Rabindranath Tagore has initiated a new era in Pre Independent Indian English Literature. Tagore's literary genius has won the universal recognition and fetched an everlasting prominence to Indian English literature. He succeeded in liberating Indian literature from its obnoxious traditional framework. His creative genius has shaped and influenced Indian renaissance in the 19th and early 20th century. Rita D. Sil in *Profile of Rabindranath Tagore in World Literature* (2005) pays tribute to his creative genius which fetched global appreciation and recognition. Niharranjan Ray in *Three Novels of Tagore* (1961) hails him as the Leonardo-da-Vinci of Indian renaissance and sees the reconciliation Indigenous and western traditions. Tagore's encyclopedic mind has unfurled many facets of his personality as philosopher, poet, prose writer, playwright, literary critic, historian, educationist, musician, composer and enlightener.

Tagore was responsible for the culmination of Renaissance in Bengal. The renaissance in Bengal was a unique blend of religious, social, scientific, cultural and literary reformation. During this period Bengal has witnessed an intellectual awakening from the socio-religious, cultural and multi-faceted contributions of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Sri Aurobindo, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Swami Vivekananda. Satyendra Nath Bose, Jagadish Chandra Bose, Bankim Chandra
Chattopadhyay and Rabindranath Tagore. The renaissance of Bengal was often compared with the renaissance of Europe by Keshub Chandra Sen, Bipin Chandra Pal and M.N. Roy. It is the renaissance that has placed Bengal far ahead of the rest of India. The role played by Bengal in awakening the rest of India is often compared with the role of Italy during the European renaissance.

In European history ‘Renaissance’ is referred in the context of the revival of Greco-Roman culture emulated by the European countries during the culturally barren medieval period. Renaissance is viewed as an attempt to study and improve the revival of antiquity through secular and worldly approaches to thought. Renaissance in Bengal was associated with reformation and national revivalism during 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. Nitish Sengupta in History of the Bengali Speaking People (2002) says that the Renaissance in Bengal began with socio cultural protest made by Raja Ram Mohan Roy and reached the pinnacle of celestial intellectualism in the contribution of Tagore. Despite the contribution of many stalwarts, Renaissance in Bengal has embodied unique intellectual and creative output with Tagore as the culmination. Referring to the literary renaissance, Charles Andrews has observed that if Ram Mohan Roy is like the root of the tree of literature, Debendranath Tagore may be compared to its strong and vigorous stem and Rabindranath to its flower and fruit (cited in Mohammad Quayum. Tagore, Rabindranath. Literary Encyclopedia. 2004).

Humanism of Tagore is an aspect of scholarly probe for many of the scholars. Humanism as a body of literary knowledge and linguistic skill based on
the 'revival of good letters' had profound social and political consequences in transforming the conservative social order of Indian society. From the ancient pre-Socratic Greek times of Thales of Miletus and Xenophanes of Colophon, Anaxagoras, Democritus and Thucydides, there were attempts to explain human reason. In Asia around 1000 B.C, there was human centred philosophy known as Lokayata system of Indian philosophy, much before Gautama Buddha had expressed skeptical attitude toward the supernatural. During the Renaissance period it became an intellectual movement. German historian Georg Voigt (1827-91) identified Petrarch as the first Renaissance humanist. During the modern period particularly in the 19th and 20th centuries Humanism was represented by Galileo and Erasmus. This was also carried out by many American thinkers and British Victorian novelists. Thomas Paine father of American human rights called for 'theophilanthropism' initiating the phase of religion of humanity. George Eliot Victorian novelist, influenced by Auguste Comte's Positivism along with her companions George Henry Lewes, Harriet Martineau propagated and consolidated secular religion of humanity asking for the consideration of all forms of religion including religious humanism. Modern humanists such as Carl Sagan hold that humanity must seek truth through reason. In the contemporary perspective, Humanism is perceived as comprehensive life stance that upholds human reason, ethics and justice.

Rabindranath Tagore played a very significant role in promulgating humanism in the beginning of the 20th century. There are many factors that shaped
his personality and the ideals of humanism. The period and environment in which Tagore has lived played a crucial role in carving the spirit of Nationalism. Tagore was born in a period when Bengal was hit by strong socio literary cultural movements. The period of religious reformation led by Raja Ram Mohan Roy had a great impact over Tagore’s personality. The Bengal literary revolution initiated by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya played vital role in molding the social ideals of Tagore. The National movement in its initial stages gave a voice to the minds of the people in asserting their personality. Tagore’s participation in the National movement and the critical interrogation of Nationalism has become a great source for understanding his humanism.

These socio literary and cultural movements were revolutionary and Tagore’s members of the family were either initiators or promulgators of these movements. Tagore’s father Maharshi Debendranath Tagore was an important member of Bramha Samaj and Tagore has received a great deal of inspiration from the activities of Bramha Samaj. The ideology of Bengal Renaissance was aptly represented by Bramha Samaj in all the fields of social reformation. It has supported the abolitions of Caste system, dowry system, emancipation of women and the improvement of educational system. Other important movements of social reformation such as Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidya Sagar’s widow remarriage movement were also attached to the movements of Bramha Samaj. Tagore was deeply impressed by these social, cultural and religious movements. In his tribute to Raja Ram Mohan Roy on his death centenary on 18th Feb.1933, he observed:
“Ram Mohan Roy inaugurated the modern age in India…
In this dark gloom of India’s degeneration, Ram Mohan Roy rose up, a luminous star in the firmament of India’s history, with prophetic purity of vision and unconquerable heroism of soul… He is the great path maker of this century who has removed ponderous obstacles that impeded our progress at every step and initiated us into…”

(Ram Mohan Roy. An essay read by the poet on 18th February 1933 in Rabindra Rachanavalli, Vol.xi, W.B. Government Publication, Baisakh, 25, 1368 B.S.)

Romain Roland has appropriately captured the influence of Ram Mohan Roy on Tagore and his observation justifies this perspective: “This man of Gigantic personality whose name to our shame is not inscribed in the pantheon of Europe as well as of Asia, sank his plough shear in the soul of India and sixty years of labour left her transformed…and out of the earth of Bengal has come forth the harvest… A harvest of works and men. And from his inspiration sprang Tagore’s” (The Life of RamaKrishna. 1986.108).

Critic of National Movement

Tagore was a genuine critic of Western imperialism and condemned the colonial policies of British for ruining Indian cultural ethos. But he openly accepted the influence of western civilization on his personality. He has admitted that he was inspired by the spirit of social service and humanism prevailing in the West. He was of the view that the vitality in Eastern culture is either a response or
a reaction to western culture. He extolled the western ideals of law, order and freedom. Gobinda Prasad Sharma while capturing Tagore’s genuine appreciation of Western culture in Nationalism in Indo Anglian Fiction (1978) says: “The Study of British history as well as of the histories of other European nations taught Indians the need for Individual liberty or dignity of man as man, irrespective of God or the King. It also taught the value of constitutional law and the evils of the absolute sovereignty of the king” (6). It is from this perception; Tagore’s criticism of nationalism has to be understood. His idea of nationalism has caught the intellectual elite across the globe. His eloquence and passionate espousal of the civilization of the east has drawn the appreciable ideology for East. He was against crucifying the spirit of Nationalism within the geographical boundaries of a Nation. Much before the post colonial critics have demystified the myth of the nation and elucidated the cultural forms of nationalism, Tagore has identified the fallacies in the ideology of nationalism. His popular novels *Gora* and *The Home and the World* are the exemplifications for his ideas of Nationalism. The thematic aspects of these two novels in the light of Post colonial Nationalism will be elaborated in the concerned chapters.

RELIGIOUS INFLUENCES (UPANISHADS, Bauls AND MYSTIC SAINTS)

Drawing immense inspiration from his father Debendranath Tagore, Tagore has derived equal inspiration from Hindu Upanishads. In his Preface to *Sadhana*, Tagore has accepted that his family used to worship the Upanishads. This is
substantiated by one of the famous critics of Tagore Dr. S.B. Dasgupta who found similarity between the mind of Tagore and the ideas of Upanishads. But it is to be perceived that Tagore has not followed the dogmas of Upanishads blindly, Though he was influenced, he only drew inspiration from them. Some critics are of the view that even if Tagore has not read Upanishads, one would naturally find the similarity between the mind of Tagore and the Upanishads. But Tagore's biographer Prabat Kumar Mukherjee presents a contradictory view of this perspective. He is of the opinion: “Nothing has influenced him more, both consciously and as an undercurrent of his thought than the Upanishads… I maintain that Rabindranath’s entire life is only an evolution and development of his Upanishadic education” (S.B. Dasgupta. Upanishada Patobhumiky rabindra Manas. 1968.4). Dasgupta has established the similarity between the mind of Tagore and the mentality of Upanishadic seers. The Truth which Tagore has practiced is intuitive; it is not borrowed from any philosophy. But some of the critics portrayed Tagore’s humanism as a spiritualistic form influenced by the content of Upanishads. It is from this perception Tagore’s sublimation from humanism has become the conceptualization of divine presence in every living species of this world.

Tagore is greatly influenced by the life and culture of Bauls. Bauls are a sect in the villages of Bengal. Away from modern education and culture, Bauls are confined to the lower rank of society. But their philosophy of life is immensely rich. Their perspective of life is Anthropocentric. To them Man is the centre of life
and culture. Tagore in *Creative Unity* says: “Bauls have no images, temples, scriptures or ceremonials, who declare in their songs the divinity of Man and express for him intense feelings of life. Coming from men, who are unsophisticated, living a simple life in obscurity, it gives us a clue to the inner meaning of all religions. For it suggests that these religions are never about a God of cosmic force, but rather about the God of human personality” (45). Their crusade against casteism, idol worship, rites, rituals, untouchability has influenced Tagore which made him carve simple characters who love mankind in many of his novels.

Tagore was equally influenced by the saint poet Kabir. Kabir was an iconoclast and a relentless debunker of rituals and fanaticism. Kabir’s contempt for religious exclusivism has impressed Tagore and he has echoed almost the voice of Kabir in condemning obnoxious religious practices: “He is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground and where the path-maker is breaking stones” (Gitanjali. 22). Tagore extended the frontiers of Kabir’s message by translating one hundred songs of Kabir into English. All the translated songs by Tagore have exhortations against idol worship, religious rituals and caste discrimination. All the songs contain Kabir message of religious synthesis and love.

Buddhism had its influence over Tagore in all its pervasiveness. Buddhism which promulgated the equality of human beings, morality, religion and faith had immense impact on Tagore in reformulating the ideals of humanism. Conceiving Buddha as the great man, Tagore is of the firm opinion that the elements of
sacrifice, forgiveness, kindness, non violence, compassion, love, universal 
fraternity, unity and peace have greatly influenced him. Paying reverential 
homage Buddha Tagore in Buddhadev has said: “On the auspicious day of Buddha 
Purnima, on the birth anniversary, I offer my pranam to him whom I considered 
from the core of my heart as the greatest man” (473). Tagore found that the 
preachings of Buddha transcended the average ideals and established absolute 
chemistry with the ordinary world.

ASPECTS OF HUMANISM REFLECTED IN TAGORE’S NOVELS

Amelioration of Women

Tagore offered a genuine critique of the glorious past of India, while emulating the 
worthy ideals of the West. The feminist perspectives of Tagore espousing the 
amelioration of women are appropriately reflected in the portrayal of women 
characters in his novels. Understanding the Western culture in a much better light, 
Tagore displayed the right perspectives of the thematic concerns of significant 
Victorian women novelists like George Eliot. Capturing the tremors of Virginia 
Wolf’s A Room of One’s Own, Simon De Bovouear’s The Second Sex, Tagore has 
excelled his contemporaries in a very bold and realistic portrayal of women than 
the male characters in all his novels. Krishan Kriplani in Rabindranath Tagore: A 
Biography (1962) says: “...inexhaustible, sympathy and admiration for Bengali 
women but little for the males of his race. This is more true of his novels than of 
his short stories”(156). Infact it is perceived that Tagore’s empathy for the 
conditions of women has paved the way for humanism. Till the time of Tagore,
no writer has probed and offered an in-depth analysis of the circumstances in which women were destined to lead their lives. It is only Tagore who elevated the spirit and life of women to the celestial heights. The early marriage of the girls and the unbearable widowhood was a gruesome and unbearable social reality of Tagore's period. His novel *Binodini* has depicted the emptiness enshrined in widowhood and the frustration and passionate feelings of widows in a heartrending and intelligent way. Tagore has probed the depths of socio familial concept of the socially unsanctioned love in the novel *Broken Nest*. The novel has succeeded in depicting the extramarital love from the perspective of frustrated wife. His novel *The Wreck* has portrayed the bitter consequences of the outdated arranged marriage system. *Gora* has dealt with the changes that education brings into the lives of women and the conflicts between love and orthodoxy, family norms and individual freedom are interrogated. *The Home and the World* comes out with an exhortation to women who are ignorant of the worldly wisdom. *Chaturanga* has unfurled the life of unyielding rebel widow and questions the sagacity of custom, convention and tradition. *Four Chapters* captures the emotions of a young lady caught in the web of terrorism which bestows merciless death on her.

Tagore's great regard and respect for women is evident in all his novels. He has unfurled the dialectics of the different images of women as a mother, suffering daughter in law, frustrated wife, widow, traditional wife and modern woman. Shiv Gajrani S. Ram in *Rabindranath Tagore* has observed that to Tagore: "woman is
endowed with the passive qualities of chastity, modesty, devotion and power of self sacrifice in a greater measure than man is” (19). All the women characters of Tagore are the epitomes of rare qualities and their travesty from innocence to experience emphasize a great change in their perspectives.

In all his intellectual sublimity, Tagore has presented two kinds of women; the mother kind and the beloved kind. To him, women of mother kind are like the rainy season that brings the gift of water, fruit, tempers, heat, peace and happiness. The beloved kinds are like the spring that brings ecstasy and unspeakable joy to men and the society. Tagore carves an ideal woman who is a synthesis of this appropriate combination of qualities. But unfortunately the absence of these qualities in the society creates conflict in life and society. Tagore has portrayed this element with an in depth analysis of woman’s heart in Two Sisters.

So, the aspect of the amelioration of women effectively and intelligently presented by Tagore in most of his novels is an authentic illustration of Humanism. Humanism in all its multiplicity is manifested in the novels of Tagore and the depiction of the amelioration of women is the best exemplification for a scholarly consideration.

THE INFLATION OF MODERNISM

Tagore was against blind emulation of tradition. He was also against embracing too much of modernity. In his essay on Nationalism Tagore has observed: “True Modernism is freedom of mind, not slavery of taste. It is independence of thought and action, not tutelage under European school masters.
It is science but not its wrong application in life" (75). With the spirit of
modernism, Tagore resisted the adherence to religious forms and rituals. Tagore
himself has said about the religious and social ostracization, he has experienced as
a result of denouncing the traditional practices of religion: "my country men in
Bengal thought him ( Debendranath Tagore) almost as bad as a Christina if not
worse. We were completely ostracized, which probably saved me from another
disaster, that of imitating our own past" (Anthony X Soares in Rabindranath
Tagore Lectures and Addresses. 1980. 8). Tagore developed a rational and
sympathetic understanding of Western values. He was well aware of the evils that
follow from the mechanical subscription to the western values. He was cautious
about the depletion of native culture when it is forced into the mould alien culture.
He was prepared to accommodate and incorporate cultural values from any other
source. As a pioneer of Indian renaissance and awakening, Tagore was willing to
accept the challenges without giving up the heritage of India's past. Tagore has
enriched his universal outlook by imbibing the positive traits in Ram Mohan Roy's
attempt to evolve a faith of his own which is a combination of East and West.
Tagore in The Spirit of Japan exhibited a high appreciation of Ram Mohan Roy:
"He stood alone in his day for India's union with the world on the basis of
humanity and that with a wonderful breadth of heart and intellect he accepted the
west without renouncing the East" (Lecture delivered at Keio Gajuka University.
1916. 2).
Tagore’s visit to England at the age of seventeen also played a significant role in influencing his mind. After his visit to England, Tagore delved into the dialectics of Western literature and thought. But this has not made him to denounce completely Indian philosophy. He was always under the constant conflict of the influence of two cultures which has resulted into the perfect combination of East and West. This was perceived as a fallacy and ambiguity of Tagore by many critics. But eventually, his deep respect and dignity for the individual projected him as a great admirer of Indian philosophy and western intellectual energy. It is on these lines; Tagore advocated modern democracy and scientific spirit of the west.

Tagore has emphasized on individual endeavour and freedom. He accepted innovations and declared that evolution is the law of life. His was of the view that it is only through evolution the value of modernity can be appreciated. He felt that each country and community with its peculiar culture needs to reshape ancient ideals to suit its own requirements. Completely conscious of the evils of ignorance, superstition, poverty and disease, Tagore demanded for an appropriate combination of east and west. He vehemently rejected the simplistic formulation of western materialism and condemned the Indian attitude of submission to fate which is inimical to the progress of man. All his novels have condemned the orthodoxical practices of Indian culture and equally condemned the imitation of western concept of nationalism.
Tagore has exposed the dichotomy involved in India’s glorious past. In the process of interpreting India’s past history and civilization, Tagore has warned the historians against the emphasis on politics. The problems of India were cultural and social. He remarked that in the Western Countries State formed the crux of National life in contrast to the absence of State in India. The meeting of the divergence of cultures went on unabatedly for many centuries. The problem of India is to evolve a happy synthesis of divergent cultures. Tagore in *Nationalism* has observed: “A true unity is like a round globe, it rolls on carrying its burden easily, but diversity is many cornered thing which has to be dragged and pushed will all force. Be it said to the credit of India that the diversity was not her own creation: she has to accept it as a fact from the beginning of her history” (115). Illustrating this perspective further, Tagore was critical that Indians have lost the genuine understanding of the history of India caught under the influence of Western education. The western historians while documenting the history of India depicted the dynastic clashes and the fanatical wars as the significant barometers that reflected the history of India. To many of the western historians, history of India is a record of invasion of one clan over another clan. Vincent Smith in *The Oxford History of India* (1958) while elucidating the history of India considered the unity and diversity of India as the greatest positive trait of India. It is to be perceived that the vision of the historian is prosaic and lacks the poetic vision. If the historians evaluate history considering the factual information and the impact
of significant religious and cultural events, the poet invests his knowledge and foresight in extricating the essence of history. Tagore has perceived the history of India with his poetic knowledge and seer wisdom. From this perspective Tagore’s perception of Indian history is a poetic perception. The perception of the poet is more historical than the perception of historian. Tagore firmly believed that the changes in the society and the welfare efforts in the country need to be perfectly documented and recorded. In fact, the efforts to ameliorate the downtrodden India reflect the inner self of India. Failing to represent inner self, history has confined to depict the clashes and conflicts. Under the impact of western education, the ideal history of India that depicts the rapid social and cultural transformation is thrown to the four winds. Capturing the social transformation in the form of history would strengthen the diversity of India. The history of India would be a history of the unity of diverse social and cultural forces. Saroj Kumar Das in Tagore and the Perennial Problems of his Philosophy (1971) strengthening the perception of Tagore rightly observes: “Tagore has vouchsafed the assurance that in the civilized society of the world, India exists as the ideal of creating unity in Diversity. To feel this oneness in oneself and in the world outside and to establish that oneness in the midst of diversity, to discover that unity by knowledge and to establish it through work, to realize that oneness through love and to preach that oneness by one’s own life, India has been doing this through many hindrances and misfortunes”(45). To bring in all the differences and diversities under the shrine of unity was the motive of Tagore’s perception. Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru’s
observation illustrates and strongly justifies the perception of Tagore. Nehru in *The Discovery of India* (1960) says: “We might say that the first cultural synthesis and fusion took place between the incoming Aryans and Dravidians, who were probably the representatives of Indus Valley civilization. Out of this synthesis and fusion grew the Indian races and the basic Indian culture, which had distinctive elements of both. In the ages that followed there came many other races. Iranians, Greeks, Parthians, Seythinas, Huns, Turks (before Islam) early Christians, Zoroastrinas: they came and were absorbed” (62). Elaborating this perspective of Nehru, Kedar Nath Mukherjee in *Political Philosophy of Rabindranath* refers to the observation of Dodwell and extols the absorbing quality of Indian culture. He says that Indian possesses astonishing inclusive capacity to absorb many races and cultures. He considers that this quality of Indian culture rejuvenates her from time to time and makes her a vibrant nation.

Tagore is of the view that the social and cultural transformation of India should be on the basis of spiritual vision and universal love. The rebuilding and regeneration of India should be on the lines that the children of India and the descendants belong to the same soil. In Tagore’s sincere conviction, Hinduism can withstand the onslaught of modern civilization if it gets rid off dogmatism and superstition. According to him a sincere religion can make no truce with idle rites and ceremonics, dogmas, superstitions, snobbery and pharisaism, orthodoxy of a priestly caste and selfishness of classes. He has aspired that the soul of India has to be delivered from these besetting sins. The principle of absorption of different
cultures has become the quintessence of India’s cultural heritage. Tagore’s vision of completely transformed India is depicted in many of his works. In the poem *Indian Pilgrimage* Tagore has described India as the original abode of all religions.

**CRITIQUE OF NATIONALISM**

According to Tagore Nationalism is a source of war, carnage, death, destruction and divisiveness. It reduces international solidarity and a larger expansive vision of the world. In most of his writings: letters, essays, lectures, poems, plays and fiction, Tagore has opposed the politics of nationalism. To him hyper nationalism finds complete realization in the ancient maxim of Thucydides “large nations do what they wish, while small nations accept what they must”. Nationalism generated by self interest paves the way for brute force. Radical nationalism acts as a opium and makes people irrational and fanatical. It blinds the sense of truth and justice and perpetuates logic of lunacy and war. To Tagore, Nationalism obstructs cycle freedom and peace. In his polemical essay on *Nationalism* he has observed that Nationalism is “a cruel epidemic of evil...sweeping over the human world of the present age and eating into its moral fibre: a terrible absurdity that is seeking to engulf humanity in a suicidal conflagration” (9). Tagore was a believer in an interactive and dialogic world. In his perception, nations should not be parochial, xenophobic, centripetal and should not be guided by self aggrandizement. From these perspectives, Tagore stands as a front runner and promulgator to many of the post colonial critics such as Frantz
Fanon, Edward Said, Noam Choamsky, Partha Chatterjee, Ranajit Guha, Benedict Anderson etc. Tagore believed in creating the other world which would create constructive alternatives of thought. He imagined Commonwealth of Nations in which every nation upholds its integrity and independence.

Tagore was an avid advocate of inter civilisational alliance. He envisioned the perfect symbiosis of east and west. He was furious with the cruelty of British colonialism and vehemently criticized the west for moral cannibalism, political expediency, militarism and war madness. But he always envisioned West and East as equal partners for creative engagement. In his letters to Charles Andrews and Foss Westcott Tagore has expressed his firm belief in greater happiness and the human spirit of significance generated in a common crusade of East and West. His fierce diatribe on Nationalism has elicited furious criticism from many of the western critics. Georg Lukacks, Hungarian Marxist critic condemned Tagore as an insignificant figure who survives from the scraps of Upanishads, Bhagavadgita and Hindu scriptures. D.H. Lawrence admonished Tagore saying that he was reverting to all forms of barbarism. Lawrence has reiterated Kipling’s imagination that European civilization stands far higher than Eastern civilization. The arrogance of the western critics generated chasm between the East and the West and created an unwarranted contempt between the two hemispheres. Tagore found that the blindness of contempt creates hopelessness and ignites ignorance. Tagore urged the west to overcome its ‘logic of egoism’ and ‘forcible parasitism’. He criticized British for their belligerency and singular passion for power and wealth
which has turned the world into cauldron of animosities. Nikhil in his popular novel *The Home and the World* criticizes the atrocities perpetrated by the British and Indian Nationalist terrorists. Nikhil strongly observes: “It was Buddha who conquered the world, not Alexander—this is untrue when stated in dry prose—oh when shall we be able to sing it? when shall all these most initiate truths of the universe overflow the pages of printed books and leap out in a sacred stream like the Ganges from the Gangotri” (134-35). The derogatory criticism of Lukacs and Lawrence fizzled out as Tagore’s assertive denunciation of Nationalism proved to be prophetic with the outbreak of two world wars and genocides conducted by British in Kenya in 1950, in Bangladesh by Pakistan in 1970s, nuclear arms race, Cuban missile crisis and contemporary global wars.

POST COLONIAL PROGNOSIS

Tagore’s Nationalism has inflated into the post colonial perspectives echoed by many post colonial critics of Nationalism. Benédict Anderson in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (1983) acknowledges that it is notoriously difficult to define nation, nationality and nationalism. He demystifies the unifying the cultural signifiers claimed as the representations of nationalism. He is of the view that the birth of Nation as a political institution is the product of European enlightenment. Ernest Gellner in *Nations and Nationalism* (1983) elucidates the reasons for the emergence of Nationalism and also the conditions for a culturally homogenous nation state. Timothy Brennan examines the role of the novel in the formation of national
consciousness. According to him novel has played a historical role in rising nationalism allowed people to imagine themselves as special community of a nation. Tagore’s objection to Nationalism is to reject the nature and purpose of Nation as an institution. Tagore who preferred creation over construction, imagination over reason, natural over the artificial considered nationalism as an organization of politics and commerce. He preferred creation as it is for itself and expresses our very being. To him Nationalism is not a spontaneous self expression of man as social being. Human relationships are naturally regulated. Men can develop ideas of life in cooperation with one another. He deemed nationalism as a recurrent threat to humanity: “It upsets man’s moral balance obscuring his human side under the shadow of soulless organization” (Nationalism. 9). According to him, Patriotism can never be place beyond truth and conscience. Tagore’s alter ego Nihkil in The Home and The World says: “I am willing to serve my country; but my worship I reserve for Right which is far greater than country. To worship my country as a God is to bring curse upon it” (29). Nikhil’s friend Sandip comes out with contrastive view claiming ‘country’s needs must be made into a God” (61). Tagore criticizes the attempts of Sandip to apotheosise nation above truth and conscience. Nationalism that breeds exclusivism and dogmatism threatens the existence of the nation and leads to self aggrandizement. Tagore says: “The Nation, with all its paraphernalia of power and prosperity, its flags and pious hymns, its blasphemous prayers in the churches, and the literary mock thunders of its patriotic bragging cannot hide the fact that the
Nation is the greatest evil for the Nation, that all its precautions are against it, and any new birth of its fellow in the world is always followed in its mind by the dread of a new peril" (17-18).

These perceptions generate that Tagore’s critique of nationalism is lofty and far-fetched and are only layered in atavistic spiritualism and romantic idealism. The sayings of Tagore are intellectually valid and are reiterated by contemporary post colonial critics. Post colonial critics concurring with the idea of nation as a dire necessity, proves the futility of the nation in reinforcing human virtues. They have proved nationalism as a weak ideology. It is vulnerable and inherently carries self destructive logic. The very methods of forming and inventing nationalism become a potent site to power discourses. Inequality and exploitation remain a daily occurrence and the aspirations of imagined communities are never answered. It is on these lines many of the post colonial critics agreed with Tagore’s view of Nationalism. Frantz Fanon’s national consciousness expressed in *The Wretched of the Earth* and *Black Skin White Masks* stands to refuted as Tagore’s perception is for all embracing crystallization of the innermost hopes of all the human beings.

**CRITIQUE OF INDIAN NATIONALISM**

Tagore vehemently has opposed the idea of ‘nation’ and the attempts of India to join the bandwagon of nationalism. He warned that India’s identity, history and culture would be nullified by the western culture under the shadow of nationalism. Born during the period of severe nationalist movements such as 1857
military uprising, 1905 Swadeshi movement, Tagore has contributed severely through lectures and patriotic songs. Though apolitical by temperament, Tagore was drawn to the crux of national movement. Appreciating Tagore’s contribution in espousing Nationalism, Ezra Pound observed: “Tagore has sung Bengal into Action” (qtd. In Desai 8). When the National movement turned violent, as a champion of non violence, Tagore was disheartened and withdrew from the national movement. In *Home and the World* and *Four Chapters* Tagore has depicted how nationalism sacrificing righteousness and conscience became a ritual of violence and exploitation. Sandip and Indranath begin as charismatic nationalist leaders but are depicted as ending their lives with self obsession and vain glory, losing sight of dispassionate and disinterested glory.

Though, Gandhi and Tagore were on friendly terms, Tagore refused to support Gandhi’s national movement. Tagore gave the title ‘Mahatma’ to Gandhi and in turn Gandhi addressed Tagore as ‘Gurudev’ and ‘poet of the world’. Romain Rolland described their relationship as the relationship between a philosopher and an apostle. Unlike Gandhi, Tagore believed that political freedom is not the right solution for India’s social problems. Tagore did not seek a miracle of political freedom upon the quick sand of social slavery. He sought freedom through steady purposeful education. He wanted an evolution within the social structure of India. To him, India’s immediate problems were social and cultural. India is a world in miniature and it should constantly strive to resolve the burden of heterogeneity. He is of the firm belief India should address the issue of Caste
and introduce a new social order by accommodating the various racial groups in India. The present social order has paved the way to militant isolation of various castes spawning cold blooded repression. He questioned the purpose of political freedom when the downtrodden are exploited ruthlessly by the elite sections. Tagore in the short story *Purification* exposed the absurdity and hypocrisy in Gandhi's *Satyagraha*. The Nationalists fervently opposed the British oppression while they were in complicit with the oppression of the downtrodden in India. The mendicant politics that refuse to tear down the customary barriers between people were of little use to the society. He wanted India to become a model of unity for the rest of the world by subscribing to the social cooperation and regeneration of the spirit. In a beautiful hymn to India titled *Bharat Tirtha*, Tagore has urged all Indians to unite across race, class and religion:

"Come, O Aryans, come, non-Aryans, Hindus and Mussulmans
Come today, O Englishmen, come, oh come, Christians!
Come O Brahmin, cleansing your mind
Join hand with all-
Come, O Downtrodden, let the burden
Of every insult be forever dispelled"

(qtd. In Quayum, 'Touched by Divine Afflatus 14)

It is only through education, eradication of poverty, modernization, cultivation of freedom of thought and modernization people would acquire freedom of mind. To him freedom of mind is the only receptacle for nourishing and cherishing the truth. Opposing Gandhi’s *Charka* and *Swaraj* Tagore wanted
India to keep itself open to the west and break the stasis through intellectual and cultural revivalism.

Tagore's critique of Nationalism was faulted for impracticality. In an imperfect world, his vision of India was unrealizable as it was too sublime. In the essay 'East and West' he criticized west for coming to India not to create and unite but with passion for power and wealth (Dutta. 206). Tagore's criticism of Nationalism, despite its failure, the transcendent thought provides a testament to all the noble and beautiful minds and strikes a chord of morality in every human being. But in the contemporary situation, India's separate identity dismantled the possible realization of Tagore's vision for 'one world' as anti colonial nationalism also invoked the seeds of cultural particularism and provincialism.

UNIVERSALISM

Tagore was in complete knowledge of the European philosophers. He evinced an authentic understanding of Ernest Renan, a French philosopher on the subject of Nationalism. According to Tagore, a nation is a soul, spiritual principle. Though the identity of race, language, religion, economic bond and geographical boundary are not indispensable, nation is an internal realization of every human being. From the perceptions of Renan, Tagore has opined that a Nation is realized by the possession of rich inheritance of past and the present with the desire to live together. The evolution of a nation is a strenuous process and it requires sacrifice and sincerity. The glory of the past, the willingness of the present and the collective spirit of the people form the basis of nationality and nation. These make
the unity of the people by the bond of love. Ernest Renan believed that common historical antecedents, traditions, customs and conventions are some of the features that constitute a nation. Elucidating Renan’s conceptualization of nation and nationality Tagore concluded that nationality is a spiritual element and the unit of man is the cardinal point of nationality. To Tagore freedom is not a mere struggle against British but it is also against prejudices and superstitions. He says: Swaraj is not our objective. Our fight is a spiritual fight- It is for Man. We are to emancipate man from the meshes” (C.F. Andrew (ed) Letters to Friend. 1928. 128).

HUMANISM, NATIONALISM & SPIRITUALISM

Critics are of the view that Tagore’s humanism and nationalism are related to spiritualism. His popularity and reputation in the wake of Gitanjali established the belief that Tagore is essentially a writer of spirituality and mysticism. Several times, Tagore has stated that his spiritual deliverance is not for renunciation. Tagore has observed: “The revelation of the infinite is...not seen in its perfection in the starry heavens but in the soul of man” (Sadhana. 41). According to him, salvation is through love, beauty and service and spiritual life is a human affair. This stands in contrast to the common perception that man’s salvation is possible only when he tears off the bonds of love and service.

According to Tagore Divinity is inherent genuine love. The eternal God rests in the abode of human heart. Salvation of the human beings comes through love. The bond of love will create ever widening consciousness to find God. In
Atma Parichay says: "To get the intimacy of supreme consciousness through love of nature, to perceive the formless informs that I call the way to liberation. I am fascinated by the nature and in that delusion I get the taste of salvation" (25). Tagore's perception of salvation through love demands responsibility than possessing the loved object. True love is perfection in knowledge, action and renunciation.

Tagore's faith was 'affirmation' to accept life. In man's quest for God renunciation is not a virtue. Man can feel the love of Supreme Being through joy and happiness. It is only through sensual enjoyment, man can achieve infinite happiness. He accepts the significance of body and says that it is only through sense one can go beyond senses. One should not become a slave of pleasure. But the joy of pleasure is infinite in nature.

According to him humanity and divinity are inseparable. They are not two distinctive entities. Tagore emphases the fact that divinity is also human as God himself becomes a man. God reveals himself in man and man becomes God. So religion is the religion of man in which the infinite is defined by God. Tagore says: "My religion is the religion of man in which that infinite is defined in humanity" (The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore. 109). The humanity is the true religion of society. The religion of humanity is to teach humanity to live like human beings. True religion makes man to rise above his society and nation. The religion of humanity is hampered by any man made formulas or ordinances.
Thus Tagore's humanism is manifested in all the aspects nationalism discussed in its wide spectrum of related aspects of divinity, salvation, universalism and diversity. His humanism is distinct from ancient and contemporary philosophies of humanism. Tagore divinizes man and makes everyone to recognize the significance of self devotion as a process of realizing God within oneself.