

Non-Parochial Inclusive Nationalism in Rabindranath Tagore's *Gora*

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Abstract Tagore expresses his dissatisfaction with the western ideology of nationalism since it erases local cultures, promotes a homogeneous national culture and leads to violence. Being a true humanist, he wards off sectarianism and casteism in his novel *Gora* to advocate syncretic nationalism through the secular image of Bharatvarsha. He propounds the idea of assimilating and accommodating nationalism which is universal in its outlook and which outshines the narrow version of Hindu nationalism. This nationalism essentially carries the spirit of Indianness.

The paper studies *Gora* in light of Indra Nath Choudhuri's understanding of Tagorian nationalism, according to which the construction of Tagore's liberal or "non-parochial inclusive nationalism" (Choudhuri) is based on different aspects, such as social justice, adjustment of races and unity, universalism, humanism, faith in inheritance and Indian civilization. The paper explores these aspects as the foundation of nationalism in the novel and claims that Tagore outrightly rejects communal nationalism for its narrowness, self-centricity, exclusivity and aggressiveness; his idea of nationalism is heterogeneous, inclusive and humanistic; it promotes "universal ideas" "without a loss of national identity".

Key words Inclusive Nationalism; Syncretic Nationalism; Universal Nationalism; Patriotism; Hindu Nationalism

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Introduction

Tagore actively participated in the initial phase of the national movement that swept

through Bengal during the first decade of the twentieth century. The immediate political reason that activated this movement, referred to as Swadeshi¹ (literally meaning 'one's own country'), was the then Governor General Lord Curzon's decision to divide Bengal in 1905². "But it marked the culmination of a Hindu nationalism that had been gathering steam since the last decades of nineteenth century" (Chattopadhyay 2).

At that time, Tagore introduced the Rakhibandhan ceremony to symbolize the underlying unity of undivided Bengal.

Along with other nationalist leaders, he [Tagore], at this point of time, had used Hindu rituals for mass mobilization, and he defended Hindu social institutions and statutes, even reconfiguring caste as a consensual and rational division of labour that secured social harmony. In the same way, he also endorsed brahmanical gender practices like widow immolation as consensual. (Sarkar 41)³

With the passage of time, Tagore's differences with other Hindu nationalists grew to the extent that he saw the Muslims as equal compatriots⁴. As the movement progressed, he became more critical of "the upper class and caste Hindu nationalist leadership which unthinkingly commanded and coerced low caste and Muslim peasants to burn cheap foreign cloth while at the same time doing little or nothing for their welfare"⁵ (41).

1 The Swadeshi movement had an amount of Muslim participation, but in spite of this the main tenor of the movement was predominantly Hindu. See Sumit Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal: 1903-1908* (Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2010), 355-377. (Foot Note No. 5 of Chattopadhyay).

2 The partition of Bengal led the Muslims to form their own national organization on communal lines. The Hindus were not in favour of this partition, whereas the Muslims were. The Hindus believed that the partition was an attempt to "strangle nationalism in Bengal, where it was more developed than elsewhere" (The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica). Bengal was reunited in 1911, but it resulted in resentment among the Bengali Muslims who thought that the partition was in their favour and the resentment lasted until the end of the British rule which ended with the partition of Bengal in 1947.

3 On this, see Sumit Sarkar, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal, 1903-08*, Delhi, 1973. (Foot Note No. 15 & 16 of Tanika Sarkar's paper "the Intractable Problem" 46)

4 See, for instance, "Bijoya Festival" (1905), cited in S.C. Sarkar, *Bengal Renaissance and Other Essays*, Delhi, 1970. (Footnote No. 18 of Tanika Sarkar's paper "the Intractable Problem" 46)

5 *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal* by Sumit Sarkar and 'Questioning Nationalism: The Difficult Writings of Rabindranath Tagore' in *Rebels, Wives, Saints* by Tanika Sarkar. (Footnote No. 20 of Tanika Sarkar's paper "the Intractable Problem" 46)

Tagore realized that the western idea of Nation is violent; it has a self-destructive tendency and makes one selfish and exclusive at the stake of the other's freedom. It blindly spreads a homogenized universalism (Choudhuri, "The Concept"). Such is the case with the narrow version of Hindu nation and nationalism also. In *Gora*, which was serialized in a literary magazine *Probasi* from 1907 to 1909, the novelist has elaborately explored the shortcomings of the Hindu nationalism "which had briefly but intensely allured him" (Chattopadhyay 2).

In the novel, the idea of Indian nation and nationalism is woven around Hinduism and the ideology of the Brahmo Samaj. Throughout the novel, Gora, the eponymous protagonist, envisions Bharatvarsha as a primarily Hindu nation. This is an attempt on Tagore's part to give a voice to the ideology of his contemporary society that asserted its Hindu identity during the colonial period. The protagonist's Irish lineage, in the novel, helps him unfetter his Hindu identification and see the assimilating nature of Bharatvarsha; the anagnorisis in the novel leads to self-realization, "a vast truth" (Tagore 475). "The good and bad, the joys and sorrows, the wisdom and follies, of all of Bharatvarsha" (475) come close to Gora, who consequently learns "what a mother's lap means" (476). The idea of Bharat Mata in a secular avatar, who welcomes one and all with open hands, dramatically dominates and outshines Hindu nationalism in the ending of the novel and advocates secular, inclusive nationalism.

Nationalism or Patriotism in *Gora*?

Tanika Sarkar writes that *Gora*, unlike *Anandamath*, is not based upon "the image of a freshly coined Goddess of the Motherland" and "an act of violence against Muslims of India" (37). In her opinion, the novel "rejects the identification of the country with Hindu disciplinary institutions and it refuses to transvalue the land as a goddess. With these two moves, it breaks open the lock between Hindu nationalism and Indian patriotism and it creates a space that belongs to patriotism alone" (37-8). She believes that "nationalism was invariably a project of power and self-aggrandizement, of exclusion and incipient imperialism" for Tagore (38). This paper counter-argues that Hindu nationalism in *Gora* takes the shape of secular nationalism with Indianness at its core, thus the novel doesn't create a space for "patriotism alone". The Hindu goddess is presented in the garb of a secular human avatar; she is Annapurna and Jagaddhatri in the form of Anandamoyi. Secondly, the criterion of "violence against Muslims" is not an appropriate benchmark to distinguish nationalism from patriotism in the modern-day world when nationalism is being understood as an inclusive and syncretic ideology also.

First and foremost, Sarkar ignores that Gora personifies the land as Mother who, according to him, is “calling” him and he must “go where Annapurna is sitting, where Jagaddhatri is waiting” (Tagore, *Gora*¹ 327). In the ending, Gora discovers that ‘the mother’ for whom he has looked for everywhere has been at his home all this time in the form of Anandamoyi, whom “Tagore paints ... as Mother India” (N. R. Choudhury 63).

Ma, you are my only mother. The mother for whom I have looked for everywhere—all this time she was sitting in my house. You have no caste, you do not discriminate against people, you do not hate—you are the image of benediction. You are my Bharatvarsha... (Tagore 477)

The novelist glorifies the assimilating, loving and non-discriminatory nature of Bharatvarsha, the motherland, whose human representation is manifested in Gora's mother, an epitome of love and care. Contrary to Tanika Sarkar's view that “the goddess disappears as the mother returns” (45) in the ending, Gora, in fact, finds the embodiment of the ‘national’ goddess in his own mother. The mother with all her attributes has been present from the beginning; it is Gora who lacks the vision and wisdom to see ‘the mother’ in his mother throughout the novel except in the ending. On the contrary, Binoy realizes very early in the novel that Anandamoyi is the “face of his motherland” (Tagore 19). He says, “May the radiance of affection of her face protect me always from all the failures of my mind. Let this face be the image of my motherland, let it direct me towards my duty, let it make me steadfast in performing” (19). Thus, the land, a non-living entity, is viewed and transvalued as the mother, who is a human representation of the divine consciousness of Annapurna and Jagaddhatri.

It is also noticeable that the necessary ingredients for patriotism, according to Tanika Sarkar—geographical integrity, historical continuity and cultural unity, promote Hindu nation and nationalism also. Patriotism and nationalism, which are primarily sentiments and which take birth in the mind, cannot be ‘unlocked’ mechanically and demarcated by lines on the basis of “act of violence against Muslims of India” (37). Sarkar delimits the scope of nationalism in India as a solely anti-Muslim project, whereas it cannot be ruled out that Tagore's inclination to “Indianness, embodying some unique qualities”, or love for a homeland in *Gora*

1 All subsequent references to this source will be given in the text with the writer's surname and page number only.

is considered to be “an ethical concept fundamental to all nationalism” ¹(Mukherji 381).

Undoubtedly, Tagore has launched a fierce diatribe against the western idea of nation and nationalism and favoured “one world” with universal humanism and “inter-civilizational alliance” in most of his writings (Quayum 34). However, he does not portray anti-nationalitarian sentiment in *Gora*. It is clear from the conclusion of the novel when Gora finds ‘the mother’ in his own mother, “who is the image of benediction” (Tagore 477) and in whom Bharatvarsha is now embodied. Here, Gora does not speak of the world but of Bharatvarsha, and the idea of Bharatvarsha, as Nina Roy Choudhury states, is “identified with faith, religion, tradition, customs and all manner of indigenous values and ideas” (60). Such Indianness is at the core of the Indian idea of nation and nationalism.

Non-Parochial Inclusive Nationalism

The idea of nationalism is very flexible and protean in character; it changes with displacement in time and space. Gangeya Mukherji appropriately applies the term ‘open texture’² to nationalism. Today, the critical analysis of Tagore’s views and perspective reveals that Gurudev was not against nationalism as such, but he was against its violent aspect. Sen calls Tagore’s attitude to nationalism “dual”. He says, “Tagore remained deeply committed to his Indianness, while rejecting both patriotism and the advocacy of cultural isolation” (“Foreword” XX). Tagore, in fact, does not reject nationalism, but “calls for a humanitarian intervention into present self-seeking and belligerent nationalism” (Quayum 48). Kedar Nath Mukherjee writes, “His nationalism was international in outlook for he was the lover of humanity” (17). Indra Nath Choudhuri maintains, “...Tagore didn’t reject nationalism but formed his own understanding of it by studying what was authentic in his country’s history. ”

He [Tagore] thought i) it was essential for us to fight against social injustice rather than political freedom, ii) to work for an adjustment of races, to acknowledge the real differences between them and yet seek some basis of unity, iii) not to accept violent and exclusive patriotism as our final spiritual

1 Max Hildebert Boehm, ‘Nationalism’, in Edwin R.A. Seligman et al. (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, New York: OUP, 1996. 234-235. (Footnote No. ix of G. Mukherji’s paper)

2 “Waismann’s idea of open texture, more generally used in the philosophy of language, indicates that notwithstanding definition as applicable category, there still remain possibilities of a definition being inadequate, although remaining different from vagueness insofar as the definition may be fairly accurate in actual situations” (Mukherji 374).

shelter but seek refuge in humanity and iv) hence his motto for Viswabharati, (the university which he founded in Shantiniketan) was *yatra viswam bhavet eka nidam* where the world meets in a nest; v) not to accept the concept of violent nationalism from the west which would mean selling our own inheritance and vi) Tagore never wanted the idea of the Indian nation to supersede the idea of Indian civilization. Tagore, as said earlier, believed in non-parochial inclusive nationalism (unself-critical Indian nationalism: Nandi) and also in patriotism which rejected violent nationalism hence he could make such a statement that I am not a patriot — I shall ever seek my compatriots all over the world (letter of Tagore to Andrews). This kind of a statement created a false impression in the minds of a large number of Indians who even attacked him and [he is] still being attacked for the 'insufficient nationalism' expressed in his song 'Jana gana mana' which became the national song of India. However, Western nationalism which became a strong basis of a nation-state became illegitimate for him as explained in detail by Ashish Nandi. Both Tagore and Gandhi created a moral universe and made it a part of politics and gave a bigger lofty meaning to nationalism. ("The Concept")

This paper analyses *Gora* in light of Indra Nath Choudhuri's views on Tagore's approach to nationalism and claims that *Gora* voices Tagore's idea of non-parochial inclusive nation and nationalism.

Preferred Social Justice to Political Freedom

Gora depicts a constant conflict between human desires and social expectations. The protagonist, Gora, advocates the observance of all the rules of society, as society is the expression of the worldly aspect of Dharma. He says, "Otherwise society will be ruined ... if we do not submit ourselves to society completely through rules, then we obstruct the deepest purpose for which society exists" (Tagore 408). He believes that one should obey society without judging it. On the other hand, the Hindu society emerges as a system inimical to human relationships in the novel; it suppresses personal interests of man for some vague and unconvincing collective welfare; it marginalizes those who challenge its mechanical authority. The conventions of the contemporary Bengali society appear to be mere pretentious and unnatural; they sideline a noble figure such as Anandamoyi. The society acts as an anti-individualistic system that restricts Gora to express his love for Sucharita (141). It acts as a threat to human concerns; both the Hindus and the Brahmos do not send their children to Lolita's school due to socio-religious reasons (278-81). The

society's grip is so powerful that Binoy finds it impossible to "declare" that he does not belong to the Hindu community (316). "[T]he samaj is bound to pass judgment" on everyone (272); there is no escape. Krishanadayal realizes that the society must not be "upset" at any cost (32).

Understanding the dominating nature of social life in India, Tagore says, "In fact, our history has not been of the rise and fall of kingdoms, of fights for political supremacy...Our history is that of our social life and attainment of spiritual ideals" (*Nationalism* 35). He believes, "Our real problem in India is not political. It is social" (64). Thus, he gives more importance to social justice than political freedom; he is more interested in global unity and the demolition of internal social evils of the country. He says, "Freedom in the mere sense of independence has no content and therefore no meaning" ("The Religion" 157) and "freedom would have no meaning, if one oppressive power was replaced by another, replicating the structures of hierarchy. The issues of caste and gender discrimination had to be tackled first, to promote social and religious harmony among the various sections of Indian society" (Aikant 57). In the novel, Poresh Babu, a mouthpiece of the novelist, regrets over the anti-humanitarian aspect of the Hindu society which "insults human beings, discards them" (Tagore 420), whereas Gora praises the Prophet of Islam for his vehement fight against social injustice. Gora reminds the old Muslim man, who is whipped in face by a British, of the prophet's message:

[H]e who submits to injustice is also guilty- he causes wrong-doing to grow. You may not understand but take it from me, being meek and tolerant is no dharma. It only encourages the wrong doer. Your prophet Muhammad knew this; therefore he didn't go about in the guise of a meek person to preach his religion. (103)

There is a strong protest against social injustice in Tagore's writings.

Tagore's "Where the Mind is Without Fear", a famous song in his *Gitanjali*, echoes his ideal vision of India. In the novel, Gora raises his voice against the injustice done to the villagers of Char Ghospur by the police. He bluntly tells the magistrate that the villagers "are not rogues. They are only fearless and independent in spirit- they cannot suffer injustice silently" (180). He himself does not bow down to social unfairness; he raises his voice against oppression as he believes that "according to the principle of right action in our tradition, it is the king's obligation to do justice. When he is unjust to his subjects, he violates this principle" (184). Gora "vigorously" beats up the policemen who rough up the boys for mistakenly

having taken water from the reserve tank (184). To protest against the legislative system which has “become a market place for buying and selling of justice” (185), he refuses to take any legal recourse.

Gora's attitude to casteism is dual. He does not make any distinction regarding caste when he mobilizes young men for physical culture and group games. However, he follows the ritual laws of pollution and purity in his own conduct and diet. He does not see “any contradiction in this because the Bharatvarsha of his dream” is “based on an indestructible order wherein these distinctions” are “divinely ordained” (M. Mukherjee “Introduction” XV). Later on, Gora discovers the downside of following the caste system, which curbs individual freedom and is responsible for social disparity in the name of Hinduism. In Char Ghospur, Gora finds it intolerable “to safeguard his caste by eating food provided by that evil hearted tyrant Madhav Chatujjye” (Tagore 174). It then pains him to see that purity has become an external matter in Bharatvarsha; he remarks, “What terrible anti-religious practices...” (174). Rising above “what is right and what is wrong”, he, under unavoidable circumstances, feels compelled to eat and drink in the house of a Hindu barber who has given shelter to a helpless Muslim boy (175). Nevertheless, it is only in the ending of the novel when Gora dramatically transforms altogether and symbolically voices Tagore's message of social equality by demanding a glass of water from Lachmiya, a Christian maid.

Tagore's idea of nationalism essentially carries the spirit of social equality amid sectarian tensions that attempt to divide human beings. Anandamoyi, a representative of Tagore's humanism, says, “[N]obody is born on earth with a caste” (15). She advocates equality and asks her husband, “If you are of such superior caste and so beloved of Bhagavan, why did he allow you to be humiliated first by the Pathans, then by the Moghuls, then by the Khrishtans?” (32). For Tagore, it reveals, there is no justification for the caste system. The novelist believes that a society must be flexible to welcome changes with time. It is of no use to follow oppressive customs blindly. Gora realizes that oil-pressers, potters and other low caste people in the villages perform their tasks with the strength of custom. However, they are scared and helpless, and they are unable to assert their right to live with human dignity. “Under the threat of penalties, and through sectarian quarrels”, they regard “prohibitions as the highest truth” (432). In their society, there is no unity, and the society merely obtains “compliance through threat of punishment” and does not “come to a member's assistance, when needed” (433). Customs become an impediment to achieve social liberation. Consequently, Gora, who staunchly upholds and advocates customs among educated people, attacks them in the village.

For Tagore, society is made for man, not vice-versa.

The satirical portrayal of Haran Babu, Abinash and Hindu-hitaishi Sabha (Society for the Welfare of Hindus) reveals Tagore's concern as a humanist who rejects all sectarian divisions (7). The novelist is clear that "it can't be desirable that human beings should narrow themselves out of regard for society; instead, it is for society to constantly broaden itself out of regard for human beings" (378).

Adjustment of Races and Unity

Gurudev does not favour the political assimilation of all nations; he believes in social accommodation that gives opportunities to all nations without merging their national identities and that also promotes unity at global level. He envisions peace and unity at intra-national as well as international levels. In this context, Tagore gives the example of India. Tagore says, "She (India) has tried to make an adjustment of races, to acknowledge the real differences between them where these exist, and yet seek some basis of unity" (*Nationalism* 65). He adds that this basis has been brought by our saints such as Nanak, Kabir, Chaitanya and others, who preached the lesson of one God to all races of India" (65). Gangeya Mukherji quotes from Tagore's "Swadeshi Samaj":

...realization of the one in many, attaining unity in diversity- this is the inherent quality of Bharatvarsha...Since India possesses this quality, we will never imagine any society to be our enemy and be fearful. With ever new conflicts we will aspire for the expansion of ourselves. Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, Christians will not die fighting each other in the case of India- here they will discover a harmony. This harmony will not be non-Hindu; in fact it will be Hindu in its essential sense. The limbs and organs of this harmony may come also from alien countries; however its life and soul shall be Indian. (qtd. 381)

Tagore understands that pluralism and diversity are the key characteristics of India, even though there is overall unity. He emphasises the combined role of the 'little' and 'great' traditions in shaping what he loosely defines as the Indian nation (Chakrabarty 94).

Tagore advocates harmony and mutual understanding within and outside nations. There ought to be a note of acceptance. "Tagore puts it; a culture could reflect 'universal ideas,' 'without a loss of national identity'" (Choudhuri, "The Concept"). Gora, "an idealized representative of Tagore's syncretic nationalism"

(Chattopadhyay 1), says:

Hinduism has, like a mother, tried to make place in its lap for people of various opinions and views. That is, it has looked upon human beings of this world as human beings, it has not counted them as members of a group. Hinduism accepts the ignorant as well as the wise-accented not just one form of wisdom but the many sided expression of wisdom...It is through such variety Hinduism seeks to realize oneness. (Tagore 357)

What Gora observes and feels is not the religion of the Hindus, but the essence of the land or, in other words, the Indianness of India or Hindustan. In Bharatvarsha, “the white European identity of Gora rather than signifying ‘foreignness’ becomes instead the metaphoric equivalent of the nation with all its diversities and differences. It dissolves the binary of white European otherness and Hindu national self-fashioning” (Chattopadhyay 4).

Tagore is in support of social accommodation and assimilation. The social history of India is a witness that the foreigners had been dealt as human races in spite of cultural differences until the British arrived as a ruling body of men who kept their identity separate and refused to get accommodated (*Nationalism* 34). Tagore regrets that races which are ethnologically different have come into close conflict in this country now. In *Gora*, the novelist has portrayed the post-1857 period, which is a period of rising discontent against the unforgiving outlandish British rule. He criticizes the loss of individual self-esteem in the colonial rule which is indifferent and self-centered, if not oppressive, and which has not come to India with open arms to embrace Indians, but with the claws of colonialism and imperialism to snatch away what belongs to India. Social accommodation is replaced with competition and conflict when the English people emerge as a materialistic colonial power ruling from the distant lands. Consequently, Gora uses English, which is deemed as a much-valued accomplishment in a colonial society, to criticize the English ways of the samaj. Tagore shows the negative effects of this sort of economic, cultural, political and psychological invasion; he favours the harmonization and unity of races through social accommodation and assimilation without the loss of national identities across the world.

Gora is sure that the smouldering “ashes of the sacred fire of countries” will undoubtedly observe rising flames, “transcending the immediate time and place, and kindle a fire throughout the world” (Tagore 356-7). In spite of his patriotism and love of his race and people, the writer advocates universal love and fraternity as

essential for all-inclusive growth. Societies such as India's can redeem themselves by adopting the principles of "sarvadharmā samābhava" (deference to all religions) or the Upanishadic dictum of "vasudhev kutumbakam" (the entire world as one family) (Aikant 55). Tagore argues, "...I have no distrust of any culture because of its foreign character. On the contrary, I believe that the shock of the outside forces is necessary for maintaining the vitality of our intellect" (qtd. in Dutta 221). Furthermore, he states that "all the elements of our culture have to be strengthened, not to resist the culture of the west, but to accept it and assimilate it" (222).

Humanity: Against Exclusive Patriotism

Tagore is unique in his attitude towards nationalism; he inaugurated the meeting of the Congress party in Kolkata in 1896 by singing "Vande Matram" to his own tune, whereas he criticized militant nationalism¹ in Japan in 1916. He is primarily a cosmopolitan, universalist and humanist. He says that he has outgrown the teaching that the idolatry of the nation is almost better than reverence for God and humanity (*Nationalism* 83). He makes it clear that he is not against any race, but the idea of the Nation which is "least human" (41). His idea of nation and nationalism is essentially humane.

Gora, which is basically a novel of discussion and not of action, exemplifies Tagore's human-centric approach. When Binoy feels the lack of human affection and company, "liberating the country or preserving the community" does not seem "true and clear to him" (Tagore 19), and the food in the kitchen of Anandamoyi, discarded by Gora, appears "nectar" to him (20). The novelist says that no matter how loudly Binoy supports a principle in the course of a debate, in practice he cannot place human beings higher than a principle (18). Binoy does not take tea and he gave up eating bread or biscuits baked by the Muslims some time ago. But, his emotional sensitivity makes him ignore Hindu customs to avoid hurting Poresh Babu's family (52). Interestingly, he himself is in a dilemma regarding "how far he had accepted them [customs] as principles and how far on account of his great affection for Gora" (18). Even Sucharita's "upbringing under Poresh Babu's influence had liberated her from being bound by any communal narrowness", and "Haran Babu's steadfast advocacy of Brahma belief was painful to her natural humanism" (93). For Tagore, humanism is supreme and indispensable.

Tagore advocates love over the tensions of religion, sect and society through the characters of Poresh Babu and Anandamoyi. Poresh Babu's "refusal to observe

¹ Tagore in his *Nationalism* remarks, "Nationalism is a great menace. It is the particular thing, which for years has been at the bottom of India's troubles" (74).

the boundaries of Brahmo and non-Brahmo jurisdiction while discussing scriptural and other matters” is an epitome of the writer’s unfaltering support for humanism (94). Poresh Babu, the novelist’s spokesperson, says, “Sectarianism makes one forget the simple fact that human beings are human beings first. It sets up an entirely society made distinction between Brahmo and Hindu and blows up the distinction into something larger than universal truth” (295); he rejects casteism as a source of “inordinate hatred between man and man in our country” and a “kind of contempt of one man for another, insult by one man of another” (155). Along the same lines, Anandmoyi asks Sucharita, “Is there no community, Little Mother, which ignores minor differences and brings people together on major arguments? Have communities been created only to carry on a quarrel with Ishwar?” (313). She asks her husband, “Aren’t Khristians human beings?” (32). Notably, Anandamoyi’s name symbolically represents the bliss (‘blessed with ananda’, joy) of being humane.

For a humanist like Tagore, the very idea of motherland transforms from a non-living entity to a living human being. Binoy finds the image of the motherland in Anandamoyi, who is loving and benevolent. He says, “Let this face be the image of my motherland” (19). Gora realizes the same in the ending of the novel when he tells Anandamoyi, “You are my Bharatvarsha...” (477). To Binoy, Anandamoyi is “the personification of all mothers in the world” (205). The personification of the motherland in Anandamoyi is the novelist’s attempt to demystify the metanarrative of Bharatvarsha, which, according to him, is with us in the form of our loving mother. Anandamoyi exemplifies Tagore’s idea of truth embodied in humanism; she believes that there is no perception of caste within a man’s heart- “and it is there that ‘Ishwar’ brings men together and also comes there himself” (229). Anandamoyi feels that “nobody is born on earth with a caste” (15). It is through her character Tagore constructs the secular image of Bharatvarsha. She discards Gora’s idea of Dharma (16).

Through the Boul’s message, Tagore refers to ‘freedom’, which in the context of the novel becomes freedom from the shams of religion. He disapproves of Gora’s view that “the heart is a great thing but it can’t be placed higher than everything else” (16). Binoy, Tagore’s messenger, is “largely influenced by the dictates of his heart” and he cannot “place human beings higher than a principle” (18). The novelist says, “The honour of humanity had to be saved” (342).

Sectarianism belittles humanity and human relationships. For Panu Babu, “it is not a great matter to abandon Sucharita”, but he “cannot allow the prestige of the Brahmo Samaj to be lowered” (250). Tagore is of the view that “natural view of things” is lost by entering one particular community (373). Labonya and Leela,

who are privately most excited about Lolita's marriage, "put on grave expressions," as they remember "the stern duty of a Brahmo household" (430). Besides, Gora's negation of his feelings for Sucharita "was a wrong committed against human nature and that is why Gora's entire inner self had turned away from the preparations of the ceremony" (470). Tagore is concerned about man's key position and dignity in the world. He attaches a lot of importance to the fullest expression of man's true nature.

Universalism in Nationalism

For Tagore, universal nationalism is "an inclusive plural concept of a nation which goes beyond the idea of exclusive nationalism and where the whole earth is a family" (Choudhuri, "The Concept"). Gurudev was aware of the downside of exclusive nationalism that it would "breed imperialism" and imperialism would "bring destruction of nation" (K. Mukherjee 269). In *Gora*, the focus is on the secular image of Bharatvarsha, which doesn't discriminate and which embraces one and all irrespective of one's caste, colour and creed. In the ending of the novel, Gora's freedom from the narrowness of hyper or communal nationalism helps him view his motherland beyond sectarianism or any kind of religious groupism, and he says, "Today I am Bharatiya. Within me there is no conflict between communities, whether Hindu or Muslim or Krishtan. Today all the castes of Bharat are my castes" (Tagore 475). "With naked consciousness", Gora is able to realize "a vast truth" beyond his imaginative image of Bharat "that was without problems or distortions" (476).

Tagore is against exclusive nationalism that is based on the policy of Nation-State, popularized by the western view of the world. This type of nationalism makes one self-centered and egotistic; it encourages belligerent nationalism or, in other words, imperialism; it snatches away one's freedom and it has a self-destructive tendency (Choudhuri, "R. Tagore" 14). Tagore's Shantiniketan, which was very close to his heart and soul, was an implicit reaction to exclusive nationalism. It was planned to provide a point of confluence in India to the world community. As India, according to Gurudev, is essentially secular and accommodating, the idea of Shantiniketan was conceived to promote international cross-cultural relations. In *Gora*, the writer makes it clear that the idea of being Indian has nothing to do with one's lineage; through the example of Gora, he asserts that even the child of an Irish couple can be a true Indian. Thus, Gora becomes a true Indian when he becomes aware of his Irish descent and understands the true spirit of India. Gora says, "I have taken birth this morning, with an utterly naked consciousness, in my own Bharatvarsha. After so long I have fully understood what a mother's lap means"

(Tagore 476).

Tagore's idea of nationalism is not ethnic. He rejects "the colourless vagueness of cosmopolitanism" (*Nationalism* 34) also. Consequently, for him, India is "not territorial (*mrinmaya*) but ideational (*chinmaya*)" (Choudhuri "The Concept"). Indianness is a perception of unity in diversity and humanistic insight for him. Thus, Tagore's idea of nationalism is a section in the wide concept of universalism. He dreams of a commonwealth of nations in which no nation (or race) would deprive another "of its rightful place in the world festival" and every nation would "keep alight its own lamp of mind as its part of the illumination of the world" (Aikant 62). In his view, "[t]here is only one history- the history of man. All national histories are merely chapters in the larger one" (*Nationalism* 65).

No Western Model of Nationalism

Tagore, a peace-loving man, renounced the knighthood after the Jalianwala Bagh massacre in 1919. He didn't want the Indian patriots to imitate the western type of nationalism, which was violent in nature, at the stake of the Indian idea of human unity and fraternity.

In his works, Tagore acknowledges differences between the Indian sense of life and the western lifestyle in terms of culture, social values and tradition. He pays due homage to India and Indianness. In his essay "Prachya-o-Paschatta Savyata" ("The Civilization of the East and the West"), he says, "Man can attain greatness both under society and state. But it would be wrong if we think that building up of a nation in the European mould is the only nature of civilization and the only aim of humanity"¹ (qtd. in K. Mukherjee 247). Tagore opines that India has her own ideals and it will be unwise to imitate the West. Society is in the center of India's civilization, whereas politics is at the core of western civilization. Tagore wisely² chooses the Indian idea of non-violence and fraternity as the base of his concept of nationalism.

Gora is coloured in Indianness. The characters, places, beliefs, lifestyle, manners, customs, norms, values and even aspirations present a panoramic picture of the Bengali society in those days. *Gora* claims, "Whatever is ours, we shall uphold proudly and forcefully to protect our country and ourselves from humiliation" (Tagore 28). He adds, "All that we want is to feel in every inch that we

1 Tagore: *Prachya-O-Paschatta Savyata*, *Rabindra Rachanavali*, Vol. XII, P. 1061. (Footnote No. 2 of K. Mukherjee)

2 Tagore also rebelled against the petty traditions and customs of society (K. Mukherjee 46). He was influenced by Rammohun Roy.

are ourselves” (28). Amid social tensions that are mainly created by the Brahmos and the colonizers, the image of Bharatvarsha- full in wealth, full in knowledge, full in ‘Dharma’- is always imprinted on Gora’s mind. Gora is able to look through the misery, weakness and sorry condition of his own land and perceives some great and essential truth (57).

In the novel, Tagore emphasizes that the legacy of Indian norms and values must be inherited; India cannot afford to imitate western nationalism at the stake of its inherited legacy. Thus, Tagore does not give narrative space to the western idea of militant nationalism in the novel and espouses his idea of nationalism in light of Indian culture, values and norms. Tagore says: “We in India must make up our minds that we cannot borrow other people’s history, and that if we stifle our own we are committing suicide. When you borrow things that do not belong to your life, they only serve to crush your life” (*Nationalism* 71).

Importance of Indian Civilization over Indian Nation

Tagore describes civilization as “the expression of some guiding moral force” that has evolved in the society “for the object of attaining perfection” (“Civilization” 621). He finds the Sanskrit word ‘dharma’ the nearest synonym for ‘civilization’ in his own language. He notes, “Through ‘a-dharma’ (the negation of dharma) man prospers, gains what appears desirable, conquers enemies, but perishes at the root” (622).

Tagore does not want the concept of Indian nation to outshine the glory of Indian civilization. Indian civilization centres on the society; it carries forward the legacy and heritage of the past. Since it is unwise to the greatest extent of man if he has no idea about his past and future, Tagore lays emphasis on “the interdependence and intimate connection of the past, present, and future” (K. Mukherjee 59). To reject the past of Bharatvarsha is to “dishonour truth”; it is a form of atheism to Gora in the novel (Tagore 356-7). For the novelist, the idea of Indian nationalism is based on the values of Indian civilization.

Gurudev believes that exclusive nationalism is “the training of a whole people for a narrow ideal” (“The Nation” 549); it leads them to “moral degeneracy and intellectual blindness” (549). This is only “a passing phase in a civilization” or “temporary mood of history” (550). In the coming age, “the true spirit of freedom will have sway” (550).

In *Nationalism*, Tagore criticizes exclusive nationalism and claims that “nationalism is a great menace” (74) and “India has never had a real sense of nationalism” (70), as she has accommodated different races. He defines ‘Nation’ as

the political and economic union of a people organized for the mechanical purposes of greed and self-interest. The political aspect that was earlier restricted to the professionals in society, crossed “the boundaries with amazing rapidity” when the political power spread its wings with the help of science and brought in “harvests of wealth” (37). The idea of western Nation-State works on the principles of divisions, mechanics and materialism, whereas the virtuosity of Indian civilization lies in the fact that it wants to bring unity in diversity. Tagore adds that a government by the Nation is neither British nor anything else. He calls it an applied science and compares it to “a hydraulic press, whose pressure is impersonal, and on that account completely effective” (43). Indra Nath Choudhuri says: “Tagore said, form yourself into a nation (nation with a small n) to mean society which was relevant to humanity and stop the encroachment of Nation with a capital N to mean a nation-state or the nations of the West...” (“The Concept”).

According to Tagore, the East and the West are complimentary to each other because of their different positions and attitudes upon life (*Nationalism* 41). The British could positively shape the destiny of India by bringing here their tribute to life. With the process of give and take, one-sided domination could be over. In fact, rather than accepting the social aspect of India, the British tried to replace it with the political state and thus disturbed human relations. It led to moral degeneration and intellectual blindness. Tagore calls it ‘Crisis in Civilization’ in one of his speeches. The constructive spirit of the West should not be mistaken for the destructive Nation of the West. The spirit of the West has brought the people of India, who are different in races and customs, closer through common law which has given us a sense of “universal standard of justice” (44). However, the benefit of the western civilization was offered to Indians in a “miserly measure” by the Nation of the West (45). It is the policy of the nation-state to exploit more and to give very little in return, just what is minimum for sustenance. In the fields of education and industries, little assistance was offered to the Indian people who were labelled as backwards. The western nationalism represented by the British in India didn't have social co-operation at its center. “It has evolved a perfect organization of power, but not spiritual idealism” (46). Tagore adds, “... the western Nation acts like a dam to check the free flow of western civilization ... ” (46).

It may be said that Tagore, keeping in view the dialectics of nation and civilization in the western world, does not want nation and nationalism to supersede the idea of civilization in India. Nation is a “new institution” (“The Nation” 551); it is short-lived, whereas civilization has successfully survived the tests of time. The concept of pluralism or Indian unity, a characteristic of Indian civilization, was

basically a product of medieval India. This fact was shared by both Gandhi and Tagore. Besides, Man's world is essentially a moral world. The cult of Nation has dehumanized him to be a mechanical man. Tagore's concept of civilization is broad and it encompasses ideal lifestyle. Nation (due to its inclination for a cut-throat economic and political competition) represents 'Adharma', whereas Civilization means 'Dharma'. India's civilization is spiritual; it is known for "its inclusiveness, its all comprehensiveness" (Tagore, "Spiritual Civilization" 735). "Aliens were assimilated into the synthesis; their widely differing modes of thought and life and worship being given their due places in the scheme by a marvelous interpretative process" (735).

In *Gora*, Tagore's idea of Hindu nation is superseded by the civilization of India, which is assimilative and which is also underlying Tagore's idea of nationalism. Indian civilization is based on unity, whereas the communal view of Hindu nation advocates the division of people on the basis of castes and religions. In *Gora*, the idea of Hindu nation is shown as a hollow institution of power in the contemporary Bengali society. Abinash takes Gora's penance ceremony as an opportunity for the Hindu community "to proclaim its power today" and to "create a great sensation" (347). He terribly fails to realize that Gora basically relies upon Hinduism to glorify the oneness of Bharatvarsha. The novelist shows that Hinduism with its narrow divisions cannot lead to the unity of India; it cannot be the real basis of a nation. Thus, the ending of *Gora* marks a shift from Hinduism to Indianness and glorifies Indian civilization.

Conclusion

Tagore was temporarily inclined towards the movement for the revival of Hinduism and reposed his faith in Hindu religion and society as a means of uniting the country. However, shocked at the communal violence and the exclusion of the Muslims and lower castes from the traditional Hindu Samaj, he rejected the ideology of Hindu revivalism.

In his novel *Gora*, Tagore shows the perils of hypernationalism that is grounded in communal politics; he advocates non-parochial nationalism, which is social, syncretic, extensive, homocentric, indigenous and civic.

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