunder and oppression.

The former view received a new interpretation from Sir John Seely who from the chair of Modern History in the University of Cambridge, drew attention to some special characteristics of British rule in India, especially on the basis of the following report from Ronaldshay's analysis:

With a handful of British Civilians and an army of 76000 Europeans and 159000 Indian troops, Great Britain governs and secures against invasion a population of 231,000,000 people, scattered over 983,000square miles of territory, while she also maintains close relations with the great ruling chiefs of feudatory states, whose joint population amounts to be 63,000,000 and whose area totals 656,000square miles. (*An Eastern Miscellany*, 192)

Seely, then, suggested that, British supremacy in India cannot be accounted for by military prowess – the true cause of it is to be searched for, not in the might of British rule itself, "but in the political condition of people who unresistingly accept it" (*Expansion of England*, 219).

Seely's opinion instantly reveals the insufficiency and limitations of moderate political strategy or mendicancy, and simultaneously confirms the British arrogance, which is unwilling to tolerate any claim of Indian nationalism what so ever. India is only a congeries of people, and therefore, as Seely says, "ought not be classed with such names as England or France, which correspond to nationalities, but rather with such as Europe, marking a group of nationalities which have chanced to obtain a common name owing to some physical separation (ibid, 220). This being the case, Seely is firm in his conviction, "India does not seem to have any jealousy of the foreigner, because India had no sense whatever of national

unity, because there was no India, and therefore, properly speaking, no foreigner” (ibid., 203).

But what is most improper and particularly interesting to notice here, is that, Seely and his fellow historians could not maintain their logical stand very long and themselves admitted that India was not like England, it was like Europe that accommodated ‘a group of nationalities’. Thus by their own opinion, national feeling was not unknown to India altogether. Her problem was how to assemble and weld together the diverse scraps of nationalist sentiments of various regions and peoples into a broader unity. She was, or is, only, too vast to build a nation.

But this also appears to be an unsustainable logic, mainly for two reasons. On the one hand, it is to be reckoned with as a persisting phenomenon of Indian History. India has learnt by experience to bear with that. On the other, many will agree that “welding of regional interests” in fact, has remained an unaccomplished task in India even after formal independence and still it troubles her profusely. Even though a large part of her Geographical territory had been amputated by the British surgeons, time and again, to reduce her vastness (so that British administration could maintain a tight grip and control), all problems have not been solved. True solution does not come that way. But India quickly mastered the art of turning chaos into a chorus. Vastness could not spoil her age old lessons of tolerance and acceptance. Her basic desire to respect ‘many’ and still to bind them together into ‘one’ made her a nation. Following that path, a country of innumerable languages and races and religions, India, in spite of her manifold diversity in culture, caste or climate, is still a nation, the largest one in the present world. Diversity has never encroached upon but enriched her colours of freedom.

This once again, proves then that, there is no and cannot be any, cut and dried formula of nation building. History and Politics are subjects not to be measured by the

carpenter's "two feet rule". Those who attempt to measure them by applying the rough and ready tests of *unities*, do forget that when applied to the socio economic fields of a different country, belonging to a different and opposite part of the globe, race, language or religion appear in altogether different connotations and therefore, offer unidentical and unmatched explanations and annotations. For, what Nationalism means, itself is vastly unsettled and uncertain. After all heroic attempts at analysis and definition, it has not been possible to reduce it to anything more than a mere sentiment, as Ramsay Muir seems to point out in his study *Nationalism and Internationalism*:

Nationality then, is an elusive idea, difficult to define. It cannot be tested or analyzed by formulae, such as German professors love to do. Least off all must it be interpreted by the brutal and childish doctrine of racialism. Its essence is a sentiment, and in the last resort we can only say that a nation is a nation because its members passionately and unanimously believe it to be so. (45)

But it is also true that any attempt to play with the sentiment and to ignore it, has always and invariably been proved dangerous. "History is not over and in Politics we are making it: even if all human history is only a tragedy of good intentions, the fifth act still remains unwritten" – the warning of Delisle Burns's in *Political Ideals* (27) sounds true for all and all ages to come.

The same mistake, however, has been done by Benedict Anderson. Anderson has given a different definition of nation by calling it an 'imagined community' living in a 'homogenous empty time' and constructed through the influence of print capitalism, that is, news papers and novels, and by such other political – cultural apparatus of modernity as census, maps and museums (Bandyopadhyay xvi). Obviously, he considers nationalism to be a modern phenomenon, "inspired by Enlightenment and Romanticism, incubated in an economic environment enriched by industrial capitalism and as the product of particular

historical process in Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries which led to the transformation of the absolutist dynastic empires into democratic nation-states” (ibid., xvi). Nations and nationalism in Europe thus came to be integrally associated with the notions of states with fixed demarcation of territorial boundaries, sovereignty with full authority upon that territory, power with desire to extend that authority as far as possible in industrial and economic, political, military and geographical fields and before all and above all with an insatiable desire of self-determination that like a bud caused the full blossom of nationalism and then like an intoxicating fragrance enveloped it to subdue all frowns and itches, both internal as well as external, under its colourful petals. This post Enlightenment European phenomenon then, crossed the seas and traveled to Asia and Africa through colonial extension of empires and facilitated the ‘making’ of nation in these regions by, as Anderson suggests, the colonial regime that brought Western Education and introduced print-capitalism and created an intelligentsia “who had been crucial to the process of imagining a nation” (ibid, xviii). Assistance came from various corners; colonial cartographers drew territorial boundaries, the census operations counted population and other resources, transforming the ‘fuzzy communities’ into ‘enumerated communities’ (Kaviraj 39), the colonial museums reinvented their antiquities, and enriched by all these, the colonial intelligentsia chose their models, Anderson claims, from the ‘official nationalisms’ of European or American histories, which ‘were copied, adopted, and improved upon’ (Anderson 140). No doubt, this is a sly way of modulating anticolonial resistance and it is well exposed by Partha Chatterjee when he observes with sarcasm that if the West imagines nationalism, imagines the ways of subjugating us for centuries and again, imagines the process of our anticolonial resistance too, then what is left for us to imagine any more:

If nations in the rest of the world have to choose their imagined community from certain ‘modular’ forms already made available to them by Europe and the

Americas, what do they have left to imagine? History, it would seem, has decreed that we in the postcolonial world shall only be perpetual consumers of modernity. Europe and the Americas, the only true subjects of history, have thought out on our behalf not only the script of colonial enlightenment and exploitation, but also that of our anticolonial resistance and postcolonial misery. Even our imagination must remain forever colonized. *(The Nation and Its Fragments, 4)*

Chatterjee explains the difference of Indian Nationalism from the Western models by dividing the nation's space into an inner spiritual space where the colonized nation seeks its sovereignty in spite of subjection in the outer public space where it might have undergone Western modular influence:

The material is the domain of the outside, of the economy and of statecraft, of science and technology, a domain where the West had provided its superiority and the East had succumbed. In this domain, then, Western superiority had to be acknowledged, and its accomplishments carefully studied and replicated. The spiritual, on the other hand, is an 'inner' domain bearing the essential marks of cultural identity. The greater one's success in imitating Western skills in the material domain, therefore, the greater is the need to preserve the distinctness of one's spiritual culture. This formula is, I think, a fundamental feature of anticolonial nationalism in Asia and Africa. *(Ibid., 6)*

The need to enliven this spiritual culture has been well acknowledged and responded by Rabindranath Tagore in his works.

The existing spiritual culture of India, in fact, was most helpful in this enterprise. For, as Sekhar Bandyopadhyay shows, 'here' the working classes did not internalize the ethos of capitalism and the peasants, even when they participated in nationalist events, had very

different understanding of those events derived from their dissimilar life experiences. Politics ‘here’, did not mean the same thing to all people (xix). It had very different meaning even to postcolonial rulers. In his reading of precolonial India and the Indian Ocean politics, Sugata Bose has drawn attention to the “looser, cascading political structures and espoused, laired and shared sovereignty with lower level leaders” (xvii). In such a political system it was difficult to have firm territorial boundaries of states. “A generalized cartographic anxiety over territorial possession” Bose points out, was new and a corollary of colonial rule (*Nation as Mother*, 54). Irfan Habib, the modern cartographer of Mughal India, also shares this opinion when he admits that “the administrative and political boundaries of the Mughal Empire were altered so frequently that taking the most recent one gives “a false picture of exactitude” (*An Atlas of the Mughal Empire*, x).

The British administrators captured this very issue and marked India as a “mere geographical expression”, that too, a creation of the British Empire. Imperial observers like V. Chirol wrote in 1910 that India was

...inhabited by a great variety of nations...there are far more absolutely distinct languages spoken in India than in Europe; that there are far more profound racial difference between the Maharatta and the Bengalee than between the German and the Portuguese...and that caste has driven into Indian society lines of far deeper cleavage than any class distinctions that have survived in Europe. (Qtd. in Nanda 37)

But what has been prescribed by these critics to overcome the loose, fragmented, chaos in the material domain of Indian Nationalism, viewed from another angle, appears to be nothing better than a threat to homogenize the cultural diversity and complicated ethnic richness of pre-colonial existence where search for patterns of congruence between ‘state, nation and nationalism’ can be counterproductive if pushed too hard (Smith Antony D 1).

For India does not mean a marked population, possessing a historic similarity, shared myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a single economy and common rights and duties for all members and these “ idols of the cave, we gather from our study of Western political science generalized from the history of Europe”, as S. Dutt suggests, “ have to be shattered in the very approaches to our subject” (15). But in spite of her lack in spread of education and a common desire of self determination, what saved India was her spiritual imagination that bore nationalism to every corner, “permeating across various levels of popular consciousness” (Chakraborty Dipesh, 172-79). One classic example of the process, is the formation of the nationalist iconography of Bharat Mata or Mother India. The first time the idea operated in the public space was, Bandyopadhyay informs us, “through the performance of a play at the Hindu Mela on 19th February, 1873, by a group involving Jyotirindranath and Satyendranath Tagore, Kiran Chandra Banerjee and Sisir kumar Ghosh” (xix). Then in 1882, in his novel *Anandamath*, Bankim Chandra invoked the image of the mother Goddess into the discourse of nationalism. The mother provides shelter for all of her children and it is the duty of her children, to protect the honour of the mother and to free her from chains. This ideology was extensively used by the nationalists in the early years of twentieth century and Tagore, as it will be seen later, wrote many songs on the theme. Then in 1905, Abanindranath Tagore painted the famous water colour image of Bharatmata, explicitly representing the motherland. In the subsequent years the mother was put inside a map of India, connecting her to the territory and thereby transforming, as Sumathi Ramaswami argues, “the disenchanting cartographic space of India delineated by colonial rule, into a sacred geo-body of the nation, or mother land, for which her devotees were now expected to give their lives” (152-89). No model was sought or provided, no body copied or improved upon anything that can be seen as a foreign resource. But the simple spiritual extension of the connotations of mother-goddess erased all differences and built a common

platform where the educated intelligentsia and illiterate masses assembled together and undertook a common resolve of freeing themselves and the mother land. It was indeed beyond the power of print capitalism to achieve such massive impact.

It is in this spiritual search for culture and cultural identity that Indian nationalism expressed its distinction from the Western territorial and political concept of the nation. And it is here that Rabindranath appeared with his unique theory and practice.

Since the Middle Ages, in Europe the journey of history has deposited a political aggregate, out of which somehow emanated a sense of oneness, to form a nation. But the matter did not end there, rather itself provided the impetus for a new kind of struggle among those nations for command and control upon the existing wealth. The fire set on every field, political and economic, territorial, social, racial or cultural and its blaze played havoc in the two consecutive world wars. Resistance also originated here, in the dire need to overcome this suicidal competition of self determination, that ultimately sought to replace the germ of blind nationalist arrogance by the liberal and wider concept of internationalism that was based on inclusion and acceptance. The mission was to arrive at a universal code of political principle from existing states and structures. The anti nationalist campaign did not accept nationality as a necessary or inevitable stage in the evolution of human aggregation. Rather, the existing order of nation states in Europe was merely seen as a “special product of history” and it was never believed to be necessary or mandatory for other peoples or communities to attain to or pass through the same stage.

The Indian exponent of this resistance is Rabindranath Tagore. “The Exclusiveness which nationality implies is abhorrent to him, and the geographical segregation of humanity into different nations is to him futile and meaningless under modern conditions of progressive scientific intercommunication” (Dutt S. 3). He makes his position quite clear when he says:

During the evolutions of nations, the moral culture of brotherhood was limited by geographical boundaries, because at that time those boundaries were true. Now they have become imaginary lines of tradition divested of the qualities of real obstacles. So the time has come when man's moral nature must deal with this great fact with all seriousness or perish. (*Nationalism*, 101-2)

It will be wrong from this to assume that Tagore did not have any patriotic feeling or sentiment for his motherland, chained under servitude. He expressed his dislike, wrath and protest time and again and never thought twice to jump at the Swadeshi movement. Apart from his various socio-political activities to uplift the poor and backward sections of the communities through self-help projects, he did strive to consolidate the varied interests of the fragmented multitude and contributed through his innumerable poems, songs, articles and essays, plays, stories, paintings and novels to the nationalist causes, intending a firm and organic growth of confidence and self-esteem among the people, a unique sense of oneness and harmony, shared, preserved and enjoyed equally by all in the collective spiritual domain.

A nation is not made overnight. Its impulses, fragmented and pushed back again and again over a considerable period of historical time, under various types of cross-cultural interests in the collective consciousness of various groups of peoples who, however, had always tried to assemble themselves together in all sorts of mutual adjustment, by instinct wait long for the birth of a common desire, intension and wishes. Then a shared philosophy, history, territory, culture and language come into force and each in its own way polish the rough surface and cure the uneven irregularities and contribute to the formation process. Still everything is not done and it has to wait for the final hour when a call arrives out of a dire necessity. All the people united and inspired in their oneness, jump together at a common cause, fight and emerge victorious. The final challenge, having been overcome, a nation is born. And the process does not end there. Then the challenge is to overcome the narrow

interests of a nation and to transcend narrow nationalist bias through a concern for the interests of all nations, that gradually leads to internationalism. Of course there is no hard and fast rule to pass through all these steps in their fixed order and duration, but in most cases, this is the general process.

Tagore does participate in the making of the nation in India; and then moves forward to embrace humanism in general; his works and words, ideas, tunes and colours, do shape the spiritual domain at home and then carry its message to the world. The subsequent chapters strive to investigate and make an estimate of his contribution to the marked project, between the marked years.
