



*Journal of Advances and
Scholarly Researches in
Allied Education*

*Vol. XI, Issue No. XXI,
April-2016, ISSN 2230-7540*

**AN ANALYSIS UPON NATIONALISM IN THE
WRITING OF RABINDRANATH TAGORE AND W. B.
YEATS**

AN
INTERNATIONALLY
INDEXED PEER
REVIEWED &
REFEREED JOURNAL

An Analysis upon Nationalism in the Writing of Rabindranath Tagore and W. B. Yeats

Ritu Yadav^{1*} Dr. Anupama Bhardwaj²

¹ Research Scholar, Department of Arts, Maharishi University of Information Technology, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh

² Assistant Professor, Department of Arts, Maharishi University of Information Technology, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh

Abstract – Nationalism is a complex term, torsade with the forces of colonial and postcolonial witness. It is a quite difficult idea to be explained, as today every nation bears the sense of nationalism but not everyone is getting the same right and space. Time to time the idea emerge with many new additions and develop the base of the concept. Rabindranath is the emblem of Bengali nation but still regarded as an anti-nationalist. Who always stands for his own people but there is no abrogation for people belong to any other country, religion and nation. Again, Yeats is representing both Ireland and England. In the late nineties there was a radical change all over the world. The powerful countries became one another's rival. Colonial rulers were threatened by the rise of the revolutionary nationalist. The whole world came to a tumultuous situation. Both Rabindranath and Yeats concentrated on that part of the human history. Their nationalist perception turned into a new direction. It is because of the aggressive nationalistic view of that time.

-----X-----

INTRODUCTION

In today's world one of the most forceful elements is nationalism. This modern world is guided by many "ism's" and of them perhaps nationalism is the most fertile one. This is an ideology, which values in many different and particular ways. This idea is generated by the Western world but now it is propagated throughout the world. Every nation has its own way of nationalist thoughts. Which invents a constant unrest in the world, our present time is bearing the fact indeed. It is primarily a political ideology which developed in Europe in the later part of the eighteenth century and throughout the nineteenth century. After the World War I it spread to the Asia, Africa, Latin America and Middle East. Early twentieth century was a period of turnover of the human history. A change came both in the Western and Eastern world. In the Western world the first world war came with a dystopian notice of the end of the world. On the other hand, the Eastern and colonized places come up with the dream of freedom. Thus "Nationalism" became an important question. Now, in the twenty first century the continuous advancement of the nationalist ideology shaping the global politics, which is creating new challenges all over the world. We all know that the emergence of this "subtle" idea or concept of the West the world has faced a lot of incidents. Some are good, some are bad, some stored a glorious chapter, and some are as horrible as damnation. Now we see many of the countries of the Eastern part is free from the colonial rule and established their strong position. Again, on

the other hand the never-ending wars deluging the land of no-fly zones in Kashmir, Palestine, Syria. The incidents of that places may be did not carried away our humanism so another new name- Rohingya, added there. All these incidents the need of inculcating the value of humanity and ethical sympathy for others.

Nationalism is the most unique gift of modern time to the world, which is both valued productive and destructive. Fundamentally the term nationalism is described as a commonness and togetherness. Nations are usually defined as a community which possess a particular land and share their own culture and practice it. This community will share a common value, culture, custom, heritage and corporate will. The community is expected to be loyal towards the society. Every individual's loyalty to the community will sum up as the sense of nationality. The awareness of nationalism exposed in many different ways throughout the world. The understanding of nationalism gave every nation a clue of particularity. So, the world became asunder into different nations and states. Where it will be always "we" against the "they". And this "we" is- our language, our culture, our religion, our state, our symbol, our tradition and so on. Here "they" cannot come or "we" will not allow anyone to come. This "we" identifies a community's territory.

Years after years people are talking about it, numerous writings are coming from every corner of

the world. For the sake of own land and people everyone worked, thought and this is considered as a noble inherent instinct in human being. We call it patriotism. But for the betterment of my own country and my own culture can we harm other's land, culture and heritage? To answer the question many people have responded with various ideas which can be analyzed by the study under various stream of knowledge as-Political Science, Social Science, History, Anthropology, Art and Literature. And certainly, these different fields give rise to different ideas. But from the late nineteenth century the study takes a new turn. The conflicted colonial rule, industrial revolution, print capitalism, social revolution-all these started a new chapter in the history of mankind. As we expected that modern age will be blessed with the aspects of life with hope and inspiration. This age will come with a resolution that human life is precious. But we saw that human beings have encountered with numerous crisis. What actually happened was not expected at all. Is that time was a asset to generate something new or is it a new way of being powerful and exploitation through consent? Cannot be answered so easily. These all arguments and discussions can be found in different documentations on nationalism.

Rabindranath used to believe that whether it is the land or the mind, it must be free from the fear and narrowness and all this will be done by the courageous thinking and firmness of human. Because this world is for human and it is their duty to keep it a suitable place of living. Now, when we are standing in the point, where the wheel of this modern world running through the current tactics, comfortable lifestyle, scientific methods but will it be easy for us to answer the question how are we living? Are we living a harmonious life with all the new inventions we had in the last century or we are only imagining the good things of these new editions and making the place of living a nightmare. All these self-awakening questions come to the mind with every line of Rabindranath's and Yeats's writing focused on the thoughts of extreme nationalism.

Both Rabindranath and Yeats rejected the violent part of nationalistic activity. The most important thing was they addressed the idea nationalism as the coming threat and talked about it not in a political ground rather from a philosophical and cultural ground. To talk about this matter, we need to understand what the term nationalism actually means. Though Yeats did not try to give any answer to it, but Rabindranath found it as an artifice and "deceitful" agency manufactured by the Western world.

NATIONALISM AND ITS UNCERTAINTY IN THE POEMS OF YEATS

W. B. Yeats (1865-1939) is the most influential literary figure in the twentieth century Europe. His literary excellence always keeps him in the centre of all talks of literature. As a poet, he expanded the border of English literature as well as dignified the Irish culture

and literature. May be he used to believe that the art and culture is the expressive medium of society, so he did not hesitate to express his political view of Ireland in his writings. By doing so the reflection of that time specially the social upheaval and political situation was bring into being and we got the prospect. Yeats was the most influential poet among his contemporaries. In his young age when he just started writing, his creative potentials helped him stand up as a challenging personality specially to his Irish contemporaries. At the age of twenty-three, his first collection of poetry *The Wandering of Oisín and Other Poems* (1889) was published. This publication was a hint to the literary world about the arrival of a powerful poet, writer and thinker on the galaxy of literature. Here the words of Oscar Wilde will be certainly relevant.

Yeats is one of the main pillars of modern poetry. He is the heir of the romantics, so many times he has been called a late romantic poet. Though many things may appear very similar to others earlier, later Yeats managed successfully to create his own style and language. Here arises the question, what helps him to do so. A hypothetical answer is- may be his Irish background and fair judgment about his nation worked forcefully behind it. As in his writing though in many places he became confused or skeptical about Irish rebellions but at the same time he never ignored the necessity of strengthening the Irish art and culture.

The main themes Yeats treated in his poetry are love, mysticism, vision, symbol, Celtic mythology, Irish traditions, Irish nationalism. May be this list can vary from individual to individual, but no one will deny the fact that Irish note is always there in his poems. Ireland and the treasure of Irish nation get highest priority to Yeats. Whether it is Irish folklore or mythological character or the Celtic traditions- all are there in the writings of Yeats. Ireland exposed in different ways through Yeats. Some points are distinct and crystal-clear, and some are not so. May be nobody will deny it today that Ireland is the land of Yeats. But the total scenario is not the same in every sector. Yeats's love for Ireland seems unconditional but it was questioned somehow. For this may be Yeats is responsible to some extent.

W.B Yeats was an acknowledged poet in his time. His Nobel prize achievement in 1923 even made it more distinct. But his treatment of the theme of "Nationalism" is not clear at all rather it is vogue and full of contradictions. His Anglo-Irish origin and contradictory ideas about nationalism has probably worked behind it. Indeed, it can be regarded as the main factor. Some people honor him as the greatest poet of Ireland because he adds glory to them and retelling Irish legacy. Again, some people label him as a supporter of England as he highly valued English art and culture. Yeats was always very much advocating for both and ultimately his sufferings were great. Yeats never liked the violence of Irish nationalists. This chapter will examine how Irish nationalism is working behind the writing of Yeats and his ideas about the nationalism through a close study of his works.

"Yeats's own lines tell Yeats's story better than any can write it- and his story is the part of Ireland's story" (Gonne 331). This is the most important quote of Maud Gonne about Yeats and Yeats's Ireland. So, to understand Yeats's nationalist views we must go through the writings of him. He wanted the Irish culture to be known again and along with other nation's story Ireland and the Irish nation's head held high with its own uniqueness. Yeats personifies Ireland through the body of a beautiful woman. The poem depicts a hero who is lost searching for years his heart's passion. Aengus meets a beautiful young woman and fell in love with her. Aengus catches a fish which turns into a beautiful woman and then is lost. Aengus keeps on searching this mystical woman for long but in the poem, he never reunites with her. As he says:

"Though I am old with wandering

Though hollow lands and hilly lands,

I will find out where she has gone,

And kiss her lips and take her hands;

And walk among long dappled grass,

And pluck till time and times are done,

The silver apples of the moon,

The golden apples of the sun".

This is a poem about longing for not the love he got but the love he bears in the deep core of his heart. Many will say this longing may be is for Maude Gonne, but it does not seem so as he never lost her literally, rather he was with her as her friend always. Yeats's lifelong longing is for Ireland never ended. In the poem it is further said that if he gets her that the days will be so bright. It is clearer that it indicates the bright future of the Ireland.

Another poem "Leda and the Swan" from the volume *The Tower* (1928) is the symbolical representation of the colonial others. In this poem Yeats refers to the myth of the rape of Leda by Zeus in the form of a charming swan. Poet narrated that, "a sudden blow" with the wings the swan Leda "caught in his bill" and she could not save herself. The representations of dominance of power is very much clear here. As a colonizer does to the colonized. The poem ended with sad consequence of Agamemnon. So, England's dominance over Ireland and the harsh treatment of the powered one can make the end destructive.

Throughout the poem Yeats being very critical about the supreme sacrifice of the Irish leaders. His skeptical attitudes towards the rising is also seen but at the same time he is expressing the feeling that as long as the Ireland will be there the story of these patriots will be uttered with sincerity.

NATIONALISM AND ITS RESTRICTION IN WRITING OF RABINDRANATH TAGORE

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) was not a political activist. But his intense words entitled the book *Nationalism* (1919) endorsed his believes on this very imported idea or concept. Being a romantic poet his continuation for Bengali literature became unparalleled but his coherent sight even makes him more pivotal for the Bengali nation. Rabindranath was always very much predisposed about the theme of "freedom". His genuine aspiration for the sovereign land and an authoritative nation filled with willpower and amity was always installed by his writing. The aim of this chapter is to highlight the idea of nationalism in Tagore. To do so, we need to discuss some other things or the early part of Tagore's life because his theory for anti-nationalism did not come abruptly. Earlier Tagore was one of the pioneers of Indian Nationalist Movement but why he became one of the prominent critics of nationalist thoughts or nationalism later is a matter of study and research.

Rabindranath's political view formation was based on criticizing the oppression of the British Empire. He firmly believed that unless or until the Indian subcontinent became free from the British empire the people of this land would not be able to do any ontogenesis trial for themselves. In the question of independence of land, Rabindranath was positive and for his one he was certain. That is the reason why Rabindranath started the Nationalist Movement. When Rabindranath come close to the common people's life "the dire poverty of Indian masses rent" his heart. He began to realize that perhaps there is no modern other state will be found, which lacks the "elementary needs of existence". Again, the bitter truth is that the property of this land flourishing the British people for long. This was understood by Rabindranath very distinctly, as he stated, "It was this country whose resources had fed for so long the wealth and magnificence of the British people" (Tagore 15). So, the bare domination of British empire and their exploitation project through the colonial rule downhearted Rabindranath and many of his contemporaries.

Rabindranath is the person who came in front of the glorious part along with the alarming part of nationalism debate. If talking for own culture, tradition, people and working for it is the indication of being nationalist, then Rabindranath was certainly is. Bangla modern literature is chiefly standing on the wonderful creation of Rabindranath. His writing enhanced the Bengali renaissance and amended the mind of progressive Indians. It won't be an exaggeration to say that, the Bengali nation chiefly depends on ideas and the vast stretch of work of Rabindranath. He is the one who has made the present form of Bangla language. He has added a

great variety of uncounted words in the dictionary of Bangla.

There is no doubt that, Rabindranath is one of the pioneers of Indian nation who always guided his people in time of crisis. He appreciated the art and culture of the English people and the power of knowledge but never accepted the regime of British government or the rule of Company and strongly got involved in the protest against it. Both Gandhi and Nehru supported him. They expressed their appreciation of the important part Tagore took in the national struggle. Rabindranath's criticism of the British administration consistently grew more intense and stronger. Swadeshi Movement or Nationalist Movement- these names are very much related with him. Rakhi Bandhan for the protest of dividing Bengal is one of the most important events of that time. This Rakhi Bandhan was introduced by Rabindranath himself, that event was done for the unity of Bengal.

It is a known fact that, Rabindranath opposed British imperialism and supported Indian nationalist's movement in the early years. During that time, Tagore wrote many poems and composed many songs which are basically patriotic and still regarded as the best tool in the struggle of the Bengali nation.

In his writings, he supported Indian nationalists just because he wanted the freedom of his mother-land and his countryman. In spite of supporting nationalism, Tagore did not support Gandhi's Non-Co-Operation Movement or the violent part of Swadeshi Movement. In this movement, the Indian basically boycotted the British product and try to establish and improve Indian production. Because of this a major part of Indian nation was in trouble. Basically, the Muslim traders of India had to face great losses for this. So, Rabindranath did not support it. The man who led the procession against British government later withdrew himself from the movement. When the nationalist movement took a violent turn, he stayed away from it, though he was the person who voiced for the freedom of his countrymen. It is because Tagore is a man for whole mankind. In the name of freedom, killing innocent people was a crime to him. So, he tried to stop it. But when he failed, he moved aside with grief. In his writings, this part is also shown very clearly. Here the best example is *Ghare Baire (The Home and the World)*. Where we see the nationalist Sandip with his charm and powerful words, convincing everyone and justifying his deeds merely for his comfort in the name of patriotism. On the other hand, Nikhilesh wishes peace and comfort for everyone by working silently. His view was not only the land, to maintain the land and to establish claim over it people should work. Nikhilesh became Tagore's mouth-piece in the novel.

THE IMAGE AND THE INADEQUACY OF NATION IN RABINDRANATH AND YEATS

Yeats and Rabindranath are the canonic figure of two parts of the world of literature. They are representing two different cultures, nations and heritages. Both of

them are the creators of the history of their people and land. Though they are enlightening different poles but their roads coming together also. They are different in many ways but both of them are the ardent lover of their motherland. Hence today Rabindranath is the flag of the culture of Bengal and Ireland is regarded as the land of Yeats. In the debate of nationalism their common ground of standing is-rejecting all violence, killing, destroying. Though this is a major issue that they are raising concentrations, but their perceptions are not same like before.

In 1910 the first publication of "Gitanjali" place these two names together. Yeats writes the preface of the book and shows his gratitude towards a poet of India. Through the words of his poem the English people got a light of hope. The destruction of the World War was darkened their life. They lost the hope and the spiritual shelter of Rabindranath became the strength. Yeats and other friends of him liked the book so much that they all become a follower of Rabindranath. Yeats and Rabindranath had a good bonding that time. Though it does not go so till the end.

As Rabindranath was scared that the greed of power will destroy the natural instinct of human. That happened as well. Soon the western world forgot the soothing power spiritualism. They started such a journey that ultimately ends the history of mankind. There is no doubt Rabindranath is supporting his people but not for any war but for regaining the culture of his own.

Rabindranath expresses mainly in the poem no.35 in Gitanjali. Here he is asking for the awakens of the people of his country. And to do so they need to be "fear" free and the light of knowledge only can be there weapon.

Rabindranath's idea regarding the political factors arisen by the thoughts of cognizance of free land. From the late nineteenth century regarding the land few elements became very prominent. Number one, Stop dependency from the British government. Number two, adequate autogenous potentiality based society and number three is taking the way of making a self -dependent society by refusing the caste differences, dormant ideology and narrowness. The intension was to ingrain the intimate assimilation of individual and social agglutination. The communal detachment and strife was ignored or neglected by the political leaders, but Rabindranath was not in a daze rather he was well vigilant to the upcoming turmoil. He was in opposition to the politics of compromise, so he again and again alerts the people and political leaders that by beseeching no great achievement can be attain. So, independence will not be achieved so easily that we will apply for it and will get it. From that intense national emotion Rabindranath started his Swadeshi Movement in the Banga vhang period. That time he tried to make people understand that for the deficit and underdevelopment of the country is the result of British rule. Again, he wanted to give the people (not the urban only but the common rural people) educated life,

healthy life and open minded progressive thinking that they can be capable enough to take the responsibility of their own culture and society and reform it for the betterment of their social and communal life. His dream was to build a nation who will start up by his own power and insight. Then they will be able to achieve their independence by protecting it with amplification. So Rabindranath goes for the altercation of the freedom and being stringent for the matter of independence of Indian subcontinent. But his attempt turns out badly and the fear became true that the indignation of the people blows up and the whole situation goes against the will of Rabindranath.

Rabindranath's final approach to nationalism towards the world is the amalgamation of all men, where they will come with their own uniqueness and offer it to others and will mingled to be more rich, "to give, to take, their mixed mixing make.../Their way they will not retrace".

If we turn towards Yeats's idea of formation of nationalism, then it will be found mainly based on the representation of the "cultural products". He was looking for a change of Ireland and this change is more with culture. As cultural nationalism is suggested in a unique way. "Ideally, cultural nationalism should foster both unity and diversity, because it opposes a of another while simultaneously removing local and national characteristics as a source of meaningful differentiation" (North, 387). So, we always find Yeats's reaction in his poem. In 1914 Yeats's another volume of poems name *Responsibilities* published. This book mainly shows, who his idea was changing that time. His frustration was also reflected in his poems. Among them "A Coat" is the most prominent one. Here Yeats is talking metaphorically on the changes of Ireland so about his.

Rabindranath and Yeats both were aware of the "cultural roots" and had an ardent believe that the consciousness of the cultural and national origin is important. To Yeats "cultural roots" was the identity of an individual. So he never left it behind rather took it with him and proceed. Perhaps that is the reason why Celtic culture, tradition always comes into the writing of Yeats. He actually retold the Ireland and Irishness in his writings. According to the suggestion of Anderson the national consciousness forms from the print language. And Yeats also consider it as an important fact that to give a raise the Irishness. Yeats took the work of writing as a means, which will help to build the nation with their origin and individuality. In 1892, December 17 Yeats wrote a letter to the editor of United Ireland. There he tried to explain the necessity of "de-Anglicising of Ireland". To do so the writings of olders can be represented in a new version, where there will Ireland and the new concept. Undoubtly Yeats took that way and retell the old Ireland in his new voice. He wants to keep the origin of the Ireland as a symbol of pride but this much is not enough for the nationhood, this is known to Yeats also.

CONCLUSION

The twentieth century is vigilating the unfolding of various forms of nationalism, antinationalism and transnationalism. Due to this we see the thread of coming to an end of a nation-state, while a spike in ethnic conflict and secession can led rise of a new nationalism. Again the present form of nationalism is creating new windows, where the migration and diaspora, through that new created cultural, economic and social networks is the most important facts. All this focus towards the anticipation of "universalization" or "globalization". Though these new elements are creating bridges over the world but again making some parts let alone. It is difficult to assess this idea. The present time is showing the extreme nationalist view by every nation which actually help them to protect their identity and origin. In our country Bangladesh, the nationalist identity is becoming acute day by day. Which is good sign for the newly born country but at the same time we are punitive towards the tribal people. Whereas this type of ethnic traditions should be protected. The conflicting facts about the rise of nationalism is not decided yet though we can see from the beginning of the history of nationalism, it is questioned. Giving this ideology, an exact position is impossible as time to time it is changing and will be changed.

REFERENCES

1. Alam, Fakrul (2012). Rabindranath Tagore and National Identity Formation in Bangladesh: Essays and Reviews. Bangla Academy.
2. Anderson, Benedict (2001). "Western Nationalism and Eastern Nationalism." *New Left Review*: pp. 31-41. Web.
3. Bhabha, Homi (1994). *The Location of Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1994. Print.
4. Chatterjee, Partha (2014). *The Partha Chatterjee Omnibus*. New Delhi: Oxford UP, 2014. Print.
5. Sanford, John (2001). "Roy Foster: Yeats emerged as poet of Irish Revolution, despite past political beliefs" <https://news.stanford.edu/news/2001/april18/foster-418.html>
6. Tagore, Rabindranath (2014). *Crisis in Civilization*. Kolkata, Visva-Bharati, 2014. Print.
7. Tagore, Rabindranath (2009). *Nationalism*. New Delhi, India: Penguin India, 2009. Print.

8. Tagore, Rabindranath (2003). Rabindranath Tagore Omnibus I. New Delhi: Rupa, 2003. Print.

Corresponding Author

Ritu Yadav*

Research Scholar, Department of Arts, Maharishi University of Information Technology, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh