



NATION, MODERNITY AND CIVIL-SOCIETY IN TAGORE'S THINKING

P. Kanaka Rao,

Assistant Professor, Assam University, Silchar

This is an exercise to interpret Tagore's thinking. It aims to creatively interpret Tagore's ideas to understand how he weaved his thoughts in relation to the nation, which is a simultaneous critique of the nation and modernity. Civil society, as a term, did not exist during Tagore's time. One can interpret Tagore's ideas to draw resources to construct ideas of civil society. There is a good deal of literature available in interpreting Tagore's ideas. Tagore's thought is interpreted to bring out the implications of his critique of the nation. His critique of the nation is premised on his critique of modernity of the west.

INTERPRETING TAGORE:

Tagore is known for his humanism, pluralism and internationalism. These are the terms he has been frequently described with. The specific connotations of these are not subjected to scrutiny. A classical liberal modernizer would describe him as a quintessential humanist, pluralist and internationalist. This has been the predominant interpretation, even during nationalist movement. Marxists have vehemently criticized him

“He wanted man to emerge in his best and fullest stature. He also wanted society and, on its behalf, the state to create the necessary conditions for this to happen. Yet he would not tell us how an old, detestable order could fade out of existence without there being the inevitability of class war in divided society. His faith in the essential unity of mankind blocked his vision about the historic battle of the nationalism of the East against the imperialism of the west” (Chakrabarti, 1986, p. 91).

Marxist scheme produces different questions. It chides Tagore for not addressing the question of class struggle in the sense of class struggle within the society, and the struggle between imperialism and colonial societies. It also criticized him for not offering a theory of transformation of fading social order.

Subaltern studies did not pay attention to the thought of Tagore as its chief purpose has been to recover the agency of the subaltern within history. It did not think in terms of the possibilities offered by the thinking and practice of national-leaders.

Post-colonial theory, at its best, tried hard to offer a positive theoretical account of Tagore.

Chatterjee sees a resemblance between human rights movements and some strands of thinking within Tagore's thought. Human rights movements, 'abjures politics, but valorizes the individual act of conscience' (Chatterjee, 2011). His (Tagore's) aesthetically grounded critique of the nation certainly resonates with many of the recent invocations of universal humanity (Chatterjee, 2011, p. 126). He argues that a strain of thought of Tagore finds contemporary resonances in all those movements invoking the idea of universal humanity. These movements do not speak in terms of representative institutions; political parties etc and, abjure politics. His criticism of Tagore is over determined by his framework of appraisal.

There has also been a recent revival of interest in Tagore which brings him into the intelligibility of contemporary liberal and critical-modernist frames. Bindu Puri draws a philosophical parallel between Tagore and Kant on individual freedom, as primarily freedom to reason. Some disagree with this, while speaking of cosmopolitanism, "the universal reach of reason is quite consistent with the values of tradition and inheritance" (Tagore, 2008, p.1075). Saranindranath Tagore derides the value of abstract universal reason, and emphasizes on reason rooted in tradition. Thus, he reads Tagore to reinterpret him as a cosmopolitan rooted in tradition. Thus, interpretations of Tagore vary from liberal to critical modern in appropriating his concerns. However, this work draws from a variety of interpretations and remains close to critical-modernist interpretations. There is a commonality in terms of critical modernist concerns, but each articulation in this mode varies.

IDEA OF NATION AS A MECHANICAL UNION IN TAGORE:

Tagore had seen European expansionism or colonialism, and the consequent two World Wars, destruction, and the violence it brought, during his own time. He travelled all over the world, particularly Japan, Europe and America. By that time, he had formed his views on the form of life called 'Nation'. He contrasts the life of nation with the life of Civilization. Nation is an invention of eighteenth-century Europe, which had spread to different parts of the world. In his view

"A Nation in the sense of the political and economic union of a people is that aspect which a whole population assumes when organized for a mechanical purpose" (Tagore, 2009, p. 37).

In the beginning there was no nation. It was society only. Society "is a spontaneous self expression of man as a social being. It is a natural regulation of human relationship" (Tagore, 2009, p. 37). Society was a spontaneous human cooperation. Only with the arrival of the nation, it took a negative turn.

"... With the help of science and the perfecting of organization this (nation) power begins to grow and brings in harvests of wealth.... For then it goads all its neighboring societies with greed of material prosperity, and consequent mutual jealousy, and by the fear of each other's growth into powerfulness" (Tagore, 2009, p. 37).

Tagore`s style of writing is unique. He does not use language in realist terms. He expresses his ideas in terms of metaphors, having been a poet and artist. Metaphors do not bear a direct relation to reality. They illuminate ideas with a theatrical quality. Secondly, he speaks of nations as if they are individual nations with specific human attributes. For him, Nations are not abstract entities. He uses human attributes to describe their relation to other nations. For instance, greed for material prosperity, mutual jealousy and fear are characteristic features of living humans, which he attributes to nations. The significance of this use of language lies in its ability to retain moral judgment as implicit in language. The language does not merely become instrumental in describing reality, but retains a moral slant.

As mentioned above, society as a spontaneous expression is viewed as a contrast to the life of the nation. The motives of behavior of nations are described as greed, jealousy, fear etc. In course of time, as the nation occupies more space, and as it becomes the ruling force, it tries hard in extinguishing higher human ideals. The society of higher human ideals, Tagore claims, has existed for centuries.

In Japan, talking about higher human ideals than mere profit or benefit, he advises Eastern societies “you must apply your eastern mind, your spiritual strengths, your love of simplicity, and your recognitions of social obligation, in order to cut out a new path for this great unwieldy car of progress” (Tagore, 2009, pp. 37-38). Here higher human ideals are spiritual strength, love of simplicity, recognition of social obligation etc. Thus, the nation is described as inspiring greed, jealously fear etc, while civilization is committed to higher human ideals.

He also goes on to describe why the nation is a mechanical union of people.

“It is owing to this that war has been declared between man and woman, because the natural thread is sapping which holds them together in harmony, because man is driven to professionalism, producing wealth for himself and others, continually turning the wheel of power for his own sake or for the sake of universal officialdom, leaving woman alone to wither and to die or to fight her own battle unaided” (Tagore, 2009, p. 38). Thus, natural ties connecting man and woman are transformed into mechanical relations of business or profit. The ideal and natural relationship has been replaced by competition. Thus, Nation destroys naturalness and brings into existence conflict, arising out of a pursuit of power. Similarly, in the realm of economy, the natural union between labour and capital, has been replaced by conflict and competition. Thus, a nation is a mechanical union between different elements while civilization represents the harmonious relation between them.

The nation as a government and as a form of life is not unique to and Britain and Europe.

“This Government by the nation`s neither British nor anything else; it is an applied science and therefore more or less similar in its principles where ever it is used” (Tagore, 2009, p. 43).

“It (Nation) is the aspect of a whole people as an organized power. This organization incessantly keeps up the insistence of the population on becoming strong and efficient. But this strenuous effort offer strength and efficiency, drains man’s energy from his higher nature where he is self-sacrificing and creative. For thereby man’s power of sacrifice is diverted from his ultimate object, which is moral to the maintenance of this organization, which is mechanical” (Tagore, 2009, p. 73).

The organization of life, as the nation demands, is that people should grow efficient and powerful. Becoming efficient and powerful is contrary to the truth of human nature, as he perceived it. The truth of human nature lies in simplicity, love, self-sacrifice etc. because it is only a simple life which makes human creativity and humanity possible. He explores into one key dimension of human creativity. A child, who makes small objects of mud with his own hands, enjoys more than a child gifted with expensive dolls and good gifts. Expensive gadgets make him feel more elated, which is a bloat in his emotions. But a child who plays with mud and makes objects out of it, develops inner depth, harmony and calmness in his interior. This inner depth allows him to develop a harmonious relationship with the other. The more intimate and deep the connection between the self and the nature, the more creative one is. This is how Tagore sees true human nature. The more powerful and efficient one grows; he becomes distant from nature and thereby becomes mechanical. The union of people organized for mechanical purposes violates human creativity. It leads to the development of conflict with others and within oneself. Because, in Tagore’s language, it violates the true nature of the human self. Human self springs joy in loving and caring relation with the others. Human activities performed with specific interest in mind, or for instrumental reasons, deform the self. The inner texture of the self is distorted, which causes violence within one self. Violence within oneself leads to conflict with others. It leads to conflict with others in the immediate vicinity and with the groups, and with other Nations. The self organization of groups, as nations and as communities, also involves considerable distortion in the texture of the self where one sees one self in the group as powerful. The self organization of a group necessarily invents its enemy and survives in sustaining that enmity. Thus, Nation’s demands to make its people powerful and efficient, violates the true nature of the human self and destroys the noble ideals of man. The man excels in sacrifice and love. The best capacities of man are realized in sacrifice and love. But those capacities are being used for mechanical purposes of securing profit or other instrumental activities. These capacities should be serving creative purposes or service.

Tagore brings out the color of experience of the nation and civilization in vivid contrast.

“Before the Nation come to rule over us, we had other governments which were foreign, and these like all governments, had some element of machine in them. But the difference between them and the government by the nation is like the difference between the hand loom and the power loom. In the products of the hand loom the magic of man’s living fingers finds its expressions and its harmonies with the music of life. But the power loom is relentlessly lifeless and accurate and monotonous in its production” (Tagore, 2009, pp. 43-44).

For him civilization is compared to weaving with the hand loom, the products of hand loom contain the ‘magic of man’s living fingers’ and it ‘harmonizes with the music of life’.

“And these shoes are the government by the Nation. It is tight. It regulates our steps with a closed-up system within which our feet have only the slightest liberty to make their own adjustments” (Tagore, 2009, p. 48).

“When the humanity of India was not under the government of organization the elasticity of change was great enough to encourage men of power and spirit to feel that they had their destinies’ in their own hands. The hope of the unexpected was never absent and freer play of imagination on the part of both the governor and governed had its effect in the making of history” (Tagore, 2009, p. 48).

Tagore makes a further distinction between the government of the Nation, and the idea of India as a civilization. A government of the nation totally controls social, economic and cultural aspects of human- life. It controls the motivation behind every activity. Civilization is reshaped into the nation. Multifarious activities of the civilization, with non-instrumental motives are straight jacketed into a single motive of pursuit of greed in the life of a nation. Each activity is reoriented towards the purpose or benefit it brings. It is controlled through over the organization in the form of science, laws and bureaucracy. Science makes possible enormous control of human life. Science offers knowledge of human life. This knowledge, in its objective form, is in turn attempted to shape human relations. The motive of knowledge production is not totally unbiased. Knowledge has the motive of controlling the society according to the *telos* that it imagined. Hence, science controls and reshapes human relations in instrumental terms. Thus, science is an instrument of the Nation-state. Laws attempt to make objective codes to regulate social and political behavior. The objective of the laws is equally intended to reshape social and political relations. The laws in different spheres function to realize the objectives of the nation-state. Bureaucracy is involved in explicit control of society through administrative procedures. This becomes more important when bureaucracy is committed to the goals of the Nation-State. Thus, the Nation-state aims at total control and restructuring of society.

The government during pre-Nation times is significantly open. The ‘elasticity’ of change was great. Men of imagination had their destiny in their own hands. There was significant room for imagination in administration, particularly in terms of transforming the codes of administration which could be changed whenever it was necessary. The purposes of such changes were also not pre-determined, while such mechanisms, which, in their very constitution are open, ended in pre-Nation times. Thus, there had been a difference in the governments of Nations and the governments before that.

THE SPIRIT OF THE WEST AND THE NATION OF THE WEST:

One could read Tagore’s critique of Nation as an overall critique of forms of life in the west, as a whole. However, Tagore did not make the divide sharp at the edges. He lays enormous emphasis on the necessity of acknowledging the contribution of the spirit of West to the East. He denounces only that dimension of the West, which has the Spirit of the West. There has been a

contrast within the west between the nation and civilization. This contrast is not contrast in time; it is also contrast in terms of the quality of life.

“Europe is supremely good in her beneficence where her face is turned to all humanity; and Europe is supremely evil in her maleficent aspect where her face is turned only upon her own interest, using all her power of greatness for ends which are against the infinite and eternal in man” (Tagore, 2009, pp. 14-15).

There are appreciable aspects in the west, particularly Europe. Similarly, there are aspects to be denounced. The nation dimension of Europe has to be denounced, while the spirit of the west should be appreciated.

“In Europe, we have seen noble minds who have ever stood up for the rights of man irrespective of color and creed; who have braved calumny and insult from their own people in fighting for humanity’s cause and raising their voices against the mad orgies of militarism, against the rage for brutal retaliation or rapacity that sometimes take possession of a whole people” (Tagore, 2009, p. 13).

Thus, Europe gave birth to the greatest spirit of self-sacrifice, for the sake of justice, right and virtue. Europe reached great heights in literature, surpassed many obstacles in science as knowing and in social service. That greatness is possible only if its motive power lies in spiritual strength.

However, India has not been offered the best of Europe according to Tagore. India has been given minimally by Europe.

“...and reducing our education to the minimum required for conducting a foreign government, this nation (Europe) pacifies its conscience by calling us names.”

Thus, the Nation of Europe has been offering a minimum of what it could, in spite of the fact that the spirit of Europe could offer immense to India. Nation of Europe has been giving out minimally to India, only to the extent that is necessary for the farmer to survive and sustain its administration, thus, Tagore offers a trenchant critique of western Europe of its Nation form, while appreciating the spirit of Europe.

NATION AND MODERNITY:

Nation is an outgrowth of modernity. It means developments in the economy, and society is responsible for the growth of an entity called Nation. In economy, the practice of production for personal consumption has been replaced by production for profit. In culture, modernity stands for being slave to desire. It is not about true freedom. It is about superficial freedom to buy and sell. Modernity is not understood in the sense of freedom of thought and opinion. In political terms, it is a conquest and war.

“The political civilization which has sprung from the soil of Europe, and is overrunning the whole world, like some prolific weed, is based upon excursiveness” (Tagore, 2009, p. 8).

“It feeds upon the resources of the other people and tries to swallow their whole future” (Tagore, 2009, p. 8).

The political, in modern times, is organized around an entity called Nation. The nation is based on exclusiveness. In the West, it is limited to a group of people who are culturally homogenous. It did not encourage the assimilation of culturally diverse people. Instead, it eliminated aliens, in some instances. Internally, it demands cohesion, which in turn, erases difference. Tagore explores into resonances of nationalism in its external dimension, in relation to foreign countries. He brings out the psycho-cultural (Tagore, 2009, p. 8) dimensions of political phenomenon like nationalism in relation to other nations. In other words, the logic of power in international relations develops certain ramifications in terms of permanently fixing the idea of strong and weak nations. The strong nations do not want weak nations to grow stronger by thwart (ing) all symptoms of greatness outside its own boundaries” (Tagore, 2009, p. 8).

The logic of power unsettles other kinds of possible imaginations of interstate relation in the times of the Nation, or alternatively in the times of Modernity. The logic of power makes all other considerations irrelevant.

“The political civilization is scientific, not human. It is powerful because it concentrates all its forces upon one purpose, like a millionaire acquiring money at the cost of his soul. It betrays its trust, it weaves it meshes of lies without shame, it enshrines gigantic idol of greed in its temples, taking great pride in the costly ceremonials of its worship, calling this patriotism”(Tagore, 2009, p. 9).

Thus, political modernity in its organization as a nation sustains itself through lies, greed and the violation of trust. He is uncovering the hollowness of organization of the Nation-State. Its organization is scientific and mechanical, and as a consequence, generates great amounts of power which is morally blind. Thus, he speaks of one kind of modernity which has been realized in the West in an institutional form. He articulates a critique of this modernity in new terms. He criticizes modernity for violating the truth of life. According to Tagore, Truth lies in simplicity, social obligation towards others, love and self sacrifice, which can be expressed in one term, social cooperation. This is the truth because human nature flourishes itself in such values than to the contrary. Modernity creates illusions, individual as well as collective in nature. These illusions are collective euphoria created and made possible by the scientific organization of society.

Nation as modernity could violate basic truth of human existence, because it is impersonally organized. Impersonal organization of society is possible because of abstract knowledge. Abstract knowledge sets standards according to which societies ought to be transformed. Nationalism emerges in a society where person to person relations are severed. Nationalism is an abstract idea connecting humans to each other, impersonally. This connection is possible only

due to certain myths/ideas shared among its members. These myths violate truth as one knows personally.

SCIENCE, MODERNITY AND SOCIETY

Within the enlightenment tradition, the science as exact knowledge of human societies, introduced a new dimension to knowledge and society. Knowledge is abstracted from concrete social relations. The function of knowledge creation has been assigned to specialists in a society. The knowledge so produced has been used by scientists and policy makers to alleviate the suffering of the people and to reform the practices of the society. Thus, the Enlightenment tradition posited a link between knowledge, and freedom or liberation.

Tagore sees this link differently. It is a crucial issue that determined his understanding of the very conceptions of the purpose of various realms of human activity. For him, science does not mean mere analytical knowledge, but should be working in tune with nature's ideal, harmony within oneself, and harmony with others. Analytical knowledge violates the harmony of creation. The fundamental violence of the separation of the heart and mind is crucial to the very existence of modern abstract knowledge. Unless the mind is disconnected from the heart, modern knowledge is not possible. This is the product of the age of science.

“Our life and our heart are one with us but our mind can be detached from the personal man and then only can it freely move in the world of thoughts” (Tagore, 2009, p. 55).

The separation of the heart from the mind makes production of knowledge ‘ascetic’. Asceticism is not in the sense of overcoming desires. Asceticism that does not know desires, has no link with the heart. The mind that does not know desires is absurdly aggressive with no meaning of moral kind. It goes to the root of the things to find law, unconnected to heart (Tagore, 2009, p. 55).

“The grammarian walks straight through all poetry and goes to the root of words without obstruction, because he is seeking not reality but law when he finds the law, he is able to teach people how to master words. This is power – the power which fulfills some special usefulness, some particular need of man” (Tagore, 2009, p. 55).

Tagore points to the power of abstract knowledge, and the power it generates. For him, Reality is harmony, and science violates that harmony. It is similar to how a grammarian breaks the harmony in poetry to find out a law, but not truth. In breaking harmony, science gives unique power to control things, or the power which fulfills some need or use.

It is possible that power helps in attending to a particular need. When the need is satisfied it makes him free from the constraints of physical nature. But the problem with science in this sense is that it deals with a portion of reality, but not the whole of reality.

“The moral man remains behind because it has to deal with the whole reality, not merely with the law of things, which is impersonal and therefore abstract” (Tagore, 2009, pp. 55-56).

The modernity of the West suffers from disharmony. The material aspect of the west has been flourishing, while its spiritual aspect has remained dwarf. Tagore's ideal is to achieve harmony between the various dimensions of human life. Modernity, in its scientific dimension, violates this harmony.

“Man in his fullness is not powerful but perfect. Therefore, to turn him into mere power you have to curtail his soul as much as possible” (Tagore, 2009, p. 56).

“Take away man from his natural surroundings, from the fullness of his communal life, with all its living associations of beauty and love and social obligations and you will be able to turn him into so many fragments of a machine for the production of wealth on a gigantic scale” (Tagore, 2009, p. 57).

Invoking science/intellect, leads to division between heart and mind within oneself, the division between heart and mind to oneself and division within reality by inventing principles according to which it functions. The principles are extracted from the reality, by which a mechanical power is secured. This mechanical power grows very quickly because it is mechanical and it doesn't have to concern itself with the whole. It merely concerns itself with a specific portion. This violates harmony or proportion between different parts of reality, by which one aspect grows very quickly and other parts become paralyzed. The quick growth in one aspect that is in political aspect and the consequent mechanical coming together is the emergence of the nation. Thus science, modernity and nation are interconnected.

However, Tagore is neither anti-modernist nor anti-science. He criticizes vicious nexus between knowledge, power and commerce. This nexus inhibited the growth of human ideals. Human ideals have been subverted for the sake of power and commerce. He deplored the nexus between human greed and knowledge. Greed and knowledge should not go together. The function of knowledge should be to bring the criticality of human ideals to human institutions perpetuating greed and power. Thus, human ideals should not be servicing greed and power.

There are hints to say that Tagore had alternative views on modernity and science.

“Those who have modern spirit need not modernize” (Tagore, 2009, p. 19).

“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. A mere imitation of our science teachers who reduce it into a superstition absurdly invoking its aid for all impossible purposes” (Tagore, 2009, p. 19).

Modernism does not mean newness in mere appearance. Modernism in commerce and politics for him are distorted affects of being modern. True modernism means freedom of mind and independence of thought and action. It is freedom in thought and action and its opposite is the slavery of taste. The idea of freedom for him is different from the liberal version of freedom and it is also different from what nation-state calls political freedom. Political freedom is limited while freedom of mind is beyond political freedom

Similarly, Tagore argues against the dominant idea of science because it makes knowledge, a servant of profit. A scientific attitude has been emphasized in colonial and post-colonial public culture. It is reduced to a set of beliefs. Over a period of time, scientific attitude has come to be known as at odds with popular beliefs. Science tried imposing itself on popular beliefs. Science is thought to be in opposition to people. As Tagore mentioned above, Science has been reduced to superstition. It is being invoked as an aid to all impossible purposes. Tagore held alternative conception of modernity and science. He articulated a view of modernity as freedom of mind and science as dialogically placed in relation to people's beliefs while dominant versions of modernity and science serves the nation. Alternative versions are imagined by him to think of life outside the framework of the nation. A good society ought to be made outside the framework of nation-state beyond the dominant notion of modernity alternative to it can be called can be called dialogical modernity.

THE POLITICAL VS THE SOCIAL

Tagore's vision puts emphasis on social in opposition to the political. The sphere of the political covers that region of life called nation. The social is the organization of life without being concerned with the pursuit of power. The question of the social is important to him because he wanted to explore the implications of social being mobilized by the political.

He offers an expansion of the social and states its objectives.

“one is to regulate our passions and appetites for the harmonious development of man, and the other is to help him cultivate disinterested love for his fellow creatures. Therefore society is the expression of those moral and spiritual aspirations of man which belong to his higher nature” (Tagore, 2009, p. 80).

The social is the realm which involves disinterested love for his fellow beings. It is a realm expressive of ideals. It is a realm uncontaminated by power. It is a realm of human action in which the motive for it is disinterest, but not with satisfaction of certain interests in mind say the interest for domination.

“Our food is creative it builds our body; but not so wine, which stimulate. Our social ideals create the human world, but when our mind is diverted from them to greed of power then in that of intoxication we live in a world of abnormality where our strength is not health and our liberty is not freedom. Therefore, political freedom does not give us freedom when our mind is not free” (Tagore, 2009, p. 80).

He refers to the political world as abnormality where strength is not health and liberty is not freedom. It is precisely because the mind is not free, that it succumbs to greed and power. The social world is constituted and sustained by human ideal of love, special obligations, self-sacrifice etc. The political world is constituted by power and for the sake of the pursuit of power. The goods pursued in the political world are illusory. The pursuit of goods in political power does not constitute health. It is merely a sedative. The health of a society lies in its social sphere or social self-organisation based on its ideals only.

He argues even in the western countries majority of the people do not know to what goal they are directed towards. “This becomes possible only because people do not acknowledge moral and spiritual freedom as their object” (Tagore, 2009, p. 81).

The unfreedom in social life cannot ensure freedom in political life. Nationalism is not a solution to social ills. Social ills ought to be cured before one talks of political freedom, which should emphasize the value of freedom in social life.

“... Whatever weakness we cherish in our society will become the source of danger in politics.... The narrowness of sympathy which makes it possible for us to impose upon a considerable portion of humanity the galling yoke of inferiority will assert itself in our politics in creating the tyranny of injustice” (Tagore, 2009, p. 82).

The weaknesses in social life will show itself in politics as unfreedom. Social conservatism cannot create a free society in the political sphere. Nationalists during the freedom movement in India, spoke of ideals, and thought the social system as perfect. “They are taking the very immobility of social structures as the sign of their perfection” (Tagore, 2009, p. 75). Thus, nationalists delude themselves that the social sphere is perfect and they need to pursue political freedom in the sphere of polity. On the contrary, Tagore asserts that freedom in the political sphere is absurd as long as social system is rigid and unfree.

He criticized both moderates and extremists within the congress. Moderates “wanted scrap of things, but they had no constructive ideal. Therefore, I was lacking in enthusiasm for their methods” (Tagore, 2009, p. 75). Moderates restricted themselves to constitutional demands. They didn’t have the aim of social regeneration. They were not involved in social reconstruction. “What India most needed was constructive work coming from within oneself”. He wasn’t very comfortable with the idea of sharing political power with the British as he wasn’t sure about the new realm of human affairs called political. He was arguing for social reconstruction in its own terms.

He could not readily agree with extremists either. “Extremists, who advocated independence of action, and discarded the begging method, this is the easiest method of relieving one’s mind from his responsibility towards his country. Their ideals were based on western history” (Tagore, 2009, p. 75). He views extremist methods of public actions as relieving one’s mind from the responsibility towards his country. In other words, advocating violent public action towards the British was in a way relieving one’s responsibility towards one’s country and co- members of the community. Their attempt was to create an exclusive community based on religion. Extremists attempted to draw the attention of the colonial state with such a support. Thus, extremists’ objective was to create Indian nationhood on the basis of which to capture state power. Finally, they are operating within the paradigm of the nation and the state without focusing on societal self-organization.

By reading Tagore, one can discern the distinction that he makes between the political and the social. This distinction is very crucial to his political critique of the idea of nation. The nation is

equated with the political sphere. In this sphere, abstract power is created which divides the social world. People's struggle for power is uncoupled from purposes of social life. Tagore advocates reform of social life. Unless social life is cured from ills, those ills would afflict political life. Nationalists operated within the framework of the nation and did not consider working for social reconstruction.

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