



Research Article

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Revisiting the Relevance of Tagore's Concept of Education and His Vision of Cosmopolitan Existence with Special Reference to "The Home and the World"

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Abstract

The cycle of violence, human suffering, and conflicts continues unabated. As we live in the 21st century, we witness an unprecedented systematic assault on human dignity and the cherished values of peaceful coexistence. The contemporary discourse in major parts of the world is shaped by the divisive politics of identity, racism, and pride of various forms. This perhaps explains the rejuvenated debates around the theories of cosmopolitanism and globalization. Tagore had visualized as early as 100 years before how nationalism and a false sense of supremacy posed a danger to the values of coexistence and humanity at large. Calling it an epidemic of evil and destructive enthusiasm, he offered through his philosophy of education a vision for cosmopolitan and harmonious coexistence. He redefined cosmopolitanism in ways that involve the local/national histories/identities and celebrates them as markers of the shared values of peaceful coexistence. The study offers insight into how his call for reconciliation of Western science with the spiritual wisdom of the East offers new avenues for peace, coexistence, and mutual understanding in times when mankind is confronted with myriad challenges on all fronts.

Keywords: cosmopolitanism; universal humanism; educational philosophy; coexistence, spiritual wisdom

1. Introduction

Cosmopolitanism and dignified existence remain an elusive pursuit for man despite unprecedented strides and progress in all walks of life. The blind pursuit of materialism breeds ignorance and kills the true human character. Mere achieving economic prosperity is not the goal of human existence. A human existence extends to much more than what a man is busy with today. A man's existence is rooted in achieving certain ideals, illuminating his soul, and enlightening his mind. If a man tends to ignore these ideals and values of human existence, he may achieve some immediate material success, but the material prosperity he is running after ends up being a death trap for him (Tagore 1917). Tagore's denunciation of this material prosperity primarily lies in his belief in the strength of man as a man. His idea of cosmopolitanism is about transcending local divisions, the politics of identity, a false sense of pride in culture and nationality, and espousing the greater values of what it means to be a human being. That is why he considered the emergence of nationalism in Europe and the resurgence of Hindu nationalism in India a formidable threat to mankind. What distinguishes him

from other cosmopolitan authors is his viewing of local identities/traditions as important markers of global existence. His urge to find a reconciliation between Western science and Eastern spiritual wisdom offers fresh perspectives for cross-cultural dialogues, and mutual understanding and can go a long way in constructing a cosmopolitan existence.

Various studies deal with how the term 'cosmopolitanism' refers to a positive outlook towards those who are different in culture, language, race, and nationality. Nussbaum (1994), while critiquing the American system of education, says how it promotes the spirit of nationalism, encourages local pride, breeds moral blindness, and thus endangers human existence. While referring to Tagore's *The Home and the World* (1916), she looks at Nikhil as an embodiment of cosmopolitanism and explains how he (Nikhil) represents the values and ideals of global citizenship and offers the promise of transcending divisions. Similarly, Tagore (2008) looks at the essence of cosmopolitanism from the perspective of Rabindranath Tagore's political and social thought. He says that Tagore's conceptualization of cosmopolitanism does not imply something abstract but suggests how local cultures, customs, and traditions can provide a stable ground for better cross-cultural understanding and peaceful coexistence. Bhattacharya (2009) notes that "cosmopolitanism attempts at transcending the nation-state and depicts an orientation both to the universal and particular, the global and the local" (p.1). He views nationalism and cosmopolitanism as interconnected and says that the latter grows out of the former. Rizvi (2009) talks about how the idea of cosmopolitanism has acquired different new dimensions. The article demonstrates how the term refers to different elite ways of living "made possible by the global mobility of capital, people, and ideas, resulting in inter-cultural encounters of various kinds" (253). It talks about the increasing nature of globalization, the essentiality of the collaborative nature of human society to solve the challenges and expounds on how the ideals of the term can help respond to the challenges thrown up by the conditions of globalization.

Kendall et al. (2009) views cosmopolitanism "as a progressive humanistic ideal which continues to be embedded in the structural conditions of modernity" (12). It teaches mutual respect towards those different from one's own culture, language, and territory. Hansen (2014) elucidates the differences between cosmopolitanism, multiculturalism, and pluralism (1). Throwing light on the historical trajectories of the concept, the study delves deep into how the idea helps people develop empathy towards differences. Saha (2013) traces how Tagore's disillusionment with nationalism coincided with his travels to Europe. The article shows that his disenchantment with nationalism and growing love for cosmopolitan vision springs from both-domestic turmoil of post-1905 in Bengal and the modernist global landscape of war and imperialism. Thus, it becomes clear that most of the current scholarship on Tagore primarily deals with how his idea of cosmopolitanism rose in response to the emergence of nationalism. However, the present study argues how Tagore's message of universal humanism, denunciation of nationalism, and cosmopolitan existence form the core of his educational philosophy and can help the world move away from violence and conflict towards that peace, mutual harmony, and happiness.

2. Understanding Tagore's Vision of Cosmopolitanism

The term 'cosmopolitanism' is composed of "two terms, cosmos, or the world as a whole, and polis, referring to the idea of the self-governing political community" (Holton, 2009, p. 4). The idea is not a recent development but could be traced back to the ancient Greek tradition. In direct contrast to philosophers like Plato who valued individual identity, Stoic philosophers viewed cosmopolitanism as referring to global existence. Brown (2009) observes that Kant envisioned a cosmopolitan world where people live under a common system of governance. His idea of cosmopolitanism is often thought of as being concerned with constructing an environment wherein each individual is free to grow to his/her human capacities (31). Similarly, Appiah (1997) conceptualizes a cosmopolitan existence where individual identities are discarded and people enter into a relationship of mutual respect while being rooted in their local cultures and traditions. Martell (2011) says that the term 'cosmopolitanism' implies the idea of being conscious of the obligations we as human beings have towards others. It is inclusive and suggestive of the bonds of brotherhood and self-sacrifice, care, and

a sense of respect. However, the term cosmopolitanism has undergone varied changes.

Today what it suggests is not an abstract thought but speaks of an orientation toward life and how people stay interconnected and interdependent. The cosmopolitan attitude, thus, is a name for orientation towards self, others, and the larger human world. It teaches us to be responsive rather than reactive toward others. It embodies the sense that all people must be given equal importance and any special preference based on language, culture, or place of birth should not be given to any group of people, linguistic, cultural, or religious. (Fazal Rizvi & Suzanne S. Choo 2020). Rizvi (2009) says while referring to Nussbaum, that the term does not talk about discarding one's local cultural identity but lies in respecting one's bewildering diversities of language, culture, and religion.

Tagore's idea of cosmopolitanism developed in the wake of Post-World War I devastations and disasters raging across the globe. The colossal destruction and human loss made him lose faith in human values. His travels to Europe made him familiar with how the spirit of conquest and militarism formed the core of the Western idea of nationalism. He got disillusioned when he saw how inhuman and brutal pursuit of this poisonous ideology had gripped the larger parts of the world. His lecture series essay *Nationalism (1917)* is concerned with demonstrating how this destructive enthusiasm thrives on hatred and breeds a vicious cycle of violence. He says that the basis of nationalism is not cooperation but exploitation. Instead, it has emerged and evolved as an organization of greed, power, and materialism ((Tagore 1917). He saw how material prosperity and the spirit of exploitation forming its core caused havoc for global existence. He describes how Europe in its blind pursuit of power and materialism lost faith in humanity (Tagore 1917). The essay throws light on how the pursuit of this 'epidemic of evil' and 'destructive enthusiasm' dehumanized and degraded humanity. The world of man, he asserts, is moral and spiritual not because we have agreed to make it so but because it is inherently so (Tagore 1917).

Though the global conditions had worked in general, Tagore's idea of cosmopolitanism developed in the specific context of the rising threats to India's cultural diversity from aggressive Hindu nationalism. He denounced the systematic efforts of Hindu nationalists to shape India's national identity from a religious perspective. In what could be described as a repudiation of the Hindu rights' vision of India, he described India as a country to which many races had made an immense contribution. He viewed cultural diversity as a strength and recognized multiple identities.

Even though from childhood I had been taught that idolatry of the Nation is almost better than reverence for God and humanity, I believe I have outgrown that teaching, and it is my conviction that my countrymen will truly gain their India by fighting against the education which teaches them that a country is greater than the ideals of humanity. (Tagore 1917, 106)

A proper understanding of the idea of the self as an individual may help us understand Tagore's idea of cosmopolitan existence better. His idea of the self fundamentally differs from the one held by his contemporary scholars. He rejects the Western idea of self as a self-centered and self-sufficient individual. Instead, he seeks to find cosmopolitanism, not in self-sufficiency but in togetherness and viewing human existence's diversity as the manifestation of its different colors. He emphasizes how "human beings are connected in fundamental ways with the universe" (Purkayastha 2003, 49). This fact explains why the idea of political freedom suggested by Gandhi and promised by the freedom movement did not appeal to him as this freedom was self-contained and self-sufficient. He regarded this self-sufficiency as an antithesis to the notion of cosmopolitanism and global existence. He viewed self-sufficiency and self-reliance as suggesting the elements of feelings of separate existence and markers of cultural supremacy as they were primarily concerned with a group of people sharing a common territory, language, and culture. Purkayastha (2003) notes that Tagore was highly critical of the Western idea of nationalism because they, though, preached the values of freedom, justice, and liberty and confined them to selected groups within the limits of their national boundaries" (50). He found the pride of race and culture forming the core of nationalism and incompatible with the values of a dignified existence. While it (nationalism) taught self-idolatry, self-sufficiency, worship of national pride, and recognizing cultural differences, giving up the false pride of self and encompassing love for humanity lies at the heart of cosmopolitanism.

The sense of pride and supremacy breeds blindness and perversity. Cosmopolitanism, an antithesis to nationalism, celebrates the diversity of human culture and acknowledges that people have their equally important specific geographies and histories. That is the reason Tagore pulled back from the project of national homogenization as it, he feared, will exclude minorities and release the demon of an ethnonationalist cycle of violence.

We have felt its iron grip at the root of our life, and for the sake of humanity, we must stand up and give a warning to all, that this nationalism is a cruel epidemic of evil that is sweeping over the human world of the present age and eating into its moral vitality. (Tagore 1917, 16)

Human dignity, denunciation of pride, and a love for the greater ideals of what it means to be a human being are the mainstays of Tagore's writings and literary works. They offer an insight into how the devastations and destructions at the beginning of the 20th century were the results of this blind pursuit of racial supremacy and nationalist pride. He described it as a 'destructive enthusiasm' as it was an antithesis of the moral ideals which constitute humanity. In his view, cosmopolitanism refers to a global outlook and does not imply uniformity in human existence or similar patterns of thought. Instead, it refers to the existence of certain structures of thoughts and a particular pattern of behavior that binds all human beings together despite differences in cultures, traditions, and languages. Tagore (2008) notes that his idea of cosmopolitanism is inclusive and pluralistic and seeks harmony rather than uniformity or similarity. He views the local traditions, ways of living, and cultural diversity as the manifestation of the strength of humanity. He believes that local cultural traditions and values can provide ground for interfaith dialogues and cross-cultural engagement. It believes that all people divided by geographies, cultures, and religions are united by the greater ideals of humanity. It is a sympathetic acceptance of cultures, customs, rituals, and religious practices of bewildering human diversity. This is substantiated by what Hansen (2017) says that cosmopolitanism involves an acceptance, and openness to ideas, values, and practices different in nature. In what could be described as a repudiation of the Hindu nationalists' love for aggressive nationalism towards which India had started showing unprecedented eagerness, he described it as a great menace that has always been at the root of India's social problems.

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. (Tagore 1917, 107)

A harmonious existence, true love, concern for the poor and underprivileged, and celebration of local cultures and traditions form the core of Tagore's idea of cosmopolitanism. Tagore's understanding of traditionalism is markedly different from its socio-political understanding manifested through the politics of communalism. He developed the idea of universalism as a way to transcend the narrow boundaries of politics of identity and nationalism. His dissociation with Indian nationalism suggests his disgust at the way the movement had become an elitist group. He, as his writings show, wanted the poor, underprivileged, and peasants to stay at the center of Indian nationalism. He consistently held that mere political independence without addressing the core issues of India's poor will not serve any purpose. Colonial oppression will be replaced by indigenous exploitation. Gandhi's endorsement of charkha, call for total liberation to sever all affiliation with the British, and non-cooperation movement made Tagore disillusioned. He had visualized that the emergence of Hindu nationalism was the direct fallout of such identity-based politics.

Thus, for Tagore, the only way to enter into a more meaningful existence of collective human aspiration is by transcendence over the socio-political restrictions of class and caste in society and through reconnection with the marginalized local and regional cultures of India. Tagore's universalism is also tied closely to traditionalism. (Roy 2015, 184)

3. *The Home and the World* as an Embodiment of Cosmopolitanism and Humanism

The text amply demonstrates the corrosive nature of nationalism and how cosmopolitanism can help the world move away from violence to peaceful coexistence. Sandip in the text is the embodiment of

nationalism and represents the degrading and dehumanising effects. He embodies how nationalism dehumanizes people, kills human instincts, and releases a demon of ethnonationalist violence. He relentlessly pursues his goal of accumulating wealth and money under the garb of nationalism. His open contempt for moral values and a vaulting lust for wealth and power kill his human soul and dehumanize him. He believes in all acts of forceful snatching, sees nothing wrong in all these acts of extortion, and seeks to justify it by saying that each and everyone has a right to possess.

As he believes that nature surrenders herself only to the robber, he is not ashamed at all to ask for what he wants, and sometimes, he feels no need even for permission before taking anything. Nikhil's master says that he believes that he (Sandeep) is not irreligious but a cunning man who uses nationalism and religion to pursue his agenda and goals of accumulating wealth and power. He idealizes cruelty and derides the idea of justice. A great fan of militant nationalism, he prescribes it for India to rid herself of the ills plaguing her through the ages. He says that injustice and cruelty have been one of the most effective tools in the hands of the powerful (Tagore 1916). He trains even his followers in cruelty. One day he asked his followers to go and chop off the leg of a goat. When they hesitated, he went and did the job. That shows how nationalism kills the human soul and reduces a man to the existence of a wild animal.

Let moral ideals remain merely for those poor anemic creatures of starved desires whose grasp is weak. Those who can desire with all their soul and enjoy with all their heart, those who have no hesitation or scruple, it is they are the anointed of Providence. Nature spreads out her richest and loveliest treasures for their benefit. (Tagore 1916, 50)

4. Nikhil Embodies Cosmopolitanism

Nikhil, an antithesis to Sandeep, epitomizes cosmopolitanism and the greater ideals of humanity. He views nationalism as an assault on human dignity and a repudiation of the values of coexistence. He stands for what it means to be a perfect human being. Unlike Sandip, he believes in the power of renunciation and self-sacrifice, chooses to be on the side of truth and justice, and regards coercion as a manifestation of weakness. Despite being aware of how Sandip employs nationalism to accumulate wealth and power, he does not dictate terms to his wife Bimala who is get swayed by Sandip's nationalist rhetoric. As he does not believe in imposing things, he allows her to understand him and make her own independent choice. He wants her to see for herself that Sandip loves himself more than his country and that his zealous patriotism is a way to aggrandize himself.

In the face of all pressure and psychological trauma he undergoes, Nikhil remains true to his ideals of humanity, justice, and morality. When the group of nationalists asked him to ban British products, he described it as blindness and refused to oblige them as it had the potential of adversely affecting the poor. The perfect sense of justice and what it means to be human is his way of life. He discards anything which encroaches on human dignity and the personal choices of an individual. For the same reason, he refuses to worship the country. To an argument from Sandeep that he worships humanity when he considers the country to be his god because man and country are the manifestations of God, Nikhil disagrees and asks him if man and country are the manifestations of god, there is no difference between man and man, and so between country and country (Tagore 1916, 35). He tells him that he had nothing to say against his worship but does not understand his hatred for other people and countries wherein God is equally manifest. He tells Sandip that he is always ready to serve his country. But he reserves his worship for true ideals of humanity. Worshipping a country amounts to bringing a curse upon it (Tagore 1916, 22). Therefore, he denounces the excessive love for the country as it involves hating and undermining other fellow human beings who are equally dignified and important. This love of Nikhil for greater human ideals and denounces nationalistic politics illustrates his cosmopolitan vision. For the same reason, he condemns Sandip's opportunism and low-level politics of winning and victory through any kind of unfair means.

It is my feelings that are outraged, whenever you try to pass off injustice as a duty and unrighteousness as a moral ideal. The fact, I am incapable of stealing, is not due to my possessing logical

faculties but to my having some feeling of respect for myself and love for ideals. (Tagore 1916, 36).

Bimala's metamorphosis demonstrates how nationalism dehumanizes people and leaves degrading effects on collective human existence. Initially, she kept on oscillating between selfish motives and sinister designs embodied by Sandeep and moral ideals and cosmopolitanism represented by Nikhil. According to him (Nikhil), she likes to find in men something violent, cruel, angry, and unjust (Tagore, 1916, 44). She gets swayed by Sandeep's nationalistic rhetoric, undergoes dramatic changes, and finds herself detached from her husband. From being a humble woman staying within four walls of her home, she becomes a Shakti, to quote Sandeep's words, and allows this madness (nationalism) to bring a trail of disasters in her life. She finds immense joy in an unquestionable surrender! She indeed realized how a man could find supreme bliss in the totality of self-destruction (Tagore, 1916, 90). However, after being exposed to how nationalism was merely a badge for Sandeep to accumulate wealth and money, she undergoes regeneration and starts appreciating truth and how her husband represented moral and higher ideals for mankind. Rao (2010) notes Bimala's remorse and change of heart towards the end of the novel are often read as a vindication of the ideals of humanity represented by Nikhil though Sandip's views are politically more resonant driven by material success and full of derision for true ideals of humanity.

5. Tagore's Philosophy of Education

What did lie at the heart of India's colonial system of education was the basic goal of achieving certain political goals. It was designed not to impart true moral ideals but to prepare a workforce that could serve well the British colonial regime. Therefore, a contempt for local culture and an admiration for the colonial masters and their values were inculcated in the young minds. This was the context and background wherein Tagore's philosophy of education developed and took root. He aimed to prepare critical minds, decolonize Western-centric practices and values, and reinvigorate the pluralistic ethos. Therefore, teaching the values of coexistence and love for mankind constitutes the core of his educational philosophy. It seeks the development of not an individual but the promotion of the spirit of brotherhood, cooperation, and understanding. Samuel (2011) says that Tagore's educational vision sought to promote fullness which comes through the adoption of "the social and the universal dimensions. One of the important insights of Tagore's educational vision was his stress on human relationships and universality" (1164). Therefore, the primary aim of his educational vision was to decolonize the minds, illuminate the soul, and promote the welfare of all people irrespective of how and where they were rooted.

Now the time has come when we must make the world problem our own problem; we must bring the spirit of our civilization into harmony with the history of all nations of the earth; we must not, in foolish pride, still keep ourselves fast within the shell of the seed and the crust of the earth which protected and nourished our ideals; for these, the shell and the crust, were meant to be broken, so that life may spring up in all its vigour and beauty, bringing its offerings to the world in open light. (Tagore 1917, 68)

Worried at the ugly turn of global events and India showing eagerness towards nationalist and identity politics, he realized how education and knowledge could help him establish a society on the sound ideals of love, fraternity, and mutual trust. He, thus, dissociated himself from the political movements and kept himself busy asking people to imbibe cosmopolitan values and discard nationalist tendencies. To realize his dream, he founded a chain of schools and institutions. In 1901, a school, Santiniketan, which means an abode of peace, was set up. Encouraged by the success and public enthusiasm, he founded another school which came to be known as Sriniketan, which stands for the abode of prosperity. He established Visva-Bharati University. The name Visva-Bharati stands for the world's communion with India. The motto reads as a place where the world makes a home in one nest. If one looks carefully at the entire project of these institutions, he/she will find that Tagore wanted to set up an institution that could teach the true ideals of mankind living as a single family. The aim was to help people develop a cosmopolitan vision, transcend local identities, and develop a

common identity for mankind. He thought that the cross-cultural exchange, dialogues among nations, and a fine reconciliation between rational Europe and the spiritual East could pave the way for peaceful coexistence. The students at these institutions were encouraged to have respect for all cultures and varied forms of human existence. The values of looking at cultures and histories as different chapters of the common history of mankind were inculcated. This is the concept of Tagore's education Nubausam refers to when she says that openness cannot be inculcated through rote learning but through shaping the hidden capabilities of an individual. Open-mindedness, broad vision, dialogues, and engagements as a means for cultural understanding are essential. The possibility of such openness and acceptance hinges on the type of education imparted. This openness and curiosity to understand other cultures is the central idea of Tagore's educational philosophy. This openness and broadmindedness can be nurtured not through an education that focuses on mechanical learning but through an education that is centered on the illumination of the soul.

He considered the blind pursuit of material prosperity and lack of true human values one of the reasons responsible for the rise of nationalism and the lowering of human dignity. That is why he placed a true moral character at the core of his educational system at these institutions. For him, education and knowledge were means of realizing the higher goals of human existence not accumulating wealth and power. His philosophy of education sought to "establish the dignity of human relationships across boundaries. Thus, for him, local education and global education should not be two ends of a spectrum but overlapping categories instead" (Datta 2017, 412). That is why spiritual training and illumination of the soul, a love for nature, and a deep emotional association with natural surroundings were some of the primary goals of his educational philosophy. As the romantic poets and philosophers were distressed to see the increasing industrialization, Tagore saw nationalism as posing a potential menace to mankind. So, he turned to nature and the spiritual existence of man. Like Wordsworth, he felt in nature a pervading existence of some invisible power. This deep association with natural life led him to think of freedom from work as the essence of meaningful human existence. He considered the universe as the manifestation of human diversity and finds the "principles of unity and diversity operating in all things-animate or inanimate, organic or inorganic. He recognizes that there is a divine spark in each and every thing" (Salamatullah 1960, 133).

In his writings, we find him seeking a spiritual union between man and nature. He considered nature a source of inspiration and said that education for the full growth of individuals can be achieved in the lap of nature. His love for natural surroundings led him to establish his university at Shantiniketan where natural life made a part of the curriculum. Tagore called for an affinity for natural life which had the immense potential of teaching a man a truly human character. Banerjee (2010) nature had always appeared to Tagore "as a living entity, a transcendental spirit, a Divine force that shapes and moulds the life of a man and is integral to human civilization" (477/8).

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. Turn a tree into a log and it will burn for you, but it will never bear living flowers and fruit. (Tagore 1917, 37)

To construct a cosmopolitan existence, education, he argues, should focus on the development of a truly human character and the promotion of higher ideals of morality. It should not emphasize the mechanical development of the human mind and the transfer of abstract thoughts. It should, illuminate the soul, enlighten the minds, and stir up the human imagination and inherent creative characteristics of an individual. He wanted to liberate the human mind from religious bigotry and eliminate the mechanical and economic aspects of the British system of education. He asked to enliven the decadent Indian system of education wherein "children were treated as no better than objects, or as prisoners in the hands of authoritarian pedagogues who were determined to rob their pupils of their vigour and liberty in exchange for stale, mindless, mechanical learning" (Quayum 2016, 4). This is the freedom he talked about in his address to Japan.

I have seen in Japan the voluntary submission of the whole people to the trimming of their

minds and clipping of their freedom by their government, which through various educational agencies regulates their thoughts, manufactures their feelings, and becomes suspiciously watchful when they show signs of inclining toward the spiritual, leading them through a narrow path not toward what is true but what is necessary for the complete welding of them into one uniform mass according to its own recipe. (Tagore 1917, 26)

6. Bridging the Divide Between Western Philosophy and Eastern Spiritual Wisdom

Fazal Rizvi & Suzanne S. Choo (2020) notes that Nussbaum, in her essay *Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism* (1994), castigates the American education system for being 'insular' and called for an education system that viewed human dignity and justice as the basic norms of civilized human existence. Her theory of cosmopolitanism and the critique of American patriotism is informed by Tagore's writings who saw in the emergence of Hindu nationalism and national pride a death for India's rational thinking, scientific temperament, and technological advancement. His critique of the resurgent Hindu nationalism shaped Nussbaum's worldview and her ideas of patriotism. Nussbaum insisted that education must impart values of human dignity, equality, respect, and appreciation for cultural differences. In the essay, she says that the proclivity to attach special importance and recognition of one's own culture and race defeats the very purpose patriotism so vociferously claims to be addressing. She found Americans' assertion of racial pride and the politics of identity echoing the Hindu nationalist politics in India. She says:

I believe, as does Tagore, that this emphasis on patriotic pride, is both morally dangerous and subversive of some of the worthy goals that patriotism sets out to serve-like national unity in devotion to worthy morals of justice and equality ... The goals would be better served by the very old ideal of cosmopolitanism (Nussbaum 1994, 4).

As a true lover of knowledge and wisdom, Tagore wanted to seek wisdom wherever it was available. Being conscious of how a synthesis of Western philosophy and Eastern spiritual wisdom could benefit mankind, he exhorted Indians to "learn from the west the knowledge of modern science and technology while enriching the west 'with the spiritual wisdom and sacrificial attitudes of the east'" (Acharya 1997, 602). He saw how a lack of reconciliation between these strands of thought could prove to be disastrous for human coexistence. That is why he opposed the boycott of the British by Indian nationalists because it could deprive them of scientific advancement and rational thinking. Similarly, he saw in Europe's blind pursuit of materialism a death for mankind. Tagore (1917) says that they must not "forget that the scientific organizations vastly spreading in all directions are strengthening our power, but not our humanity" (41/2). Being a philosopher of cosmopolitan vision, he knew how the open channels of communication, dialogues, and engagement could pave the way for a harmonious existence and cultural understanding.

The real truth is that science is not man's nature, it is mere knowledge and training. By knowing the laws of the material universe you do not change your deeper humanity. You can borrow knowledge from others, but you cannot borrow temperaments. (Tagore 1917, 54)

He saw a way ahead for India's emergence as a knowledge power through moderation and a balanced way of life. The blind pursuit of material prosperity by the West and the religious dogmatism of the East left him deeply disillusioned. He looked up not for confrontation, and exclusion but for accommodation and synthesis between East and West, science and spiritual wisdom, and tradition and modernity. Though he harshly denounced the militant aspect of nationalism, it did not deter him from being appreciative of the Western idea of rational thinking, experimentalism, and observation. Tagore exhorted Indians to keep their eyes and heart to what was going on in the world around them, how people lived, the language they spoke, and things they aspired for while being rooted in their own culture and ways of life. His message was that every culture was rich enough to offer something unique for others to learn and assimilate. Therefore, the window of learning, dialogue, and understanding must remain open for cross-cultural dialogue and mutual understanding.

The four pillars of his concept of education were: nationalist traditions; syntheses of Western and Eastern strands of philosophy; science and rationality in approach; and an international and cosmopolitan outlook. The original way in which Tagore interwove these various strands to expound a system of free and creative inquiry that gazed beyond the shackles of colonialism in India was unique. (Ghosh et al. 2012, 59)

Freedom from pride and prejudices lies at the heart of his vision of cosmopolitan education. He wanted to break the shackles of religion, caste, and nationalism one is entangled in. Salamatullah (1960) says that one of the areas Tagore emphasized so much is ample scope for creative self-expression and the idea of internationalism which shows his deep sense of respect for the varied existence of mankind. He decried uniformity but appreciated the sense of unity and harmony. He wanted the education system to generate unity and harmony without developing and imposing uniformity as it “robs the individual (and by extension, the nation) of his or her uniqueness, his or her inherent talents, and forces him or her to mindlessly imitate the dominant patterns in society” (Fazal Rizvi & Suzanne S. Choo 2020). The idea that there is one global existence lies at the heart of Tagore’s educational philosophy.

True modernism is freedom of mind, not the slavery of taste. It is the independence of thought and action, not tutelage under European schoolmasters. 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 1917, 75)

6. Conclusion

Tagore’s idea of cosmopolitanism developed in the wake of nationalism emerging as a formidable force in the early years of the last century. Being a man of a farsighted vision and a deeper sense of sympathy with humanity, he visualized how the spirit of conquest and materialism formed the core of the Western idea of nationalism. Through his denunciation of Western nationalism, he appealed to build the world and human society on the sound principles of love, mutual respect, acceptance, cooperation, and a sincere apperception of the existing differences. Having lost his faith in global nationalistic politics and identity politics in India, he founded many institutions to realize his dream of constructing a cosmopolitan society through his educational philosophy. Decolonizing the minds, a synthesis of Western philosophy and Eastern spiritual wisdom, illuminating the soul, enlightening the minds, communion with natural life, and above all placing the man above everything makes the core of his educational philosophy. Thus, the construction of a cosmopolitan society based on the sound ideals of mutual love, respect, and appreciation of differences is his message through his vast body of works.

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