Culture, Cohesion, and Creativity in Tagore's *Creative Unity* (1922)

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Abstract

Creative Unity outlines the philosophical and cultural reflections on the problems of the modern times. The central objective of this paper is to read Tagore vis-à-vis the analytic paradigm of 'rooted cosmopolitanism' propounded by Kwame Anthony Appiah. Appiah's framework is important because it unravels a space for ethical sociality based on ideas and action. By looking at Tagore's ideas of sociality expressed in *Creative Unity*, this paper seeks to argue that Tagore's vision of cosmopolitanism vastly predates Appiah's idea of rooted cosmopolitanism. Furthermore, Tagore's ideas of creative unity and communicative actions generate a unique response to the cultural and historical anxieties of the times.

**Keywords**: 1922, Tradition, Community, Cosmopolitanism, Modernity, Anxiety

The decade of 1920s marks an important shift in Tagore's literary career. An increasing disenchantment with the political conceptualisation of the nation and western modernity underlines his thoughts and philosophical reflections in this phase. Particularly, 1922 seems to be a landmark year in Tagore's creative repository. Apart from the publication of *Creative Unity*, this year also witnesses the publication of his poems *Sishu Bholanath* and his drama *Muktadhara*. What remains a common thread between *Muktadhara*, *Sishu Bholanath*, and *Creative Unity* is a relentless search for a spirit of unity and cohesion, alongside his resistance against the repressive forces of colonial modernity.

This paper deals with Tagore's *Creative Unity* essays and their complex engagements with the context of the 1920s. After the First World War, a mood of deep-seated pessimism engulfs the 1920s. The combined effect of western modernity and the relentless muscle-flexing of the modern state rode "roughshod over human needs" (Bagchi 39).Besides, the binary between materiality-spirituality emerged as a counter-point to the prevailing anarchy. Rabindranath's *Creative Unity* draws on a symbiotic relationship between the East and the West. Rather than following the essentialized modernist binary of Western materiality and Eastern spirituality, it envisages a single world of cohesion and unity.

While commenting on *Creative Unity*, Fakrul Alam notes, it expresses "his religious beliefs, his art, his views on women and East-West relationships" (174). The essays deal with an inclusive idea of philosophical, social, and cultural development. It also marks the evolution of the poet-philosopher into a poet educationist. Importantly, the final essay of the volume, "An Eastern University" lays out the conceptual framework of Tagore's dream project Visva-Bharati. By invoking a cosmopolitan idea of social and spiritual justice, *Creative Unity* opens up the possibilities of social cohesion and harmony against the "wide panorama of futility and anarchy" (Eliot 23). This paper situates *Creative Unity* within the historical conjuncture of 1922—the highpoint of modernism. The central objective of this paper is to read Tagore vis-à-vis an analytic paradigm of 'rooted cosmopolitanism' propounded by Kwame Anthony Appiah. Appiah's framework is important because it unravels a space for ethical sociality based on ideas and action.

Rooted Cosmopolitanism

In *The Ethics of Identity* (2006), Kwame Anthony Appiah differentiates "rooted cosmopolitanism" from other universalism and cosmopolitanisms. He identifies two dominant strands in the vision of cosmopolitanism: "Cosmopolitanism…gives to airy nothing a local habitation and a name: but aery nothing it remains. Others view it not as unattainable but as objectionable; for them, it is a distinctively modern mode of deracination" (214). Appiah's framework offers an alternative model of cosmopolitanism by offering three models of sociality: the sociality of mutual dependence, sociality as an end, and instrumental sociality. The sociality of mutual dependence remains predicated on "human nurture, moral and intellectual education (268)." Sociality as an end could be imagined through the conceptualisation of discursive ties with friends, lovers, parents, children, the wider family, colleagues and neighbours. Instrumental sociality, conversely, depends on the logic of production through the relative valuations of culture (literature, arts), education, and money. Appiah advocates the necessity of agential subversion through mutuality, dialogue and collective action.
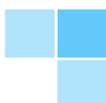
In his defence of cosmopolitanism, Appiah espouses the importance of special responsibilities, associative duties and a need for metaphysical consensus for an effective instrumentalised action. For him, the primary conditions of instrumentalised action are ethical partiality, moral equality, ethical obligation, cosmopolitan patriotism, confrontation and conversation, globalising human rights, cosmopolitan conversations. An ethical consideration marks Appiah's ideals of cosmopolitanism and social justice (231). The historicization of social ties and acting as an embedded self within that network of power—paves the way for a new form of ethical sociality. Its local character and increasing commitment to individual rights remain foundational to Appiah's framework. Individual rights can only be secured through the elimination of threats posed by larger social groups. Therefore, the focus should be on resolving conflicts, even if there is disagreement (253).

Appiah lays enormous emphasis on the conversation between contrarian beliefs, sensibilities and ideas as a mode of ensuring social justice. Pheng Cheah, in a different context, argues the impossibility of transcending the postcolonial nation-state in the name of cosmopolitanism. Neither can popular nationalism tap and co-opt the movement of cosmopolitan movements across the world. Cheah also argues for the "most rigorous sense of responsibility" (197), addressing these critical debates in contemporary sociology. Martha Nussbaum considers cosmopolitan education can be harnessed and channelised through the recognition of "common aims, aspirations, and values...instantiated in the many cultures and their histories" (qtd. In Appiah 256). Nevertheless, Appiah thinks, "Proximity, spiritual or otherwise, is as conducive to antagonism as it is to amity" (256). Hence, Appiah defends the necessity of dialogue among "static closed cultures, each of which is internally homogeneous and different from each other" (256). This dialogue can be forged through the re-imagining of a community where human rights are protected as "it is the only vernacular that enables dependent persons to perceive themselves as moral agents and to act against practices that are ratified by the weight and authority of their cultures" (Ignatieff, qtd. in Appiah 260).

It is interesting how Appiah's framework of 'rooted cosmopolitanism' alerts us to the necessities of ethical sociality through communicative action. In his *Creative Unity*, this paper argues that Rabindranath Tagore vastly predates this idea of ethical belonging through dialogue, reciprocity, and collective welfare. Appiah's "rooted cosmopolitanism" calls for an egalitarian space of human rights and social justice. At the level of praxis, he focuses on developing a community that enables individuals to act as moral agents against institutional discrimination. His focus also remains on the necessity of unflinching ethical commitment to the fields of associative values, rights, responsibilities, and justice. Tagore embeds his vision of an alternative social community in Santiniketan to develop an intellectually aware, socially conscious and politically aware group of people who re-imagine the discursive boundaries of social foundations by different forms of socialization.

The Comparative Cultural Context in Europe and India

Jean Micheal Rabate, in the introduction to his book *1922: Literature, Culture and Politics* argues: "What was looming was less the perception of the new as a break with the past, and more so the wish to reconsider and reconfigure the entire system, a system of values to which one would often give the name of "culture" (3). Philosophically, it is marked by a division "between "Continental" and "Analytic" philosophy; the former still bearing a modernist impulse of a creative evolution in its relation to the sciences and to the
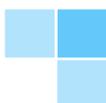
arts, the latter choosing instead to focus on the foundations of logic" (Lambert 216). The literary context marks the highpoint of Modernism, with the publication of *Jacob's Room*, *Ulysses* and *The Waste Land.* An eternal quest for "Shantih*"* commingles with an overriding concern with the collapsing structures of faith and optimism. The image of "a solitary (ipsorelative) mutable (aliorelative) man" (*Ulysses* 831) living through the "rattle of the bones" (*The Waste Land* 11) depicts the urban existential dilemma, modernism offers. *Jacob's Room* (1922) engages with the axiomatic premises of happiness and discontents to find a perspective within the randomized flows of time or Armstrong calls "disrupted temporality" (19).

Against this "disrupted temporality", one finds the resurgence of an alternative political culture that clings onto the notions of totality, sovereignty and exception. 1922 was a politically volatile phase not only in Europe but also in India. In 1919, Tagore's refusal of Knighthood as a protest to the Jallianwala Bagh massacre provokes fierce controversy in the urban intelligentsia. The refusal of the Knighthood was like a direct confrontation with the British state and its imperial violence. Notably, Tagore's essays on Nationalism were published in 1917, where he vehemently critiques the construct of the nation which turned into an "automaton led by the power of greed" ("Nationalism in the West" 422). When a nation becomes an organized power, it perpetrates every form of crime and violence. The Jallianwala Bagh Massacre done at the behest of Reginald Edward Harry Dyer was an instance of that.

In *The Centre of Indian Culture* (1919), Tagore addresses the problematics of the European University and its institutional structures. In *Rajnitir Pathakrame Rabindranath*, Ashok Sen informs that Tagore met some of the boys of the Phoenix School who came to Santiniketan to stay under the patronization of C.F. Andrews. After meeting the boys of Phoenix School, Tagore wrote to Andrews in a letter, "They are trained to obey which is bad for a human being, for obedience is good, not because it is good in itself but because it is a sacrifice. Those boys are in danger of forgetting to wish for anything, and wishing is the best part of attainment" (qtd. in Ashok Sen 66). In another letter to Andrews, he expresses his "misgiving about their system of training."

Sen's book is important as it traces the trajectory of Tagore's political thoughts. With the arrival of Gandhi in the Indian Nationalist frame, it forms an interesting historical conjuncture. Sen identifies how the protest against the Rowlatt Acts in 1919 and the Non-cooperation movement organised by Gandhi in the 1920s brought into sharper focus the questions of anti-colonial struggles. Tagore's cynicism with nationalism was not restricted to European nation alone. As the historian Sabyasachi Bhattacharya notes in his recent work that apart from being conscious of the problems of the European nation state, Tagore was also conscious of "the fault lines in the nationhood of the Indian people" (*Antinomies of Nationalism* 35). His novels like *The Home and the World*, *Four Chapters* bear testimony to that. What he proposes as an alternative to this fiercely mercantile agenda of nationalism is the ideals of human unity. The fact that Tagore was quite anxious about the nature of the Anti-Rowlatt protest in the country seems evident in Tagore's letter to Gandhi: "Passive resistance is a force which is not necessarily moral in itself; it can be used against truth as well as for it...Evil on the other side naturally begets evil on the other, injustice leading to violence and insult to vengefulness" (qtd. in Ashok Sen 97). Sen informs that how Tagore was disillusioned with the violent and vindictive turn in the anti-Rowlatt protest movements. Furthermore, Tagore expressed his doubts over Gandhi's

resort to the principles of boycott and his symbol of pre-modern "Charkha" as a mode of collective awareness and realization. Admittedly, he deviated from Gandhi on the grounds of educational policy, arguing that a break in the ongoing form of education would leave multitudes of students uneducated. It is interesting that while being part of the anti-colonial struggle, Rabindranath was not aiming at the immediate view of social transformation through "swaraj." Instead, he aimed to develop greater cultural and political unity beyond the barriers of parochial nationalism. In a letter to a Guajarati poet who was critical about Tagore's stance in the Non-cooperation movement: "I have chosen, my own practical field of work—not mere turning out of verses—and through it I hope the idea which I consider to be true and vitally needful for my country will one day be realised" (qtd. in Ashok Sen 112).

Tagore was writing in a world moving in different directions philosophically, culturally, politically, aesthetically, exploring the interface of limits and limitlessness, totality and fragmentation. The art historian Partha Mitter refers to the works of Binay Kumar Sarkar who considers this phase to be an important watershed marker in the field of Indian art as Sarkar rejects the Bengal School's much-vaunted tradition of spirituality, and made a "passionate plea on behalf of the avant-garde 'aesthetics of autonomy', comparing it with the nationalist demand for self-rule or autonomy from the Raj" (16). Alongside this search for autonomy, a spectral fascination for European thought informs the core of Indian political and cultural discourse. The 1920s were particularly significant because the Indian nationalist imaginary was already grounded in the search for a "political monotheism" which resonated with the thoughts of Carl Schmitt's *Political Theology*, argues Anustup Basu. He argues that the "Schmittian notion of the political", which calls for the rise of a sovereign dictator capable of bending the law, was working through its discursive textualization of *The Bhagvat Gita*. Basu's reflections highlight how The Gita's predominance in the Nationalist discourse bolstered the image of a superman "Avtar" who exists outside the fold of the law and historical time.

Basu's response, woven around the importance of *The Bhagavat Gita* in the Twentieth Century Indian cultural and National imaginary, triggers a different field of debate, provoking the necessity of further reflections. In fact, it importantly alerts one to the historical duality underlying the time-spirit between a collapsing civilization and the increasing propensity of measuring the political along theological lines. Tagore was aware of its possible repercussions, as he was aware of the dangers of a violent, totalitarian state. In *Creative Unity*, Tagore, therefore, accords his emphasis on four fundamental aspects of developing a society: creative imagination, creative liberty, embeddedness in tradition and communicative action.

In his recent book on Tagore-Rolland correspondence, Chinmoy Guha cites a conversation between Roman Rolland and Tagore. A passage from the conversation adequately sums up that Tagore's response to contemporary times. His anxiety was more about the erosion of humanistic values than the immediate political independence of a nation in fetters:

> In 1921, when I was in Germany, young people came to me and said, 'Sir, we have lost our faith in our masters. What are we going to do?' Their faces were emaciated, their bodies feeble, but there was a lustre of keen idealism in their expression; they were all the time trying to grasp the situation better. They had apparently no definite idea, and while dreaming of creating a new world, they had

some vague expectation that an old man from the East may be of some help to them… (qtd. in Chinmoy Guha 112).

From his writings of *Sadhana*, it is perceptible how Tagore, despite the raging presence of pain and mortality, was trying to look at the brighter side of the world. His optimism about a brighter tomorrow and universal harmony resonates in his later writings as well. In *The Centre of Indian Culture* (1919), a collection of his lectures delivered in Madras, Tagore sets the philosophical goals of this new world: "He alone sees, who sees all beings as himself" (*The Centre of Indian Culture* 491). Visibly, he was unhappy with the contemporary world and sought to re-build the world along ethical lines. This process of re-building takes place through the evolution of the poet-philosopher into a poet-educationist. Admittedly, Tagore's vision of unity offered a panacea to the dull, dreary mechanization of the modern civilization. However, the alternative proposed by Tagore was not at all an isolated, individualized response to the west from a differential eastern perspective. Instead, it emanated from a sense of cultural kinship, camaraderie and rootedness that his essays on 'creative unity' endorse.

Creative Unity and Social Harmony

In a recent article, "Visva-Sahitya: Rabindranath Tagore's Idea of World Literature", Rosinka Chaudhuri argues:

> For Rabindranath, *visva* is an enormously significant category not because he was referred to as *visva kavi* or world poet by the Bengali public (he became an international celebrity after he won the Nobel Prize in 1913), but because for him, as he said himself, the creative process itself was correlated to the immediacy of existence in the world. The category also comes up repeatedly in the talk itself, prefacing not just sahitya, but also *manab* or man, when he refers to *visvamanab* in the context of *visvasahitya*, as we shall see. (261)

Tagore's *Creative Unity* also explores this co-relation between the creative process and the immediacy of social existence. Eclectically, he draws on an array of divergent topics, adumbrating the goals and purpose of the newly established Visva-Bharati. There are ten essays in *Creative Unity* (1922): "The Poet's Religion", "The Creative Ideal", "The Religion of the Forest", "An Indian Folk Religion", "East and West", "The Modern Age", "The Spirit of Freedom", "The Nation", "Woman and Home", "An Eastern University." Interestingly, the essays deal with two broader areas—the ethical aspect of a poet's role, creative ideal and the aspects of social liberty lying within the Indian culture, which feels stifled under the duress of the modern age. The last essay articulates the vision of an Eastern University. This vision seems to intertwine the two areas of the poet's role: the ethical and the social. The arrangement of the essays from "The Poet's Religion" to the idea of "An Eastern University" bears testimony to the gradual transition of the poet's role from being a mere poet to an educator, keeping the ethical and social pursuits intact.

"The Poet's Religion" has an interesting structure. Here, Tagore unravels the dialectics of "civility" and "hurry" in human behaviour. While civility requires patience, perfection and restraint through the harmonious fusion of voice, gesture and movement, words and action, our needs are "rude and unceremonious" (495). This dialectic of civility and hurry reminds one of the Nietzschean dyads of the "Dionysian"—the unruly creative force, and the 'Apollonian'—the harmonizing impulse. However, Tagore traces an underlying unity between the two paradigms, showing that man is "not a mere living

catalogue of endless wants; there is in them an ideal of perfection, a sense of unity, which is a harmony between parts and a harmony with surroundings" (495). "The Poet's Religion" begins with the constructive definition of the role of a poet who acts as an intermediary between the forms of necessity and organization. It is evident from the outset that Tagore attributes an ethical value to the poet who despite remaining embedded within the socio-historical field of necessity has an extended personality that unravels the "joy of unity" (495). This search for an aesthetic and cultural unity, harmony and cohesion re-visits the work and leisure binary, argues in favour of their points of intersection for a greater unity beyond the discursive divisions. In this section of the essay, Tagore invokes how the ideal of love transmutes the ostensibly destructive sexual passion into a "perfection of beauty" and "spiritual truth". While the first section deals with the ideal of love, in the second section, Tagore, through a retrospective plunge into his childhood days, shows how the poetic imagination offered him a sense of peace and harmony with the natural world. It is fascinating the way he uses the metaphor of the web to depict the role of the poet as a creative synthesizer. The pleasure of the poet inheres in "interweaving the web of creation with His own patterns of many-coloured strands" (498). The analogy of reading the work of art as fabric makes the role of the poet decidedly intertextual: he is not merely the creator, but also the arranger and disposer. Tagore's philosophy of poetic imagination, quite like Coleridge's theory of poetic imagination, follows a pattern where it 'dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate.' As Tagore puts it the joy of creativity thrives on image-making and by dint of it he finds a rapprochement with the outside world. Thus, the poetic mind forges a harmony between the inner world of spirituality and the outer world of materiality. For Tagore, the poet is a dreamer, and his dream culminates in a vision that enables the creation of a "durable, substantial" canvas. Importantly, Tagore prioritizes faith over reason in search of unity because it is a gateway to the "unity of performance" while logic and reason propel us to the "greenroom where there is stagecraft but no drama at all."

In "My School", one of the essays in *Personality* (1917), Tagore articulates, "I believe in a spiritual world—not as anything separate from this world—but as its innermost truth. With the breath we draw we must always feel this truth that we are living in God" (394). The poet's religion exemplifies an eternal quest for a spiritual world and its innermost truth. The truth of poetry transcends the frontiers of doubt, truth and untruth. Therefore, the poet's religion is "fluid, like the atmosphere round the earth where lights and shadows play hide and seek, and the wind like a shepherd boy plays upon its reeds among flocks of clouds" (500). The use of a bucolic image while defining the religion of the poet resonates with the entire spectrum of Tagore's creative unfolding in *Creative Unity*. The question that invariably comes up in this context is whether Tagore's conceptualization of the poet as a spiritual seer of the innermost truth is isolated from the social limits and dimensions of poetry. However, it is notable that Tagore does not repudiate the social in favour of the spiritual. Evocatively, the poet instead dwells on the necessity of harmonizing emotions and impulses keeping the two sides open: "Life is a continual process of synthesis, and not of additions" (504). The poet's recurrent reference to the musical metaphor opens up a space of intertextuality, in which the process of poetic creation remains inextricably linked with the process of musical composition. With the invocation of the call of faith, Tagore thereby accords importance to the ideas of justice, creative liberty and the "expression of the infinite" (*Creative Unity* 504). This relentless search for the infinite comes as an alternative to his overriding concerns about the

increasing growth of the nation in their trust in the "present machines of system" (*Creative Unity* 505).

In *The Waterfall* (1922) (Alternatively *Muktadhara*), Tagore peddles this same idea with a resolute critique of the increasing propensity towards the machine-maniac human civilisation. In May 1922, in a letter to Kalidas Nag, he wrote:

> In your letter you have referred to a discussion on the machine; that machine plays a vital role in this play…. Those who use the machine to hurt others meet with disastrous consequences themselves because the humanity they assault is also in them; their very machines impair the human within themselves. (qtd. in Abhijit Sen 109)

The philosophy of *Muktadhara*, thus, resonates with greater spiritual joy and harmony, a transcendence beyond the barriers posed by the machines. Therefore, it ends with a deeper spiritual awakening interspersed with a revolutionary impulse:

> Victory to Him, who is Terrible
> The Lord of Destruction,
> The Uttermost Peace!
> The Dissolver of Doubts,
> The Breaker of fetters,
> Who carries us beyond all conflicts,
> the Terrible! the Terrible! (*The Waterfall* 207)

This search for an *enfant terrible* remains a persistent motif in Tagore's poetics. With an optimistic turn towards futurity, Tagore is ready to welcome "the sudden guest who comes as the messenger of emancipation, are bound to court defeat whatever may be their present wealth and power" (*Creative Unity* 505). This trope of a "sudden guest" or *atithi* is recurrent in Tagore. The arrival of that "sudden guest" will question the culturally cherished host-guest binary and the fundamental asymmetry of power. Although Tagore's approach sounds highly philosophical, it is not extricated from its social dimension. The harmonizing power that the poet harbours--endows one with a transformative zeal by dint of which the social and cultural parameters could be re-mapped and re-negotiated. This ostensibly philosophical outlook seems to be a gateway to Tagore's social vision, which as Sasadhar Sinha argues "could only come when the present possibilities of compromise and reform had been completely exhausted, and that this would involve the disappearance of one's own familiar world" (qtd. in Marsh 9). This search for self-remaking and the reimagining of the social ties permeates Tagore's *Creative Unity* essays.

Tagore's essay "The Creative Ideal" seeks to address and resolve this fundamental asymmetry of power by invoking a sense of unity and oneness in the "*Virupa-bhedah*" (*Creative Unity* 506) or separateness of forms. "The Creative Ideal", therefore, launches a quest for *pramanani* or the principle of mutual accommodation. The poet's religion was to give shape to the discordant impulses and emotions, but the creative ideal, on the other hand, channelises and transmutes the unruly, boisterous passions to mould it into harmony and cohesion. The creative joy, for Tagore, is not "pleasure" but is an outcome of "detachment from the self" and lives "in the freedom of spirit" (508). Tagore, quite compellingly, negotiates the ontological dichotomies of pain and pleasure by relativizing their premises: "But the pain of some great martyrdom has a detachment of eternity. It appears in all its majesty, harmonious in the context of everlasting life" (*Creative Unity*

509). For Tagore, the key factor in the Creative Ideal is "detachment" that throbs with "Eternal Passion, Eternal Pain" (*Creative Unity* 510). Thus, Tagore interlinks the individual pain with eternal pain and passion. Beyond the ontologies of pain and pleasure, they represent a source of joy and inspiration. The principle of mutual accommodation that Tagore follows in this essay seems to echo Tagore's conceptualisation of a singular world without divisions and internal fissures.

In *Creative Unity*, thus Tagore re-calibrates the civilizational ties along the lines of joy and harmony. This cultivation of joy, harmony and creativity is an antidote to the spiritual crisis the world suffered from. To re-build the structures of society, Tagore rests his faith in the religion of the forest. Amit Chaudhuri while reading Tagore comments "For Tagore, nature is the site of civilization, refinement, of certain ideals of the secular enlightenment, such as the ideal of living in harmony with the world—and it's a specifically Indian location for these things" (100). Undoubtedly, nature remains one of the key areas of joy and anxiety for Tagore. While his earlier poetry imagines nature in its idyllic, utopian bliss, from *Lipika* (1918-22), one finds a distinct shift in Tagore's reflection on nature. The historian Dipesh Chakrabarty identifies two contradictory ways of seeing the nation in Tagore: "the critical eye that sought defects in the nation for the purpose of reform and improvement, and the adoring eye that saw the nation as already beautiful and sublime" (151). His poems like "Kinu Goyalar Goli", "Banshi" resonate with the existential angst intrinsic to modern times. The serene and tranquil nature of *Sonar Tori* takes a dystopian turn in *Lipika*. Consequently, *Creative Unity* too reveals persistent anxiety about the exploitation of nature. In "The Religion of the Forest", Tagore dwells on the development of a natural kinship that transcends the conquest-union paradigm, intrinsic to the thoughts of the Enlightenment philosophy. Here he looks at the forest as a mode of harmonizing and synthesizing impulses. As Tagore points out that the forest serves as a gateway to a natural unity, severely wanted in the human civilization:

> India holds sacred, and counts as places of pilgrimage, all spots of which display a special beauty or splendour of nature. These had no original attraction on account of any special fitness for cultivation or settlement. Here, man is free, not to look upon Nature as a source of supply of his necessities, but to realise a soul beyond himself. (518)

In the next essay in the collection "An Indian Folk Religion", Tagore transcends beyond the parochial nature of Hindu-Muslim to invoke the Baul philosophy. As Tagore puts it: "the mystic philosophy of the body is the outcome of the attempt to get rid of all the outward shelters…" (527). Tagore, by his admission, learns how a living current of tradition flows through this folk religion, being impervious to any external imposition of thoughts and traditions. In an article, Kathleen M. O' Connell shows "educationally he distinguishes the need for various levels of education: education of the senses (*indriyer siksha*) and education of the intellect (*jnaner siksha*). Then he adds "cultivation of feeling" (*bodher tapasya/sadhana*) which involves an expansion of sympathy in kinship with all existence" (69). The invocation of a folk religion comes as a direct alternative to the hegemony of institutionalized religion.

In the essay, "East and West", Tagore articulates his vision of a cultural melting point between the east and the west. He shows the fault lines of the perception of an eternal dichotomy between the East and the West. Here, Tagore unpacks the compactness of generalisations underlying this binary by identifying how "the modern age has brought
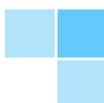
the geography of the earth near to us, but made it difficult for us to come into touch with man" (530). Critiquing the Western world's servitude to machines, Tagore calls for a liberation of the souls from the dungeon of the matter. The murderous, rapacious instinct of the west lacks the creative harmony and sympathy embedded in the living traditions of the East. Therefore, Tagore stresses the necessity of a syncretic association between the East and the West:

> The presence of the Western people in East is a human fact. If we are to gain anything from them, it must not be a mere sum total of legal codes and systems of civil and military services... We have our human birth right to claim direct help from the man of the West, if he has anything to give us. (536)

Whereas the West should turn towards the Eastern traditions, values and social system in order to overcome the voracious desire of modernity, the East must find her own balance in Science—the West can bring to her (537). As Tagore quite prophetically utters: "It must come to us, not through mere facts in juxtaposition, but through spontaneous sacrifice made by those who have the gift, and therefore the responsibility" (536).

In "The Modern Age", Tagore identifies that the principal reasons for unhappiness emanate the lack of wholeness and liberty. He castigates the method of crushing personality in the name of scientific temper. As Chakrabarty shows Tagore's disillusionment with modernity is so well documented in a series of articles from the 1920s:

> More than that, the similes and metaphors Tagore used in a series of articles from the 1920s on, to defend his understanding of the relationship between the poetic and the real (*bastab*), make it clear that he did not see anything aesthetic in these experiences of middle-class urban life. (159)

As a result, Tagore invokes the spirit of freedom to be the essential gateway to the world of joy and harmony. In the essay, "The Nation", Tagore re-iterates his views on aggressive, interest-driven nationalism. At the end of the essay, he enunciates the importance of a new group of people with ethical beliefs and commitments:

> ... I do not put my faith in any new institution, but in the individuals all over the world who think clearly, feel nobly, and act rightly, thus becoming the channels of moral truth. Our moral ideals do not work with chisels and hammers. Like trees, they spread their *roots* (Italics mine) in the soul and their branches in their sky, without consulting any architects for their plans. (551)

In "Woman and Home", Tagore accords importance to the value and spirit of human relationships. For him, the necessity of home does not reside in the narrowness of an enclosure but in the extension of the space into the personality. Again, the ethicality of human relationships gets priority in Tagore's vision.

The final essay, "An Eastern University" lays out the visions of Tagore's cosmopolitanism. In this essay, Tagore fundamentally dwells on the analytic doctrines of *moksha* (liberation) and *ananda* (joy). From the first essay of *Creative Unity*, Tagore stresses the idea of oneness and harmony. In this essay, he lays out the structure of his unifying social and political vision. It marks the evolution of a poet-philosopher into a poet-educator and administrator. The philosophical ideas and beliefs meet their praxis through Tagore's realization of the Santiniketan dreams. Interestingly, Tagore isolates

himself both from the western tradition of university education and the increasing propensity towards national schools and institutions in the east, which according to Tagore are derivative in nature. In the perpetually struggling world of modernity, Tagore envisages the necessity of a university space that can be of a cultural contact zone and thereby enabling the process of revealing different peoples to one another.

The search for a common truth, heritage and harmony underpins Tagore's conceptualisation of this university space. Going against the grain of the European education system, this new university is devoted to collect "its own scattered lamp and offer them to the enlightenment of the world" (558). The premises of a new university space that will operate through the paradigms of ethical values and virtues. Here Tagore stresses the necessity of cooperative and communicative actions as key to the realization of a collective goal. He remains strictly committed to the active agency of individual and collective actions as means of greater social cohesion and camaraderie.

In the Visva-Bharati Essays, Tagore calls Santiniketan a *Tirtha*, a sacred space. Here he clearly spells out that the motto of Santiniketan will not be on producing "cast iron and rigid standardized products." (Visva-Bharati Essays, Tagore Web). Instead, Visva-Bharati will thrive on the nourishment of belief, naturalness and spontaneity. Evidently, through his mapping of new university space, Tagore seeks to re-build the crumbling structures of a community. This re-imagination of the communitarian bonding emerges ethical alterity to the problems of greed, maniac obsession with power, and other forms of social and ethical discriminations. What is unique about Tagore is the intersection of his staunch rootedness to Indian traditions and an unwavering commitment to a cosmopolitan dream of changing the world.

Ranjan Ghosh, in the introduction to his book, comments, Tagore's, "... transcendent problematic of the 'East meeting the West' was deeply constellative and diffractive – the rhythm of negotiation was nowhere close to a demure handshaking but alive with the throb of interference, infringement, entanglement, porosity and informed pervasiveness" (15). This possibility of constellation, diffraction and entanglement between different cultures, spaces and peoples—would unravel a site of condensation and negotiation, the processual mechanism a tradition lives by. However, what is unique about Tagore is the idea of individual creative liberty, where the presence of human touch could salvage the world from degenerating into a mechanical abyss.

To conclude, Tagore's vision of creatively enabled group of individuals re-imagines the ontological limits of community, measured along the lines of value and labour. With a coalescence of love, labour, faith, Tagore (re)builds a social community where cultural osmosis is possible through localized goals and action plans. Appiah argues the ties of social relation could be re-imagined not merely through dialogues and conversations but also through the mutuality of reciprocal agencies and actions. Tagore's *Creative Unity* sets the cornerstone for such reciprocal actions at many levels: individual, philosophical, cultural, and social. The aspects of nationality, sociality, and ethicality—coming under a purview constitute a constellative framework of a culturally rooted reciprocal actions and harmony. Tagore's social imaginary of Visva-Bharati, therefore does exist in an ideological void. Instead, it remains deeply committed to an ethical ideology of developing a historically informed, culturally rooted, politically aware generation capable of catering to the needs of the time. In *A Hundred Horizons*, Sugata Bose argues that Tagore fosters an ideal of "universalism with difference" (234). The
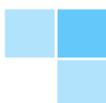
measures of Tagore's universalism were different as a sense of Asian Universalism informs Tagore's ideals, argues Bose ("Tagorean Universalism and Cosmopolitanism" 217). Mohammad A. Qayum, in the introduction to his edited volume, *Tagore, Nationalism and Cosmopolitanism* argues, "Tagore's cosmopolitanism was more cultural and spiritual in nature, in which the individual would be expected to share a sense of hospitality and sympathy towards all fellow human beings and maintain" an openness to the "world around him" (18-19). Through this ethical openness, Tagore retains the multitudinous streams of tradition within this conceptual rubric of one tradition. This sense of tradition shares an inextricable relationship with Tagore's vision of *Itihasa*, which is "humble and habitual" (R. Guha 94)—never final, always in the process of becoming, resisting epistemic closures.

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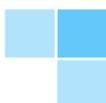
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