1976

Rabindranath Tagore's Philosophy of International Education

Asirvatham Periaswamy

Loyola University Chicago

Recommended Citation

http://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_diss/1588

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses and Dissertations at Loyola eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Loyola eCommons. For more information, please contact ecommons@luc.edu.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 License.
Copyright © 1976 Asirvatham Periaswamy
RABINDRANATH TAGORE'S

PHILOSOPHY OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

by

Asirvatham Periaswamy

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of Loyola University of Chicago in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Docotor of Philosophy

May

1976
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express my heartfelt thanks and appreciation to Dr. Gerald Gutek for the thoughtful reading of the dissertation and for the many valuable suggestions which helped to accentuate and clarify the points and improved immeasurably the organization of the material. In his capacity as my chief faculty adviser, he guided me for several months in my research. Without the inspiration he provided, the philosophy of Tagore, embodied in this dissertation, could not have been formulated.

I would like to note here my sincere gratitude to Dr. Rosemary Donatelli, Chairman, Foundations of Education, for her unfailing patience and superb skill in guiding me in the technique of research. I also want to acknowledge with deep appreciation the help and encouragement given by Dean John Wozniak, Dean of the School of Education.

I am very greatful to Dean Raymond Mariella, Dean of Loyola Graduate School, for his gracious thoughtfulness in giving me an extension to complete my research.
Vita

The author, Asirvatham Periaswamy, is the son of Abraham Periaswamy and Packiammal (Ponnuswamy) Periaswamy. He was born November 17, 1927, in Pandamangalam, Madras, India.

His elementary education was obtained in the Catholic School system. He completed his secondary education at St. Ann's Boarding High School, Tindivanam, Madras, India, where he graduated in 1947.

He attended Loyola College, Madras and graduated with a B.A. in March 1955, majoring in Economics and Political Science. While attending Loyola College he was a member of the Student Social Service League, and Catholic University Student's Federation.

Mr. Periaswamy also attended Meston Training College, Madras and earned his B.T. (Bachelor of Teaching) in April, 1957, majoring in Education and Sociology. He did his graduate studies in English for a year (1961-62) at Presidency College, Madras.

He came to Chicago in September 1962 and began his graduate studies in English at DePaul University, Chicago and received his M.A. in February 1966.

He started graduate studies in Education at Loyola University of Chicago in 1967 and received his M.A. in 1969, majoring

Mr. Periaswamy taught in Catholic Schools in Madras State, India for six years and in Chicago, at St. Stanislaus Kostka High School for ten years (January, 1963-June, 1973). He also taught as a part-time lecturer at Loyola University, for two years (1971-73) teaching Philosophy of Education to undergraduates.

He wrote articles on Social and Political issues, in a Catholic weekly, Survavyabi, in Pondicherry, India.

He is a member of American Society for Health Education and Training as well as Chicago Area Society for Health Education and Training. He is the membership Chairman for the Chicago Area Society.

At present, he is the Education Coordinator for Professional Services in the Department of Hospital Education at St. Joseph Hospital, Chicago. He teaches part-time at Northeastern Illinois University, Chicago.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acknowledgments</th>
<th>ii</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vita</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contents of Appendices</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Biography of Rabindranath Tagore</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. The Educational Philosophy of Tagore.</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Tagore's Philosophy of International Education</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. Concept of Tagore's International Education: Its Relevance and Implication</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. Summary and Conclusion</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix I</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix II</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix III</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix IV</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## CONTENTS OF APPENDICES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>APPENDIX</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>The Subjects offered</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>Degree Programs</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>Degree Program in Fine Arts</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>Festivals</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
"No more war, war never again." While this often and much quoted phrase from Pope Paul's address to the United Nations General Assembly in October, 1965, reveals the ultimate purpose of the United Nations, namely "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war," as he comes to realize that armed conflict between nations is an evil, civilized man has come to the definite conclusion that war can be avoided. Through the United Nations and other world organizations, he has started to establish machinery for lessening its evils.

The march of civilization has brought us two horrible global wars within a quarter of a century. For centuries great men of religious and humanitarian ideals held that war is not a necessary result of human nature but rather an unnecessary outcome of faulty institutions and wrong ways of thinking. Many philosophers have expressed similar sentiments. But in the absence of sincere fellowship and brotherhood conflict will grow and war will break out. In the spirit of ecumenism, all religions emphasize universal fellowship. Christianity preaches love for fellow men. Hinduism used the
OM to express peace to all mankind, and Buddhism propagates universal brotherhood. But only war breaks this universal love.¹

Humanity today is struggling against insecurity. Although a relative stability is characteristic of the contemporary international situation, the problem of war and peace nevertheless continues to be fundamental. The future of civilization is at stake. That is why every effort to avert fresh conflicts is so important. Mankind is vitally concerned in the triumph of the principles of peaceful co-existence. International education, in particular, seeks to educate the coming generation in the ideals of peace and concrete resolution.

The world at the present time needs teachers who are not only sensitive to the rights of the exploited segments of society in their own culture but also aware of the plight of humans around the world.² This sensitivity of teachers is based on the humanistic philosophy that man everywhere has an inherent right to freedom and dignity. After two disastrous world wars, men who may find it difficult to agree on anything also have generally agreed that we must work

² Ibid., p. 29.
together to eradicate the roots of war. According to Adolph E. Meyer:

Education is the best defense against war and destruction. Obviously education is man's most formidable tool for survival. The great educators of the past like Socrates, Tolstoy and John Dewey have pointed out that change must come from within and that it must be based upon ethical principles. Rabindranath Tagore is rightly considered to be among them. These educators strongly believed that humanity could save itself from war and they expressed that education is the only alternative. Besides, most of mankind lives in poverty surrounded by the undeveloped wealth of nature. Half of mankind is chronically hungry, poorly clothed and inadequately housed. Yet in an age when understanding and mutuality are more imperative than ever before, the seeds of suspicion remain frighteningly strong. We are threatened by bigotry and intolerance; almost one-half of the world is illiterate and there is still a vast gap between the haves and have-nots.3

Again, education is the only alternative to world-wide conflict. Demanding effort and discipline, it awakens man to the creative possibilities that William James called the "wider-self." Living by pretension, modern man covers his selfishness with the name of convention. Man's tragedy is his lack of involvement and concern. He preaches love, but in reality he is a slave to his own egocentric desires. Educational thinkers like Comenius and Tolstoy appealed to the idealism

of mankind and attempted to apply reason to man's institutional life. Genuine education is humanism, and the aim of international education is to foster world humanism. Though the term "international" was first used by Jeremy Bentham after the creation of nation states in Europe, the idea of the unity of mankind is as old as man himself.

Leading theorists such as Erasmus, Comenius, Tolstoy and Tagore have sought to organize a universal state. Modern communication and transportation teach us that we are inevitably headed toward the unification of the world. But the only question is whether that unification will be achieved by conquest or consent. The most pressing task of man everywhere is to see to it that the unification is achieved by consent. And this can be done only by unremitting effort to move toward world community and world organization. International understanding through international education is a means for such a goal. Through international education, men would understand one another and appreciate the common heritage of humanity. We are living through one of the greatest revolutionary periods in history. The real goal is justice and to enable every human being to achieve his highest potentialities.

5 Ibid., p. 5.
No national government can protect the lives and properties and preserve the culture of its people.

The world is changing rapidly and man's ideas are changing with it. Since the end of the First World War many individuals around the world became interested in the establishment of a World University. As early as 1919 Paul Otlet of Belgium and Henri La Fontaine of France established a World University, but it was closed in the mid-thirties due to lack of funds. In 1942 the English philosopher Bertrand Russell wrote and urged the establishment of an international university. In 1942 Albert Einstein expressed his desire in favor of a world university. In 1962 Dwight Eisenhower spoke in an international conference on education and expressed the need of an international university. Rabindranath Tagore was one of the pioneer figures in the movement for international education. He established an International University known as Visva Bharati in Santiniketan, India where scholars from several countries participated in seminars and lectures on international problems. Tagore devoted his life to the theory and practice of international education. The purpose of this


7 Ibid., p. 71.
dissertation is to investigate Tagore's concept of international education which was designed to facilitate international understanding and by this understanding peace and prosperity for mankind. Through international education, Tagore believed that it would be possible to establish peace and create prosperity among men. Chapter II deals with the biography of Tagore and of his major works. Without a knowledge of Tagore's world, of his inheritance, and of his life it would be impossible to understand his philosophy. Chapter III describes his philosophy of education. Chapter IV describes his philosophy of international education. Chapter V examines the relevance of his concept of international education and its implications and Chapter VI summarizes and develops conclusions.

Since extensive works on Tagore's concept of international education are not available in the United States, the author of this dissertation conducted extensive research at Visva-Bharati during a research trip to India in the summer of 1972. He had the opportunity to meet several professors and officials of Visva-Bharati who had worked with Tagore. At that time, the author engaged in useful conversation with two professors who are authorities on Tagore. He has also used their published works in the preparation of this dissertation. They are Dr. H. B. Mukerjee, author of Education
for Fullness, which is a study of the educational thought and experiment of Rabindranath Tagore, and Dr. D. Datta who wrote several books on Indian Philosophy and taught in several universities in the United States. The writer also interviewed some of the graduate students of education at Visva-Bharati.

Interestingly enough, he also discussed some of the ideas of Tagore and the problems of education of modern India with Professors H. E. Majumder, Chairman, Department of Education and with Dr. J. E. De, Professor of Education. Since these two are experienced educators, their free opinions and suggestions were very valuable. While at Visva Bharati, the writer used the extensive collection of books and pamphlets on Tagore and his philosophy.

While there are many approaches which could be used for a study of Tagore as an educator, social reformer, poet, philosopher, statesman, and world citizen, this dissertation examines his concept of international education. Tagore, who proposed a meeting of East and West, was an early and significant advocate of international education. It is hoped that this study will be useful to students of education, in general, and to scholars in educational foundations in particular. The
framework for this dissertation involves both the study of Tagore in relation to the educational context of India and in relation to the larger international dimension. Tagore's ideas on international education had their genesis in the multi-factored cultural context of Indian life and society. In order to appreciate Tagore's ideas on international education and reconciliation, some examination of his life and the broader context of his educational theory and practice is needed. Chapter II examines the life of Tagore, Indian author, philosopher, and educator.
CHAPTER II

BIOGRAPHY OF RABINDRANATH TAGORE

Rabindranath Tagore, who was destined to be regarded for generations as one of the greatest and certainly the most correct of Indian poets and statesmen, was born in Calcutta on May 6, 1861, son of Devendranath and Sarada Devi. He was his parents' fourteenth child and the fifteenth child did not survive.

When Rabindranath was born, it was not a significant event in the family where all elder brothers and sisters and their families -- children and grandchildren -- lived together as one joint household. He was named Rabindranath or Rabi for short, meaning "the sun." It was an unusual coincidence that he was born on the same day that the famous Indian statesman Motilal Nehru, was born in Agra where the world famed white marbeled Taj Mahal stands.

The original family name was Banerji. But the term Thakur which means literally a Lord, was used to address the

---

Brahmans. The early British officials anglicized "Thakur" as "Tagore" and it was taken over by this family as their surname. 3

Rabindranath's grandfather Dwarkanath Tagore was a highly respected leader of Calcutta's Hindu community. He was popularly called Prince Dwarkanath Tagore because of his elegant appearance, magnificent way of living, and his generous public charities. Many public institutions received his generous help. He helped to establish several institutions in Calcutta. The oldest and finest library in India, the first medical center of modern education in India, the first medical college and hospital in Calcutta, and the Presidency College of Calcutta are a few of the institutions assisted by his generosity. 4 Tagore recollects:

My grandfather was among those whom the orthodox Hindu Society had excommunicated and who were looked upon with suspicion by men of other religions, because they were trying to revive the true spiritual traditions of Hinduism and re-establish them in our country. 5

Dwarkanath was a scholar, shrewd politician and social reformer. He was a staunch supporter of Raja Rammohun Roy,

5 Ibid., p. 21.
an outstanding social and religious reformer, who heroically crusaded against the old Hindu practice of Suttee.\(^6\)

It is interesting to note that Roy was one who persistently advocated the modernization of India. Even though at one time the Hindus made adventurous voyages to all parts of the known world, later somehow or other there was a taboo against sea voyages. Despite this injunction, Dwarkanath twice visited England, in 1842 and again in 1844. During his second visit he was given a grand reception by Queen Victoria.\(^7\)

During his second visit to Europe, he died in London on August 1, 1846 at the age of fifty-one. His sudden death was a great shock to his young family. He left behind three sons. The eldest, Devendranath, father of Rabindranath, the second, Girindranath whose two grandsons Alanindranath and Gaganendranath became famous artists, and Nagendranath, the third.

Rabindranath's father, Devendranath, was highly respected among the people of Calcutta as a saintly man. Therefore, he was popularly known as the Maharshi, an enlightened man of God in the tradition of great sages of India.

\(^6\) The Hindu widow burning herself on the same funeral pyre as her husband.

\(^7\) Kripalini, p. 22.
Devendranath's translation of the *Rigveda* and the *Upanishads* (both of Hindu Scripture) into the Bengali language proved his profound knowledge of Hinduism and Bengali literature. He also had an excellent command of English, Persian, and Sanskrit. The Maharshi took the full responsibility of managing the large joint family and its vast estates. Being a religious as well as a social reformer, he was conscious of his rights and scrupulous in fulfilling his obligations. The impact of the Maharshi's life on his son Rabindranath was profound. Later in his life Rabindranath said:

My father was very particular in all arrangements and orderings. He disliked leaving this vague or undetermined, and never allowed slovenliness or make-shifts. He had a well defined code to regulate his relations with others and theirs with him. In this he was different from the generality of his countrymen. With the rest of us a little laxity this way or that did not signify; so in our dealings with him we had to be anxiously careful.

Rabindranath's loss of his mother when he was thirteen brought a new dimension to his childhood. It gave him a sense of immense regret for losing the love of his mother in his early days. But he had the habit of making communion with Nature which relieved him from his solitary moods.

---

The Tagore children were not spoiled. In spite of their social status, the children were raised in a simple way of life. Their food was sufficient but simple. Their clothing was enough but not beyond necessity. Of this simple life, Tagore said:

Luxury was a thing almost unknown in the days of my infancy. The standard of living was then, as a whole, much more simple than it is now. Apart from that, the children of our household were entirely free from fuss of being too much looked after. The fact is that, while the process of looking after may be an occasional treat for the guardians, to the children it is always an unmitigated nuisance.9

The Tagore family had several servants -- male and female. Usually the children were kept under the care of servants. To fulfill their duty, the servants were very severe and unreasonable in their dealings with the children. There was no mother-child affection. It was simply a babysitter or custodial relationship. Sometimes the servants were indifferent and cruel and did not treat the young children kindly. But the Tagore children could not speak a word against the servants because they believed that they were supposed to be obedient to the servants who took their parent's place. As Rabindranath reminisced:

9 Ibid., p. 1.
We used to be under the rule of the servants. To save themselves trouble they had almost suppressed our right of free movement. But the freedom of not being petted made up even for the harshness of this bondage, for our minds were left clear of the toils of constant cuddling, pampering and dressing up. Our days were spent in the servants quarters in the south-east corner of the outer apartments. One of our servants was Shyam, a dark chubby boy with curly locks, hailing from the District of Khulna. He would put me in a selected spot and, tracing a chalk line all around, warn me with solemn face and uplifted finger of the perils of transgressing this rings. Whether the threatened danger was a material or spiritual I never fully understood, but a great fear used to possess me.

I now sometimes wonder why such cruel treatment was meted out to us by the servants. I cannot admit that there was on the whole anything in our behavior or demeanor to have put us beyond the pale of human kindness. The real reason must have been that the whole of our burden is a thing difficult to bear even for those who are nearest and dearest.

It was the tradition of the Tagore family that the children stayed away from the elders. They would eat separately at a different time. They would not mingle with the elders at any time. Tagore remarked:

Our elders were in every way at a great distance from us, in their dress and food, living and doing, conversation and amusements. We caught glimpses of these, but they were beyond our reach.

The care of the Tagore children was generally entrusted to servants. Although private tutors were engaged for the children's lessons, Tagore's father took a personal interest
in their education. The Maharshi was a gifted linguist and made sure that young Rabindranath's education was multi-lingual. Devendranath Tagore gave his son lessons in Bengali, the vernacular of Calcutta, and in Sanskrit, the ancient classical language from which Hindi is derived. Young Tagore's language lessons had a particular bearing on his own view of Indian culture and education. India is a multi-language nation. It was from this perspective of many cultures and languages that Rabindranath Tagore developed the germs of his theory of international education. In his recollections of his early education, Tagore commented that his father was a good teacher:

My father started me on the second Sanskrit reader at one bound, leaving me to learn the declensions as we went on. The advance I had made in Bengali stood me in good stead. My father also encouraged me to try Sanskrit composition from ... the very outset. 12

The Maharshi did not only introduce his child to the indigenous languages of India. He also felt that they should be familiar with western culture. With this aim, he taught Rabindranath to read English literature and to examine western culture. Of this Rabindranath remarked:

My father had brought with him some volumes of the

12 Ibid., p. 90.
Peter Parley series from which to teach me. He selected the life of Benjamin Franklin to begin with. He thought it would read like a story book and be both entertaining and instructive. Among the books which my father had brought for his own use, my attention would be mostly attracted by a ten or twelve volume edition of Gibbon's Rome.13

Through these readers, he became aware of western customs and ideas.

The Maharshi was very liberal in regard to the freedom of his children. While he never interfered in their rights, he was also a good disciplinarian. He wanted his children to grow to independent life. It should be mentioned, however, that the servants often were allowed to dominate the children.

To the end of his life, I have observed, he never stood in the way of our independence. Many a time have I said or done things repugnant alike to his taste and his judgment; with a word he could have stopped me; but he preferred to wait till the prompting to refrain came from within. A passive acceptance by us of the correct and the proper did not satisfy him, he wanted us to love truth with our whole hearts; he knew that truth, if strayed from, can be found again, but a forced or blind acceptance of it from the outside effectually bars the way in.14

The Maharshi gave Rabindranath a very good training. Young Tagore was made aware of his future responsibility. He would one day be in charge of the management of the family estates. About his father's vigilant training Rabindranath

13 Ibid., p. 93.
14 Ibid., p. 97.
said:

Probably in order to teach me to be careful my father placed a little small change in my charge and required me to keep an account of it. He also entrusted me with the duty of winding his valuable gold watch for him. He overlooked the risk of damage in his desire to train me to a sense of responsibility. When we went out together for our morning walk he would ask me to give alms to any beggars we came across. But I never could render him a proper account at the end of it. One day my balance was larger than the account warranted.

"I really must make you my cashier," observed my father. "Money seems to have a way of growing in your hands."

That watch of his I would wind up with such indefatigable zeal that it had very soon to be sent to the watchmakers in Calcutta. 15

Tagore was not always careful in his works and must occasionally receive some reprimand for negligence. He recalled:

My father left his little cash box in my charge. He had no reason to imagine that I was the fittest custodian of the considerable sums he kept in it for use on the way. He would certainly have felt safer with it in the hands of Kishori. 16 So I can only suppose he wanted to train me to the responsibility. One day as we reached the staging bungalow, I forgot to give it over to him and left it lying on a table. This earned me a reprimand. 17

Like a modern father, the Maharshi tried to be a good

15 Ibid., p. 84.
16 The name of the attendant who takes care of personal things, but not a cashier.
17 Tagore, Reminiscences, p. 93.
companion to his son. Despite his frequent travels in conducting his business, he tried to keep company with Rabindranath. In his later life, Tagore reminisced about his father:

By the time the sun rose, my father, after his prayers, finished with me our morning milk, and then, I standing at his side, he would once more hold communion with God, chanting the Upanishads. Then we would go out for a walk.18

When he became the head of his own family, Rabindranath Tagore assumed the duties of managing the family's estates. Like his father, he often had to travel on business. In the Indian tradition, he tried to be a good father. In his Reminiscences, Tagore recalled the frequent separations from his own father:

Shortly after my birth my father took to constantly travelling about. So it is no exaggeration to say that in my early childhood I hardly knew him. He would now and then come back home all of a sudden forgetting some of his things for school or work.19

As a boy Rabi felt very lonesome for his father. He would make use of this time to roam around his father's room. He expressed his feelings about the absence of his father:

18 Ibid., p. 95.
19 Ibid., p. 16.
My father hardly ever stayed at home, he was constantly roaming about. His rooms on the third storey used to remain shut up. I would pass my hands through the venetian shutters, and thus opening the latch get the door open, and spend the afternoon lying motionless on his sofa at the south end. First of all it was a room always closed, and there was the stolen entry, this gave it a deep flavour of mystery; further the broad empty expanse of terrace, glowing in the rays of the sun, would set me day-dreaming.20

The children were always delighted to see their father. The appearance of his father was always a delightful experience for young Tagore. Rabindranath wrote:

Anyhow, when my father came, we would be content with wandering around about his entourage and in the company of his servants. We would see our elders at certain hours, formally robed in their chogas, passing to his rooms with restrained gait and sobered mien, casting away any pan21 they have been chewing. Every one seemed on the alert. To make sure of nothing going wrong, my mother superintended the cooking herself. The old mace-bearer,22 Kinu, with his white livery and crested turban, on guard at my father's door, would warn us not to be boisterous in the verandah in front of his rooms during his midday siesta. We had to walk past quietly, talking in whispers, and dared not even take a peep inside.23

Rabindranath's mother, Sarada Devi, was a woman of character. She was a wonderful mother who gave birth to fif-

20 Ibid., p. 16.
21 Spices wrapped in betal leaf.
22 The male servant.
23 Tagore, Reminiscences, p. 71.
teen children and raised them all except the last one who did not survive. She herself was from an orthodox family and was raised in the traditions of the Hindu religion. However, she possessed sufficient flexibility to accept a new outlook of life. She must have been a very hard working person in the management of the household. Especially, the Tagore joint family was just like a small community. Sarada Devi had a tremendous job to manage the family with sons and sons-in-law, daughter and daughters-in-law and their children. Besides, there were also a number of male and female servants who were treated as real members of Tagore's family. Even though her heart had broken after the death of the fifteenth child she managed the household very well. She died on March 8, 1875, when Rabindranath was only thirteen years old. He really missed the affectionate care and unsolicited love of a mother. Later in his poems and short stories he vividly described the tenderness of the mother's love. It is unfortunate that there is not much else recorded about the life of this remarkable mother.

Even though Rabindranath was not always under the direct care of his parents, his proper training and early education were not neglected. Almost all the Tagore boys had private tutoring at home in various subjects. Actually this tutoring was often more effective than the lessons given at the school.
For only a short time did Rabindranath receive formal schooling from the schools. First, he attended the Oriental Seminary and later moved to the Bengal Academy. He stayed only a short time at these schools. The atmosphere and daily life at school failed to attract him. Then he was transferred to St. Xavier's High School in Calcutta. There he stayed for a while. Thus he never completed any formal schooling.\(^24\)

When Rabi was eleven years old, his father arranged for the investiture with sacred thread of his two young sons, Somendra and Rabindranath, and his grandson Satya. The Brahmins referred to themselves as the twice born. The investiture with sacred thread was a ceremony which commemorated the birth and also was an initiation into the Vedic rites. Since the Tagores were Brahmins, they followed the same religious rite. Even though the Maharishi rejected some of the orthodox vows of his religion, he observed faithfully certain other ceremonies and rituals such as this investiture rite. Even Rabindranath, in spite of his liberal social and religious outlook, honored some of these rituals throughout his life.

At the investiture ceremony, the boys were given the sacred thread to wear, had their heads shaved, and wore gold

earrings. This was their initiation to full Brahminhood. Then they were put in a private room on the third floor of the house to meditate on the mystery of life and the universe for three days. But they were not so serious in their meditation. As Rabi described it:

It was great fun. The earrings gave us a good handle to pull each other's ears with. We found a little drum lying in one of the rooms; taking this we would stand out in the verandah, and, when we would stand out in the hall and caught sight of any servant passing in the story below we would rap a tatoo on it. This would make the man look up, only to beat a hasty retreat the next moment with averted eyes. In short, we cannot claim that these days of our retirement were passed in ascetic meditation.25

After Rabindranath had attained his full Brahmanhood, he became more serious and much interested in reciting the particular prayers. The meaning of the text was very difficult for a boy of his age to understand. However, the solemn intonation of the Sanskrit verses appealed to his senses strongly. Throughout his life, Rabindranath continued to recite the verses and to meditate on them. In his later philosophizing, Tagore incorporated many of the ideals which came from his early religious education.

Rabindranath was growing physically and intellectually.

His attitudes and values were in accordance with Hindu philosophy. But his father, the Maharshi, and other elders of the family were concerned about his future career. As usual they wished that Rabindranath would obtain a respectable position in his life. At this time his elder brother, Satyendranath, who himself was very highly educated and cultured, suggested to his father that Rabindranath go to England for an education to prepare him for the civil service or the law which were then very respectable positions in India. Satyendra was the first Indian to enter the Indian civil service. He was the only Indian among fifty successful candidates at the Civil Service examination held in London in 1863. From 1864 to his retirement in 1896, he served as District and Sessions Judge in several courts in the Bombay Presidency. Interestingly enough, Satyendra wanted Rabindranath to earn a law degree to become a judge like him. With his father's consent Rabindranath moved to Ahmedabad to stay with Satyendra where the latter was the District Judge.

Rabindranath stayed at Ahmedabad for four months. His sister-in-law with her children was in England. So he was alone reading books of English history and literature to increase his knowledge of England. This period brought forth a
a new stage in his intellectual growth. During his stay here, he first composed his own music for his songs. It was here that he conceived the plot of one of his finest love stories, "Kshudhita Pashan" (The Hungry Stones).\textsuperscript{26} He noted this:

Finding how imperfect was my knowledge of English I set to work reading through some English books with the help of a dictionary. From my earliest years it was my habit not to let any want of complete comprehension interfere with my reading, quite satisfied with the structure which my imagination reared on the bits which I understood here and there. I am reaping even today both the good and bad effects of this habit.\textsuperscript{27}

To have more practice in conversational English, Satyendra sent Rabindranath to Bombay to stay with the family of his friend, Dr. Atmaram Pandurang Turkhud, who was a prominent Bombay physician. His young daughter, Anna, who was educated in England, took the burden of teaching Rabindranath proper English manners and customs. Rabindranath was so very much impressed with his teacher, Anna, and this impression remained permanently in his memory.

Later at the age of eighty Rabindranath recalled this experience and wrote it in his \textit{Reminiscences}.\textsuperscript{28} He called

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{26} Kripalani, \textit{Rabindranath Tagore}, p. 75.
\item \textsuperscript{27} Tagore, \textit{Reminiscences}, p. 156.
\item \textsuperscript{28} Kripalani, p. 76.
\end{itemize}
her Malini, the name of the imaginary sweetheart in his narrative poem Kavi Kahini (The Poet's Story). He read the poems to her several times. This short romantic experience left a permanent impression on Rabindranath's memory. In his later life, in his conversation or writings he referred to her with affectionate love and deep respect. The memory of Anna never faded. He spoke of her as one whose nature mingled grace with delight, a true "creature of joy". Of woman's love he never ever spoke lightly or disrespectfully, but always with gratitude and reverence.

After his further studies of the English language, culture, and history, Rabindranath was ready for his venture to England. It was in September 1879, that he sailed for England with his brother, Satyendra.²⁹

Tagore's loss of his mother during his early childhood contributed to his introspective and sensitive nature. Like the European educator, Friedrich Froebel, Tagore revived the experience of his early childhood. When he developed his own educational theory and founded his own school, Tagore was always sensitive to the longings and needs of child-

²⁹Ibid., p. 78.
As was true of the Swiss educator, Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, much of Tagore's early education was given over to servants and tutors. Frequently, these hired guardians were impersonal and uncaring. Tagore's educational theory sought to create the personal dimension of schooling and to use it to bring about a secure attitude in the learner.

The foregoing analysis of Tagore's own childhood recollections as recorded in his Reminiscences clearly shows his father to be of paramount influence. It was Tagore's father, Devendranath Tagore, who carefully introduced his son to the study of Bengali, Sanskrit and English. It was this combination of eastern and western language and culture that was to have a later impact on Tagore's own theories of education which combined the wisdom of both cultures. Tagore's father was the busy but interested parent, who despite the burdens of his own responsibilities, found time for his son's education. One can detect, however, that young Tagore yearned for greater parental attention.

Finally, the impact of the traditional Indian joint family should be observed as an influence on Rabindranath Tagore. His childhood home was one filled with servants,
guardians, relatives, and guests. The manners and customs of the family were bound to have had a shaping influence that was probably not unlike that of the Russian writer and educator, Lee Tolstoy, whose own boyhood was spent in the large family situation.  

Marriage and Family

According to the custom of his family, Rabindranath's marriage was arranged. His father, the Maharshi, believed that Rabindranath was ready for family responsibility and should marry. So all the family members were involved in finding a suitable bride for Rabindranath. Finally, they selected a ten-year old girl whose father, Beninadhav Raichaudhury, was an employee in Tagore's estate. The Rachandhury family was not rich, and the choice was limited because of the observance of the caste system. Rabindranath was very conservative in observing social customs. Therefore, the Tagores had to select from their own lesser or degraded Brahmin sect, known as Pirali. Since the Orthodox Brahmins would not intermarry with the Tagores, the selection had no wide choice and was limited to the same Pirali subcaste in Jessore.

Ibid.
Rabindranath, following the traditional way, consented to this unromantic marriage.

The bride's maiden name was Bhavatarinileni. After the marriage, the name was changed into Mirinalini, very likely chosen by Rabindranath himself. The wedding took place in the family home at Jorasanko on December 9, 1883.

The interesting thing about the marriage was the fact that the Tagore family did not seem to have taken the wedding seriously. Usually, the wedding of the youngest son of Tagore's family social status would be a great social event of the family. Here even the Maharshi was not present at the wedding. Tagore's oldest brother, Sathyendranath, and his family were also absent.

On the same day Rabindranath's brother-in-law, husband of his beloved sister Sandamini Devi who raised Rabi in his early childhood, died. Soon there was another tragedy, Rabindranath's favorite sister-in-law Kodambari Devi committed suicide on April 19, 1884. She was only twenty-five. Her death was a terrible shock to Rabindranath. When his mother died he was too young to feel the impact, but now this death left a terrible impact on Rabindranath's mind. After this within a very few weeks his third elder brother, Hermendranath, died. Hermendranath had taken care of Rabindranath and helped
him in his early education. Despite his grief, Tagore's great will power and spiritual strength enabled him to carry on his normal work.

Tagore's wife, Mrinalini, was twelve years his junior, and it was difficult for the teenage wife to adjust herself socially to her husband. She never attended any school. Her early education at home stopped with learning the alphabet. She picked up something just by sitting close to her brother while her father was teaching her brother. Compared to the standard of education of the Tagore girls and their sisters-in-law, Mrinalini must be considered as an illiterate. Taking a special interest in his wife's education, Tagore personally taught her Sanskrit and Bengali. She also learned English and the Hindu Scripture. Within a period of five years, Mrinalini acquired sufficient learning to become mature socially and culturally. She became a very refined lady and able housewife. She learned household management from her elder sisters-in-law. Simple, honest and open-minded, she was devoted to her husband. Rabindranath was much in love with her, and both were very dear and affectionate to each other.

---

Ibid., p. 64.
In spite of some miseries, Rabindranath had a happy married life though it lasted only for twenty years. When they were married Rabindranath was twenty-two and his wife was only eleven years old. For these twenty years Mrinalini took care of him with the traditional devotion and respect as a good wife. She bore him five children, three daughters and two sons. A simple but shrewd woman, she accepted generally all the likes and dislikes of her aristocratic husband. Above all she loved him more than her own self.

In 1886 when Rabindranath was twenty-five his first child, a baby girl, was born. They named her Madhurilata and called her in short as Bela. Two years later a baby boy Rathi was born. Afterwards two daughters, Renuka and Mira, were born and in 1894 a second son Samendra was born. Tagore and his wife were pleased by their family. Rabindranath supervised the education of the children and hired private tutors for the children. Although his wife wanted the best for her children, the farm village of Shelidah was not the proper place. In 1901, the family moved back to Calcutta. They spent the summer at Darjeeling as the guests of the Maharaja of Tripura. In the same year Madhurilata, the eldest daughter, was mar-
ried to Sharat Chandra, a son of Tagore's close friend.

After his daughter's marriage Tagore went to Shelidah for the Pienya Festival. A joyous festival for the peasants of Bengal, it is held at harvest time and marks the commencement of a new year in farming. Tagore stayed at Shelidah for a while but was not in a happy mood. He missed his family and expressed his feelings in his letters to his wife:

Shelidah
1901

I could write to you yesterday because of the ceremonies when the tenants pay their New Year's rent but I arrived at Shelidah on the evening before, and the empty house yawned at me. I thought I would enjoy the lonely quiet after all the harrassments of many days, but my mind was unwilling to enter alone where we have been accustomed to living together. Especially when I went into the house, tired after my journey and with no one to look after my wants and be glad and show tenderness, it all seemed very empty. I tried to read but I could not.

When I came in after walking through the garden the empty room with its kerosene lamp appeared emptier. The upstairs rooms seemed even more vacant. I came down again, trimmed the lamp and tried to read once more, but it was no use.

We had an early dinner and went to bed; I slept in the west room upstairs and Rathi in the east room. It was really cold during the night and I had to cover myself with my woolen rug. The days are also fairly cold.

The rent-collecting was completed yesterday with music and prayers and so on. In the evening a party of kirtan-singers came to the courthouse and we listened to them until eleven.

Your herb garden is full now, but the greens have
been planted so closely that they have no room to grow. We shall send you some of them with the other things. A number of pumpkins have been put away. The rosetrees that Nitu sent are in full bloom but the greater part of them are the odorless variety. He was cheated badly. The rube roses, the gardenias, the malati, the lady-of-the-night are also flowering but there is no perfume in the rainy season.

The tank is full to the brim, the sugarcane in front has grown well, the fields all around here are heavy with corn - a flawless green carpet. Everybody asks, "when will mother be here?"

Lovingly,
Rabindranath Tagore

Tagore's affection for his wife and family is shown by his correspondence. He wrote again and related his loneliness.

Shelidah
June 1901

When the rent-collecting celebrations were over I set my hand to writing again. Once engrossed in my work I am like a landed fish which has found water again. Now the loneliness of this place gives me complete protection, the little details of life no longer touch me and I can easily forgive those who have been my enemies.

I can understand why you feel oppressed by loneliness; I would be happy if I could share with you my joy in this mood, but it is something which no one can give to another.

When you leave the crowds of Calcutta and find yourself in the midst of the emptiness here, you do not like it in the beginning, and even when you get used to it you feel a repressed impatience within you. But tell me what else I can do when my life grows bar-
ren in Calcutta. That is why I lose my temper, first about every little thing, cannot sincerely forgive everyone and so preserve my own peace of mind.

Besides, everyone is so restless there, Rathi and the others never can be properly educated. For all these reasons you must resign yourself to a sentence of exile. Perhaps later on, when I can afford it, I shall be able to select a better place, but I shall never be able to bury all my powers in Calcutta.

Lovingly,
Rabindranath Tagore

Tagore was very dear and near to his wife, and had much consideration for her. In spite of his imposing power and personality, he had great affection for her.

When Mrinalini became ill, Tagore devoted himself to her needs. She was in bed for two months. Tagore himself gave her all nursing services day and night. Her illness became serious and she died on November 23, 1902. Tagore spent the whole night walking up and down on the terrace. Recalling his mother's sickness and death, Rathindranath, the eldest son expressed:

Mother had realized that the end was near even before the doctors had given up hope. The last time when I went to her bedside she could not speak, but on seeing me the tears silently rolled down her cheeks. That night we children were all sent to bed in another part of the house. But my sister Bela and I could not go to sleep. A vague fear kept me awake. Early in the morning we went up to the terrace overlooking the room where mother slept. An

Ibid.
ominous silence hung over the house, the shadow of death seemed to have crossed its threshold with stealthy steps during the night. That evening my father gave my mother's pair of slippers to keep. Vicissitudes of life, pain and afflictions never upset the equanimity of father's mind. His inward peace was not disturbed by any calamity, however painful. Some inner resources gave him the power to face and to rise above misfortunes of the most painful nature. After mother's death father devoted himself with renewed zeal to the affairs of the school at Santiniketan. 

Tagore was very much depressed by the death of his wife but he controlled himself very well. Expressing his feelings in his poems, Tagore expressed his lonesomeness for her:

In desperate hope I go and search her in all corners of my room. I find her not. My house is small and what one is lost from there can never be regained. But infinite is thy mansion, My lord, and seeking her I have come to thy door. I stand under the golden canopy of thine evening sky and I lift my eager eyes to thy face. I have come to the brink of Eternity from which nothing can vanish -- no hope, no happiness, no vision of a face seen through tears. Oh, dip my emptied life into that ocean, plunge it into the deepest fulness. Let me for once feel that lost sweet touch in the allness of thine universe.

Renuka, Tagore's second daughter, became seriously ill, and in September 1903 died at the age of thirteen, nine months

---

34 Kripalani, Rabindranath Tagore, pp. 195-6.
after her mother's death. His father, the Maharshi, died on January 19, 1905 at the age of eighty-eight. The Maharshi's death "marks the end of a very significant period of Indian history -- the age of religious and cultural renaissance, of intellectual and moral giants who paved the way of India's political awakening.\(^{36}\)

William Rothenstein of London was a great admirer of Indian art and culture. He met Tagore in 1911 during his visit to that country.\(^{37}\) Since then he became Tagore's lifelong friend. For thirty years they had correspondence with each other. Rothenstein visited Santiniketan and made considerable contribution to it. His family knew Tagore well since Tagore had visited them several times when he was in London. When he heard of the death of Tagore Rothenstein wrote to Tagore's son Rathindranath Tagore:

```
Far Oakbridge,
Gloucestershire
August 9, 1941

My dear Rathindranath - today I read of your dear father's peaceful death in the Times, and my mind goes back over the years to the days when I first knew him at your family house, when he came to England and joined us, that wet but happy summer, here at Oakbridge. Since then he has become a world figure, symbol of all that is noble and
```

\(^{36}\) Kripalani, p. 200.

great in India, the interpreter of India's soul. But I think of him as the genial and inspiring friend and companion, with whom I spent some of the happiest hours of my life, witty, wise and delightfully fanciful, and the friend, who gave me the riches of his own mind with complete generosity. That meeting at Jorasanko brought 31 years of a wonderful friendship. Only once was this disturbed by a passing breeze, when, after the war, your dear father preferred German to English support for his great scheme for a model University.

One memorial of our close friendship remains - the letters I had from him over the space of years, which will, so long as I live, keep his enchanting sense of life fresh and vital, and will prove a precious legacy to my children, and their children.

But what memories you must all have! So rich and fruitful a life, so much love given and received, and upon his single shoulders the genius and honor of India; Tributes to the inspiring influence he had the world over will be coming to you from all sides. You will be able to know that England does full justice to his greatness, in public expression and in private homage. I send you and your family, and to Abanindranath, the expression of deep affection from us all. Ever yours, dear Rathindranath.38

William Rothenstein

Rothenstein once wrote to Tagore:

11 Oak Hill Park, Hampstead
November 26, 1912

My dear friend:

Your letters are a great joy to me. Only at times am I able to shelter the moods that came to me as it were automatically when I had you sitting near me in the studio. That mood comes too, the moment I find myself in the country, when I see

38 Ibid., p. 8.
good works of art, and read good books - less
certainly at other times, and sometimes I realize
that for a day or two it has not come at all.
So many people drive it away, and with these one
finds one's nerves uncertain and jumpy, and one
is prone to say things with impatience and to feel
one's life untidied and fruitless.

I am so happy to know of your being in peaceful
surroundings that inspire you and bring you rest.
I think not a day passes but we speak of you and
wish you with us. I had a charming letter from your
brother, but so far no drawings nor Sannyasi clothes
have reached me - many thanks for writing for these.
I have heard nothing from Dr. Seal. Yeats is still
in Ireland. The Winter's Tale is over, and has been
praised. Mr. Galsworthy has produced a new play,
but I have been to no theatre.

I still hope you may meet Chapman. Chose come
regularly - what a really good creature he is. The
irrespressible Das Gupta is putting on Sakuntlal at
the Albert Hall. The children send their dear love
to you all - I think letters are in slow preparation.
My wife asks me to send you hers too - she met Andrew
Bradley last week, who spoke most gratefully of you.
Macmillans have all your mss having asked for every­
thing I had of your work to give to their reader, and
I hope before to let you know of any arrangements pro­
posed. I am so glad to know you are with good and
simple people. In the meanwhile I am ever your friend.39

William Rothenstein

In this letter Rothenstein was referring to some
persons who were the friends of Tagore. These English friends,
including W. B. Yeats, arranged for staging some of Tagore's
plays in London. Das Gupta, an Indian friend of Tagore, ar­
ranged to stage Tagore's version of Sakuntlala which was taken

39
Lago, p. 68.
from classical work of Kalidasa, a famous ancient Indian playwright who was similar in stature to the Elizabethan Shakespeare.

Finally, the greatest tragedy of Tagore's family life occurred in November 1907. His youngest son, Samindra, a very charming and intelligent boy, suddenly died of cholera. He was only thirteen years old, almost five years after his mother's death. During this period of five years, Tagore had become very depressed. He lost his wife and two children. Among the three surviving ones, the eldest daughter lived with her husband outside Bengal. The eldest son had been sent to the United States the previous year to study agricultural science at the University of Illinois, in Champaign. The third daughter had been married a few months earlier. Although he was very lonesome, Tagore managed to get along very well by keeping himself busy with his work.

The Poet:

One of the supreme lyric poets of the world, Tagore was influenced by two important forces which helped to mould his thinking: The one was his own father, the Maharshi,
and the other was the *Vaishnava* poetry. The philosophy of his father and the tradition and spirit of the *Vaishnava* poetry formed and developed his poetic character. In all his poems, we can see the vivid description, clear imagery and true feelings with music. Perhaps the most characteristic trait of Tagore's poetry is the fusion of nature and man. This unity of nature and man is identified in all his poetry.

Tagore as a writer was the contemporary of Tennyson, Browning and of Robert Bridges. He must be judged as the Victorian poets are judged. Tagore wrote extensively to the last days of his life. His published verse and dramas amount to about 150,000 lines. His essays on various topics, non-dramatic prose, short stories, novels, criticism and autobiography are more than twice his poetical works. There is also a mass of unorganized and uncollected works. Tagore wrote his first poem when he was only eight years old and his last verse was completed just a few days before his death. Interestingly enough there are some very exquisite and highly

42 Ibid.
inspired poems in his earliest period. However, there are many uninspired poems in his later life. The sights and sounds of nature in Bengal, especially the rural landscape where Tagore spent most of his time, induced the mood and the atmosphere of his verses. Kripalani remarks on this:

Tagore has also caught the varying moods of the monsoons in a hundred songs and poems. The expectancy of the parched soil just before the advent of the rains, the heavy smells which rise from the damp area after first sharp shower, the thrill of life in the green shoots of the newly growing grass, the dark clouds which dim evening shadows, the unceasing pattern of rain in the silence of the night - these and a hundred other pictures are brought vividly to our mind in Tagore's magic verse. He has also woven into them the joys and sorrows of the human heart till nature and man reflect one another's moods and lose their separate identity.

Tagore's literary career had its beginning with the "Bhanu Sing" poems, however several prose and verse pieces were published earlier in some periodicals. The "Bhanu Sing" poems were first published in Bharati in 1877. His first work to be published in book form was "A Poet's Story" which appeared earlier in Bharati in 1877. Before he was eighteen, Tagore had published about seven thousand lines of verse and a great deal of prose work.

43 Kabir, p. 12.
44 Kripalani, p. 12.
45 Thompson, p. 27.
Poems About Children:

Tagore's poems for the children vividly describe the child's nature. These poems also reveal Tagore's command of fairy tales and his remarkable knowledge of the child and of child psychology. Tagore wrote:

The Child Angel

They clamor and fight, they doubt and despair, that they know no end to their wranglings. Let your life come amongst them like a flame of light, my child, unflickering and pure, and delight them into silence. They are cruel in their greed and their envy, their words are like hidden knives thirsting for blood. Go and stand amidst their scowling hearts, my child, and let your gentle eyes fall upon them like the forgiving peace of the evening over the strife of the day. Let them see your face, my child, and thus know the meaning of all things; let them love you and thus love each other. Come and take your seat in the bosom of the limitless, my child. At sunrise open and raise your heart like a blossoming flower, and at sunset bend your head in silence complete the worship of the day.

Tagore's poem, The Child Angel, clearly reveals his feelings for the child as being holy and close to God and to nature. While the adult world can be cruel and the source of corruption, the child represents the means to reform.

46 Chakravarty, p. 312.
47 Thompson, p. 197.
Through the child and through his education, the adult can experience reformation. Tagore's concept of international education reflects this concern for the child. It is through the child's education and through the cleansing force of nature that world understanding will come to bring about a brotherhood of man.

In Tagore's poem, Benediction, which follows, the concept of mother, love and security is portrayed. The important point of the poet is that the child's trust is the genuine beginning of education. From this trust comes true peace. Benediction reveals Tagore's poetic insight into child nature.

**BENEDICTION**

Bless this little heart, this white soul that has won the kiss of heaven for our earth.

He loves the light of the sun, he loves the sight of his mother's face. He has not learned to despise the dust, and to hanker after gold. Clasp him to your heart and bless him.

He has come into this land of an hundred crossroads, I know not how he chose you from the crowd, came to your door, and grasped your hand to ask his way. He will follow you, laughing and talking, and not a doubt in his heart.

Keep his trust, lead him straight and bless him. Lay your hand on his head, and pray that though the waves underneath grow threatening, yet the
breath from above may come and fill his sails and waft him to the heaven of peace. Forget him not in your hurry, let him come to your heart and bless him. 48

Tagore had to take care of his two youngsters after his wife's death. During this period he tried to hide his own grief and appeared very cheerful before the young ones. He often entertained them by singing songs, telling them stories, and writing them poems. These poems were later published in one volume - *Sisu, The Child*, a collection of poems about children. Several of these poems, available in *The Crescent Moon* in English translation, help adults to understand the child's mind. Tagore was so keen in observing nature as well as the child that he was able to describe the nature of the child's mind. His poems about children are "unique in the literature of the world". 49

His Dramas:

Tagore's "dramatic work" is the vehicle of ideas, rather than the expression of action. 50 Tagore, a great actor, appeared in many plays. He wrote his first important drama "Nature's Revenge" which had a wide popularity

49 *Kripalini*, p. 198.
50 *Thompson*, p. 47.
among the Bengalis. Tagore's drama is more suitable to be acted in open courtyard than in a packed theatre. The Indian drama, just like the Greek plays, is acted under the open skies in court yards or streets. This type of theatre is disappearing in modern urban areas; however in rural villages it still survives. A group of travelling-dramatic parties combined singing and acting and staged their plays in several places especially in the autumn. The plots of the play were taken from the Ramayana and Maha Bharata. They are like the early English mystery and morality plays. Many of Tagore's plays are morality plays which aim for a moral principle. Several critics claim that Rabindranath is one of the world's greatest dramatists and poets.51

When Rabindranath was a boy of fourteen or fifteen he wrote a play for an amateur dramatic company in Calcutta and he too acted in it. Since then he might have written twenty plays. Many of the best known plays were not translated into English. However, some of the plays are available now such as "Chitra," "The King of the Dark Chamber," and the "Post Office," the last two plays having been pro-

51 Ibid., p. 50.
duced in Dublin and at the Court Theatre in London by the Frick Players. By London standards, these plays seemed lacking in ordinary stage attraction and effect. However, it should be realized that Tagore's plays were written for a Bengali audience to be acted in the open air by a group of boys who were not professional players, without scene settings or elaborate fittings. Therefore, from the "Western" dramatic point of view, there is no attempt to have a dramatic pattern in all his plays. 52

Tagore's biographer Ernest Rhys writes his personal view about the plays:

Of the two plays acted over here, "The Post Office" and "The King of The Dark Chamber," I saw the first when it was produced at the Court Theater, with Synge's mordant comedy. The Well of the Saints, as an incongruous companion peace. The story of "The Post Office" turns upon the longing of a small boy who is a prisoner unable to be moved from the village but, where sickness holds him fast. He is hope's most pitiful pensioner, living in a remote village that has hardly been heard of, and he has for his solace been led to believe that the king himself is sending him a letter. Here, you may think, is a slender thread by which to move the pulleys. But as it was acted, even with the drawback of having a partly Irish, instead of an Indian, characterization of its village humors, it proved moving and particularly effective in the stroke of tragedy redeemed at the close. The pathos would have been too much for a stage-idyll, except that imagination saved it, and that in the Indian order death is so often not

52 Rhys, p. 77.
catastrophy at all, but a blessed escape.

Tagore's other remarkable play is "Nature's Revenge," whose Indian title is "Prakritira Pratischda". The main idea of the play "Nature's Revenger" is to portray the travesty of the worldly fame and name and the warm activities of human love. "Nature's Revenge" was originally written in Bengali and translated and published in English as Sanyasi Sacrifice and other plays. In this play there is a notable evidence of Tagore's further development as a dramatist as he improved significantly his ability to express the aspects of mature life. Interestingly enough it is one of the characteristics of Tagore's poetry, whether lyric or dramatic in form, that would help to make his pages more humanly interesting. Often he expressed explicitly the ideal history of his own spiritual pilgrimage.

In summarizing his comments on Tagore's plays, Ernest Rhys remarks:

... When a man writes the drama of himself, he always tends to be lyrical; and both in "Chitra" and "The King of the Dark Chamber" the play does seem to be looking at every turn for its lyric moment and for a solution which transcends the common office of the

53 Ibid., pp. 79-80.
54 Thompson, p. 46.
stage. The dramatic critics have complained over this tendency in Indian playwrights, as if in great drama, in Aeschylus, in Sophocles, in Shakespeare, in Goethe's "Faust", there was not any attempt to find lyrical alleviation on the road to the dramatic climax. Moreover, the East has fostered a drama of its own, congenially influenced by the musical affinity of its theme. It does not, like our English stage, look for the comedy of differences or the sheer tragedy of circumstance. The old-style Indian playwright set out with a clear subject -- say, the pursuit of beauty by the ordained lover, or the quest of the Golden Stage --- There must be a few comic episodes for relief, a diversion, not a development, of the real argument. We have to reckon both with the tradition of a stage, as well as the temperament of a playwright in judging a kind of drama a new to us. Rabindranath Tagore may break the rules of our common stage-practice, but breaks none that govern the leisurely drama of the open air and courtyard, which he and his fellow-playwrights in India have in mind.

**Short Stories:**

The finest work of Tagore is found not in his plays or in his songs, but in his short stories. Only a few of his stories have been printed in English. Tagore wrote short stories throughout his life. He wrote his first story, "Shikharini" ("The Beggar Woman") which was published in 1877 when he was sixteen and his last few stories were written a few months before his death in 1941. More than half of these stories were written between 1891 and 1895 during his first creative period usually referred to.

55 Rhys, p. 66.
as the Sadhana period.  

His stories, as A. Chakravarty says, "reflects his surroundings, currently dominant ideas and problems which exercised his mind, at different periods of his life".  

As a short story writer, Tagore was very particular to construct plots to elaborate human life and to reflect human feelings. He preferred to take simple incidents and in most cases his stories are plain, simple and straightforward. About Tagore's short stories Ernest Rhys writes:

Rabindranath Tagore indeed is a place-charmer in his tales. For him, houses have souls, old ruins may be powerful as witches in their sorcery, a river-stair can count the footfalls of ages and a door can remember its dead. This is only part of his tale-teller's equipment; for he is very tender to his human folk, especially to his women of sorrow and children, and, what is perhaps his favorite among them all, the child of nature - what the Bengali calls sometimes a "mad chandi", a possessed one, with a certain tenderness as for a creature held by a spirit beyond the common. His page often tells of the unconscious creature that is very near the sources of nature, drinking her clear dew and becoming one with her in her play of life and death.  

Tagore's short stories reveal his profound sense of unity of nature and man. Therefore, it would be very

56 Chakravarty, p. 45.  
57 Ibid.  
58 Rhys, p. 63.
hard to feel the real sensitivity of the characters and situations of his stories without a considerable knowledge of the geographical and social environment of his stories. For example, the story "Arithi" (The Runaway) would be difficult to understand without its vast background of nature. Among his popular stories are: "The Khokabibur Pratyabartan", The Return of the Child, "The Postmaster", "The Kshudhita Pasjan," The Hungry Stones", "The Samapti", The Conclusion, "The Kabulliwalla", The Man from Kabul. Of all these, "The Postmaster" has often been hailed as one of the world's masterpieces. Many of the short stories were translated into English and published in periodicals for Western readers.


59 Kabir, p. 19.
60 Chakravarty, p. 46.
Tagore portrayed his imagination and human feelings.

Humayun Kabir comments on this:

Tagore's greatness as a short-story writer depends on the combination of his deep humanity with his sympathy with the idiosyncracies of the individual. In inimitable vignettes, he has portrayed man's life of endeavor, disappointments and hope against the background of a nature that is sometimes cruel, more often kind and never indifferent to human destiny.  

More often than not, translations of literary works may not carry the original artistic imagery, so it is also with Tagore's literary works. Rhys in his biography of Tagore mentions:

His stories, finally, if we can judge by the imperfect English versions we have, are written in a style of Hawthorne in his most elusive vein, or Turgenief in his romantic tales. It is as if a folktale method were elaborated with literary art, inclining to the imaginative side of everyday life, yet dwelling fondly on the human folk it portrayed.

His Songs and Music:

Tagore's great desire to express his profound imagination and feelings was not satisfied with his literary works alone. He engaged in many expressive art forms and endeavored to express himself in arts such as music, drama,

---

61 Kabir, p. 19.
62 Ibid.
opera, ballet and at the end of his life in painting. By nature Tagore enjoyed music. Humayun Kabir notes:

He was born into a house that was full of music. His father had sought to find harmonic expression for Vedic hymns. Almost all his brothers were experts in classical Indian music and he sang for his father while still a child. The family background and his own inclinations combined to develop his musical taste. Before long, the traditions and conventions of Indian music became a part of his being.63

In regard to his musical talents, Tagore was influenced by three different types of music: European music, Classical Hindu music which had strict rules, and the popular religious music of Bengal. Of these three musical influences, the popular music of Bengal had the greatest impact. He became interested in the popular music of India and enthusiastically followed the mystical traditions of Bengal which he carried on in his own literary work.

Interestingly enough, it was not always known to the West that Tagore was not only a poet but also a talented musician. Poetry and music cannot be separated in his work and in these songs words and melody complete each other. Tagore composed more than two thousand songs.64 These songs

---

63 Kabir, p. 56.
formed a wide variety styles and themes. As far as form is concerned, Tagore composed two types of songs: songs which are dominated by melodies and songs that are dominated by words and phrases. As a lyric poet, Tagore loved words for their own sake. He was fascinated by a peculiar form of music that stressed the union of words and melody. The moods of Tagore's songs were multitudinous and the variety was bewildering. There was hardly any song which did not correlate to the reality and refinement of the moods of Indian life. Swami Prajnananda comments on Tagore's songs:

The creative genius of Rabindranath found its fullest expression in his songs, dramas and dances. The songs of Rabindranath have a particular type of presentation of their own. It was his own creation out of his special mode of singing or improvisation. ... With his facile and gifted pen he portrayed the beauty and grandeur of Nature and at the same time in beautiful vision, he invoked the Divine Maker of the same through his songs ... Rabindranath made music out of the sense of his inimitable words. His music enriched with poetic compositions, melodious tunes and perfect balance and rhythm and temp. His songs are replete with the message of eternal harmony that bridges the gulf between heaven and earth, between bondage and freedom.65

Tagore and Western Music:

Tagore's natural preference for the union of verse

65 Ibid., p. 166-167.
and melody was further developed by his growing enthusiasm for and experience of western music. Tagore began to compose the music for his own songs even before his first visit to England. However, it was only after one or two years that he started his own experiments in composing music different from the traditional forms of Indian music.

When Tagore was in England he was a frequent guest at many parties. He heard and began to love several of the Scotch, Irish and Old-English tunes that were sung at the different parties. He began to learn to sing European songs himself. He was so much impressed and fascinated by this musical experience. Humayun Kabir remarks on the impact of western music on Tagore:

Even before his visit to England, Tagore had often heard Western music at home. His brother, Jyotirindranath, was almost equally at home in eastern and western music, but we do not find any direct impact of western music on Tagore's own composition till his first trip to England. This trip had a twofold effect on him. On the one hand, he was released from the constant pressure of the Indian tradition. On the other, he became acquainted with the western composers who regarded their compositions as inviolable entities. ... Indian classical music was by contrast essentially improvisation. Tagore disregarded the prevalent tradition and insisted that there was an organic unity between his melody and his words and performers must interpret his songs in the way he had composed them. ... The process of change and development in Tagore's music began soon after his first trip to England. When he returned, his mind was full of the Western
tunes he had heard and himself learned to sing. In the "Valmiki-Pratibha", his first musical play and perhaps the first opera in any modern Indian language, Tagore incorporated several western tunes.66

Similar remarks were made by Arnold Bake on the impact of western music on Tagore:

Just as Schubert song is best when sung as closely as possible to the intentions of the composer, so a Tagore song is best when rendered as closely as possible to what the poet wanted it to be. This means a change from the general Indian attitude which could probably never have occurred had Rabindranath not at one time realized the beauty of the completeness of a European song in its finished perfection.67

Tagore's musical inclinations reflected an appreciation of both western and eastern melodies. They also reflected on the secular and the sacred. As his tastes in music were an ecumenical blending, so his vision of international education incorporated a worldwide view of life and of man.

Tagore's Art:

It is interesting to note that Tagore began painting at the age of sixty-six and continued to paint with great vigor and charm until his death. He produced about two and

66 Kabir, pp. 21-22.
a half thousand pictures of which many are ranked among the world's greatest.

Tagore's paintings reveal a very astonishing vitality with a wide range of his own individual technique. He did not have any formal training or instruction in painting. This was quite a new experiment in an entirely new medium of imaginative and emotional expression. Since Tagore did not follow any conventional methods and principles in his paintings, his pictures did not conform to any prevailing Indian style. No one can formulate the rules of art. It is simply the creative expression of the individual's mind. No one can define it. Tagore speaks of it.

I shall not define art, but question myself about the reason for its existence and try to find out whether it owes its origin to some social purpose, or to the need of catering to our aesthetic enjoyment, or whether it has come out of some impulse of expression which is the impulse of our being itself ... I am not going into the history of modern art, which I am not at all competent to discuss; yet I can assert, as a general truth, that when a man tries to thwart himself in his desire for delight, converting it merely into his desire to know or to do good, then the cause must be that his power of feeling delight has lost its natural bloom and healthiness ... The art world contains elements which are distinctly its own and which emit lights that have their special range and property. It is our duty to distinguish and arrive at their origin and growth.68

68 Kripalini, p. 267.
Tagore's paintings and his experiments through a new approach display a new meaning and purpose of art.

Humayun Kabir remarks:

Some regard his work as a complete break with the Indian tradition and yet many competent critics have described him as one of the most significant and creative painters of modern India. His affiliation with primitive art on the one hand and with some of the "avant garde" on the other is only one indication of the sweep and range of his genius. 69

Tagore did not start his painting with a formal brush, but doodled freely with his pen when he was writing. His manuscripts are full of fascinating evidence of playful exercises interwoven with his verses. Kripalaini comments:

Most of these exercises were induced by what he has called "casualties in my manuscripts", deletions and erasures which he hated to leave alone as desultory scratches on his page. They seemed like "Widowed gypsies" in frantic search of mates calling to him piteously to rescue them from their irrelevance as outcasts; and so he would work on them with the selfsame pen and connect these various solitary incongruities into some kind of rhythmic pattern, fanciful or grotesque. 70

Many figures in his manuscripts are testimony to these exercises. When Tagore painted he had his own unique way of using colors to express his feelings and to describe

69 Kabir, p. 330.
70 Kripalini, p. 269.
his imaginations and to display his emotions. Carol Cuthbertson, in her book *Tagore an Artist* describes the unique use of color by Tagore:

Color for Tagore transcends all bounds, for in it is incorporated all that he senses in the essence of a moment ... One of the most charming aspects of Tagore's use of color is its instantaneity. ... Interestingly enough, as an artist, Tagore is able to find several equally good metaphors or other poetic devices all to describe the same thing, as for instance, immortality. This has a fine artistic effect, for it varies the ideas of the colors which the reader holds in his mind, and is also a good device for maintaining pattern. Most of this is psychological and I would think that Tagore knew what he was doing. 71

Tagore's method or organization of colors would reveal the feelings of life and the beauty of nature. Ernest B. Harvell, former Principal, School of Art, Calcutta, remarks:

... Tagore had proved successfully that an Indian artist need not borrow any inspiration or learn anything such as drawing, painting and technique from the west. Some of his paintings show his encyclopaedic mastery over modernism. He broke fresh ground in art. He was not a slave to any age or to any technique. Elimination of unnecessary details and concentration on essentials are the distinguishing traits of his art which is fusion of the East and the West in their best features. 72

---

Admired and appreciated all over the world, Tagore's paintings were exhibited during his tour in Europe and America. He exhibited his paintings in Galeri Moeller in Germany, in Pigale Gallery of France, in Casperi Gallery in Munich, in Dresden, in Moscow, New York and Boston. The exhibition in Germany was unique and newspapers published special issues on Tagore's exhibition of paintings. The exhibitions both in Boston and New York were very successful. The famous art-philosopher Ananda Coomaraswamy contributed his comment for the exhibition brochure. He remarks:

An exhibition of drawings by Rabindranath Tagore is of particular interest because it puts before us, almost for the first time, genuine examples of modern primitive art ... This is a genuinely original, genuinely naive expression, extraordinary evidence of eternal youth persistent in a hoary and venerable personage ... The poem gives no descriptive title to his pictures ... They are not pictures about things, but pictures about himself. In this sense they are much nearer to his music than to his poetry. What a varied and colorful person is revealed.

When Tagore's paintings were first exhibited in Birmingham, England, the whole audience in the gallery gave a rousing ovation to the Poet-painter and stood amazed be-

---

73 Ibid., p. 187.
74 Kripalini, pp. 341-342.
fore his masterful creativeness. Famous artists of England were astonished to see his production. Kaines Smith remarked:

There is an immense amount of enjoyment in his group of drawings. In one or two instances we have exquisite handling of line and form in which human figures derive their beauty and their value as a design, not from direct resemblance to human figures, but rather from the quality of the line by which these figures are expressed. These are seen at their best when the lines are extremely fine, and very formal and enhanced by no color whatsoever.75

It was quite obvious that a unique insight was developed in him by his own intellectual training. He himself admitted this:

My pictures are my versification in lines. If by chance they are entitled to claim recognition, it must be primarily for some rhythmic significance of form which is ultimate and not for any interpretation of an idea of a representation of a fact.76

The Nobel Prize

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high: Where knowledge is free Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls: Where words come out from the depth of truth: Where tireless striving stretches its arms toward perfection: Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit: Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening thought and action

75 Sen Gupta, p. 185.
76 Ibid.
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake. 77

The above quoted poem is taken from Tagore's most important literary work *Gitanjali*. When the translation of *Gitanjali* was made by Tagore himself in 1912, his poetic genius came to be known to the West. Interested men began to read Tagore's other translated works. Thus Tagore was accepted by literary critics and acclaimed by all people of aesthetic taste. As Kripalani states, "England paved the way for that emphatic acknowledgment and the Nobel Prize Committee in Sweden could hardly have taken notice of Tagore if his English admirers had not rated his poetry so high." 78

When, in 1913, Rabindranath Tagore was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature, many people in the West felt that it was a promising understanding of the West. T. Surge Moore, a famous English author and a member of the Royal Society, submitted Tagore's name for consideration for the prize. Tagore's biographer, K. Kripalani, saw Moore's original letter in the Royal Library, during his visit to Stockholm in July 1959. The letter reads as follows:

77 Kripalani, p. 228.
78 Ibid.
Sir, as a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature of the United Kingdom, I have the honor to propose the name of Rabindranath Tagore as a person well qualified, in my opinion, to be awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature. T. Surge Moore.79

The proposal of Tagore's name was really a surprise for the Swedish Academy. The Chairman of the Committee Harold Hjarne had a very difficult time to recognize the originality of Tagore's creative work. He expressed his serious doubt and his unwillingness to commit himself for the recommendation. As a result the Committee was seriously considering another French author, Emile Faguet, a famous literary historian and social moralist. In spite of this confusion, Tagore gained support from some enthusiastic members of the Academy. Per Hallstrom, one of the members, expressed his great admiration for Tagore by his own penetrating study. Finally Verner Von Heidenstam strongly supported Tagore. Heidenstam, a great scholar, was awarded the Nobel Prize three years later. After reading Gitanjali both in English and in a Swedish-Norwegian translation, he said:

I was deeply moved when I read them, and I do not remember having read any lyric writing to equal them during the past twenty years or more. They gave me hours of intense enjoyment, it was like drinking the water of a fresh, clear spring ... There is nothing in his work that is controversial and offensive,
nothing vain, worldly and petty, and if ever a poet may be said to possess the qualities that make him entitled to a Nobel Prize, it is he ... Now that we have finally found an ideal poet of really great stature, we should not pass him over. For the first time and perhaps for the last for a long time to come, it would vouchsafe us to discover a great name before it has appeared in all the newspapers. If this is to be achieved, however, we must not tarry and miss the opportunity by waiting till another year. 80

It is interesting to note that the only person in the Academy who was actually able to read Tagore's works in the original Bengali language was Essias Tegner. This great scholar and literary critic enlightened his fellow members of the Academy about the genius of Tagore. The Nobel Prize award met with popular approbation in India as well as everywhere in the world. Following this award Tagore's other important works were published in several languages and his greatness was confirmed. The prize to him was justified everywhere. In fact, by awarding the Nobel Prize to Tagore, Sweden honored him greatly and thus paved the way for Tagore's international fame. 81

The Gitanjali Songs became world famous when the books was available in English. Through Gitanjali people in the

80 Andreas Osterling, "Tagore and the Nobel Prize," Centennial Volume, p. 203.
81 Ibid., p. 204.
West became interested more and more in Tagore's work.

Edward Thompson, Tagore's biographer and one of the co-workers from the West, wrote:

It was through the English "Gitanjali" that I got my first introduction to his poetry and I confess myself to this day so under its spell that I cannot appraise it with any degree of accuracy. The book has spoken to countless hearts, has been a revelation of what they felt and experienced and cannot be ever forgotten ... The book has had such a rebirth into our Western tongue, that a considerable literature has gathered round it. This renders it superfluous for me to do more than indicate, in a very few sentences, three or four characteristics of these songs. It would be churlish to find the collection monotonous; nevertheless, the eager delight with which one can enter this gentle paradise flags at intervals, before one gets to the end of its hundred and fifty-nine poems. That delight experiences constant renewal of the freshest, most joyous sort. But the best fifty of these songs are outstanding in their beauty and appeal and make a far richer book than the whole. I say this, weary of saying it. 82

When Tagore was in London he met the famous Irish poet W. B. Yeats, and they became life-long friends. They had a very great mutual respect and admiration for each other. Yeats read the manuscript of Gitanjali and its English translation. He also wrote an introduction to the English Gitanjali. In it, Yeats said:

As the generation passes, travellers will hum

82

Thompson, p. 216.
them on the highway and men rowing upon rivers. Lovers, while they await one another, shall find, in murmuring them, this love of God a magic gulf wherein their own more bitter passion may bathe and renew its youth. At every moment the heart of this poet flows outward to these without derogation or condescension, for it has known that they will understand; and it has filled itself with the circumstances of their lives.83

After a visit to America following his stay in England, Tagore returned to India on October 4, 1913. While he was in Santiniketan the great news of the award of the Nobel Prize to Tagore came on November 13th. This news was received with great rejoicing all over the country. When the news reached Calcutta on the evening of the 13th local evening paper Empire commented in its editorial:

It is the first recognition of the indigenous literature of this Empire as a world force; it is the first time that an Asiatic has attained distinction at the hands of the Swedish Academy and this is the first occasion upon which the £8000 prize has been awarded to a poet who writes in a language entirely foreign to the awarding country -- to Sweden.84

Edward Thompson had the first-hand experience of the atmosphere in Santiniketan when the Nobel Prize reached Tagore. He wrote:

83 W. B. Yeats, "Introduction to Gitanjali," quoted from E. Thompson, p. 218.
On the evening of a day in the first week of November, when I was staying at Santiniketan suddenly a hubub arose, and the masters rushed up with a sheaf of telegrams. "We have great news, Mr. Tagore has won the Nobel Prize." It was a time of great happiness for us all ... He was greeted with a frenzy of worship, one after another throwing himself down and touching his feet. He stood with hands to his face, palms together, deprecating their homage. Every one shouted and sang. At last the boys dispersed and made a huge bonfire. Rabindranath told me the award was not altogether a surprise. When in England, he had been asked to send copies of his books and press clippings to the Nobel Prize Committee.\textsuperscript{85}

Even though Tagore was elated and proud of this great honor he did not like the public show. However, he was very grateful to his friends who worked hard to introduce him to the West and the Nobel Prize Academy. All these friends were so happy for their dear friend, Rabindranath. One of his lifelong friends Rothenstein was delighted to know about it and wrote the following letter:

\textit{Far Oakridge, November 15, 1913}

My very dear friend: -- I open the Times & a great shout comes from it -- Rabindranath has won the Nobel Prize: I cannot tell you of the delight this splendid homage gives me -- the crown is now set upon your brow. Surely this, the greatest honor which can come to a man during his lifetime, must make your own heart swell a little, & then happily the price is materially substantial, & you will at last I think be rid of all anxiety regarding the school. We here made a holiday of this day - all

\textsuperscript{85} Thompson, pp. 222-23.
rejoice in the role of honor in which you have been invested before the eyes of Europe. I took the children for a drive, a long promised one: we had a glorious day, & as it is not often I play truant, the children were like a peal of bells. My dear friend, from the heart I send you my full congratulations. Never I think did ampler reward fit ampler merit; your pilgrimage is one of the romances of literature. It should awaken the East like a trumpet blast & at last turn the minds of the young men towards something more noble and fruitful than political intrigue. For yourself it will be an incentive to a new faith in your own great powers; you are not of those whom heads can be turned by much praise, & in the solitude of Bolpur you will see still deeper into the mysteries of all those common things amongst which men live so unheeding. Poet of the sun, you will sit in the sun, poet of the night you will go forth into the night, poet of the human heart, you will bring warmth & comfort to a thousand cold & dispirited. Is not this even a greater prize than any man can bestow? to be chosen to serve your fellows, & your neighbors now reach across the world. We send our love from house to house. Ever yours __

Tagore had great affection for Rothenstein's family. It is obvious from their letters. According to M. M. Lago:

Rothenstein's role as prime mover of Tagore's career as an international figure, however, there can be no question. The correspondence (between them) documents and confirms the magnitude of his contribution to Tagore and to the history of cultural exchange between India and the West - in Rothenstein's crowded life, one contribution among many, to other friends and other causes ... The thirty-year correspondence of William Rothenstein, a painter, and Rabindranath Tagore, a poet, is a history of

86
Lago, p. 139.
the friendship of two men who reached out, the one from England toward India, the other from India toward the West. 87

The Nobel Prize made Rabindranath Tagore not merely aware of his literary excellence but of the West's recognition of Asian excellence by Western standards. Tagore was fully aware of it. He mentioned his feelings in the following letter to Rothenstein.

Santiniketan November 18, 1913

My dear friend:

The very first moment I received the message of the great honor conferred on me by the award of the Nobel Prize my heart turned towards you with love and gratitude. I felt certain that of all my friends none would be more glad at this news than you. Honour's crown of honor is to know that it will rejoice the hearts of those whom we hold the most dear. But, all the same, it is a very great trial for me. The perfect whirlwind of public excitement it has given rise to is frightful. It is almost as bad as tying a tin can at a dog's tail making it impossible for him to move without creating noise and collecting crowds all along. I am being smothered with telegrams and letters for the last few days and the people who never had any friendly feelings towards me nor ever read a line of my works are loudest in their protestations of joy.

I cannot tell you how tired I am of all this shouting, the stupendous amount of its unreality being something appalling. Really these people honor the honor in me and not myself ... The only thing that compensates for this is the unfeigned joy and pride that the boys at my school feel at this occasion.

87 Ibid., p. 1.
They are having festivities and making the most of me.

I know how glad Mrs. Rothenstein must have been at my great good fortune -- please give her my kindest remembrances and love to the children.

Yours

Rabindranath Tagore

Tagore's Last Years:

The last days of Tagore's life were approaching nearer to their end. Even though it was the last chapter of his wonderful life, he continued to be active till the last day of his life. His daily routine of writing, answering letters and attending meetings was kept without delay or interruption. He occupied himself writing poems, plays stories, articles, early reminiscences and speeches. There was not any sort of artistic decline in his poems or stories. On the other hand, they seemed far better than his early works. E. Thompson remarks:

If he had written nothing but the poems and fiction of his last two decades, Tagore would have ranked at the head of Bengal's men of letters.

It was Tagore's profound desire to see in his own lifetime the unity and peace among the nations. He was much troubled in his mind and heart when people were destroyed

---

88 Ibid., p. 140.
89 Thompson, p. 288.
and countries were devastated during both the wars. He also cherished the strong hope to see free India in his own lifetime. But now he realized that his wishes would not be achieved. However, the appearance of Mahatma Ghandi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Subbash Chandra Bose and other young leaders on the political stage brightened his patriotic wish to be fulfilled at least in the future even though after his lifetime.

When Subbash Chandra Bose came to visit him in 1939, to get his blessings for future freedom struggle, Tagore with his full heart blessed Bose and said:

Long years did I cry to the yet unborn leader of Bengal and today I speak to him, the chosen of all the people, the leader crowned in glory. Subbash! In the freedom battles which lie ahead, I may no longer be at your side. But you have made our country's sorrows your own, and the final goal, the independence of your country, draws swiftly near. And with this before my eyes, I give you my blessings this day.90

Tagore also had great hopes in Nehru. It was Tagore's strong belief, Nehru, a disciple of Ghandi, could surely lead Indians to freedom. Tagore expected that Nehru would be the champion from the East for world unity and peace. In 1939 on his way to China, Nehru paid a courtesy visit to Tagore in Calcutta. Tagore was extremely delighted and immensely

90 Khanolkar, p. 348.
happy to see Nehru at the time of his last days. He was deeply moved and in expressing his feelings said to him:

I feel proud that the new spirit of Asia will be represented through you and our best traditions of Indian humanity find their voice during your contacts with the people of China.  

In February 1940, Mahatma Gandhi and his wife Kasturba visited Tagore at Santiniketan. They had visited Santiniketan fifteen years ago. Tagore was happy to receive his beloved guests. They were welcomed in the beautiful mango grove and in the Indian traditional way Tagore himself anointed and garlanded them with his own hands and he affectionately said:

On behalf of Santiniketan I welcome you in the plain and simple words of love, such as express our regard for greatness more fittingly than any highflew extravagances. All I wish to say is that just as you belong to all mankind, you are very near and dear to us; you are ours and we are yours.

Tagore took them all around Santiniketan and explained to them the activities in the institution. Gandhi was much impressed by the education program and projects. They stayed overnight at Santiniketan and left the next morning. When Gandhi reached the next halt he sent a re-

---

91 Ibid., p. 349.
92 Ibid.
ply which said: "Of course I will. I look on Santiniketan as my own." This assurance of Gandhi relieved Tagore from his worries about Santiniketan's future. Because of Gandhi's recommendation, the Department of Education granted substantial financial help to Santiniketan. At present Santiniketan is fully supported by the Government of India.

In September 1940, Tagore fell sick at Kalimpong. He was brought to Calcutta and eminent doctors took care of him. Within two months Tagore recovered and made tremendous improvement. When Tagore felt strong he went back to Santiniketan. Because of his advanced age, he suffered a relapse. In July 1941 he was brought back to Calcutta. When his car was moving to the railway station, weeping and sobbing students and professors, men and women, old and young visitors and workers lined both sides of road. He said to them "I am going away and goodbye." No doubt the people realized that they would see him no more.

When this author was at Santiniketan in the summer of 1972, he was deeply moved to see those places. It was very touching to see and walk where Rabindranath Tagore lived, moved around, took his evening walk and where he received Mahatma Gandhi. The special library which con-
tains his original works and other related documents and papers is a living monument to his greatness.

In Calcutta the doctors suggested an operation for Tagore. He was not happy about surgery due to his age. However, he finally consented to it. On July 30 he was operated on. Everything went well. After the operation he seemed to recover, but after a few days he took a turn for the worse. People began to realize that the end was near. His only surviving son, Rathindranath and daughter-in-law were at his bedside. He stayed in bed resting quietly and peacefully covered with a clean white shawl.

On August 5th, Tagore lost his consciousness, and remained in a coma. On August 7th he closed his eyes, never to open them again.93

Radios and special editions of newspapers spread the news of Tagore's passing away. Not only India but the whole world mourned him. Edward Thompson writes:

The whole world paid tribute to the greatness whose visible presence had finished, to his majestic person and long life of versatile distinction. Not a man only but an age had made its way at last into history ... The international recognition of his quality was well missed in the commemoration meeting in London, of which I had the honor to be chairman; I shall certainly never again preside over such a platform. ... The question of whether he was a great

93 Kanolkar, p. 353.
poet might be undecided, but all knew that he had been an outstanding figure and a very brave and emancipated man. He had summed up in himself a whole age in which India had moved into the modern world. If I may be permitted one further personal reference, as I said in the broadcast message I was asked to send across the seas, I felt present not merely at the (demise) of my friend, but at the (demise) of an epoch.

Tagore passed away before his country had gained her political freedom. But in his case he himself had found his own freedom long ago. His mind and being were rooted in India. However he felt at home with all the people of all nations.

This chapter has commented in some detail on Tagore's contribution to art, literature, poetry, and drama. His reputation as a writer and artist was one that transcended the Indian sub-continent. The award of the Nobel Prize to Tagore gives testimony to his recognition and to his stature as a man of international reputation. For Tagore, the world of art and of aesthetic education would make a great contribution to international understanding. Man's poetical sense was one that transcended national boundaries and frontiers. It was no accident that the curriculum that Tagore developed at Visva Bharati emphasized art, literature, drama and poetry.

---
94 Thompson, p. 296.
The aesthetic dimension of education was a way to reach man everywhere in the world.

As a poet, philosopher and artist Tagore had a broad outlook of humanity. He always felt that nations of both the East and the West contributed considerably toward human progress. However, the problem has been the fact that there was no meeting of the minds of the hemispheres. Tagore believed that it would be a lasting contribution to seek to bring the meeting of the minds through mutual knowledge and understanding. For this purpose he established his school for international studies. In the next chapter we shall describe the features of Tagore's educational philosophy.
CHAPTER III
THE EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY OF TAGORE

To describe Tagore's philosophy of education, it is necessary to examine some of the elements of his general philosophy. Tagore was an artist, poet, philosopher, prophet of freedom, humanist and educationalist who exercised tremendous influence on the development of twentieth century Indian educational thought and practice.

Tagore was born in a period where contradictory currents of thought prevailed in the ideological life of India. This was a complex period of conflicting economic, educational, religious and social realities in India. There were not only reactionaries and progressives resorting to establish their aspiration but also powerful political, leaders, and eminent writers and thinkers endeavoring to establish their idealism. Many intellectuals created a new feeling of nationalism and started the battle against feudalism and colonialism. It was within such a climate that young Tagore grew and sought to express his views, according to Damodaran:

Tagore grew up in an environment marked by the conflict between the old and the new. The
atmosphere around him was that of the fight against medieval superstitions, religious bigotry and outmoded customs, but belonged to the school of progressive idealism.¹

Tagore was well aware of the conflicts that were raging in India. He was aware of the conflicts created by the pressures of the traditional and the modern modes of life. In his later educational work, Tagore would seek to create a synthesis that harmoniously blended the best of the ancient values with the most worthy of the modern tendencies. In commenting on the conflicts and controversies of India, Tagore said:

This was happening about the time I was born. I am proud to say that my father was one of the great leaders of that progressive movement, a movement for whose sake he suffered ostracism and braved social indignities. I was born in this atmosphere of the advent of new ideals, which at the same time were old, older than all the things of which that age was proud.²

Tagore, the poet philosopher, was not interested in arguments and logic but was a visionary and therefore he communicated the truths that were revealed to him, directly through his poetic images. However, there were forces that

² Tagore, Lectures and Addresses, p. 2.
influenced Tagore and molded his personality and philosophy. They were: first, the ideas of Raja Rammohan Roy, a religious reformer who established a new sect of Brahmo Samaj; secondly, the influence of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, the famous Bengali writer of the nineteenth century and thirdly, the national movement created by the Congress Movement. Therefore, it is our purpose to examine these influences on Tagore and on his poetic images in order to determine the nature of his thought and beliefs.

Different people have attempted to interpret the general character of Tagore's philosophy in different ways. Therefore, it is appropriate to try to determine the ideas of Tagore's philosophy in terms of conventional academic philosophical concepts. According to Radhakrishnan:

We do not find any systematic exposition of his philosophy of life in any of his writings. Even Sadhana is a book of sermons or mystic hymns, or perhaps a reasoned account of metaphysics: an atmosphere rather than a system of philosophy. But we feel that the atmosphere is charged with a particular vision of reality. In his writings we have the reaction of his soul to the environment, his attitude in the face of life. His personality is completely revealed in his soul, the outpourings of his devotional heart, and the revelation of his poetic consciousness. His writings

3 Damodaran, Indian Thought, p. 419.
must and do contain suggestions of his intellectual creed.\(^4\)

It should be stated that Tagore's philosophy was not expressed in conventional philosophical terms. It was expressed in his drama, poetry, and in the literature that he created. His idealism was primarily of an aesthetic nature. From Tagore's aesthetic insights came his ethical and moral beliefs. His educational philosophy or his theory of international education was the result of his aesthetic insights and his feelings about man, nature and the universe. Such a philosophical orientation is not uncommon to those who share the orientation of Idealism.

Tagore was a prolific writer. His poems, plays, novels, short stories and essays convey his thoughts. Therefore, it is possible for us to derive from Tagore's works his philosophical views. Tagore accepted the ancient Indian traditions and thought. He was deeply influenced by the Upanishads and the Vedanta -- the scripture of Hindu ideals. Therefore, his ideas had much in common with the philosophies of many Indian thinkers. In the light of this let us briefly examine the elements of his philosophy.

---

Like other Indian idealist philosophers, Tagore believed in an Ultimate Reality behind the material universe. To Tagore this Ultimate Reality was a Personal Reality, an embodiment of the highest and the noblest that humanity has sought. In other words, it was a personification of moral and aesthetic values. According to Basant Kumar Lal:

> Reality, according to Tagore, is one. He identifies this reality with personal God. This identification of impersonal reality with personal God gives interesting results. Now, all attempted descriptions of his thought assume a validity. Tagore can rightly be called an idealist, or a spiritualist. He can again be described both as a monist and an atheist.

Therefore, it can be asserted that Tagore's philosophy is a religious synthesis of Abstract Monism, and a particular type of Theism. According to Tagore, God is not merely an abstract of the metaphysician but He is the concrete ideal of man's life and aspirations. In fact, Tagore had a very sound reason for believing in a personal God - Tagore's evidence for this is that God can be realized only in a powerful experience or in a forceful and positive concentration of our being. Tagore felt that the relationship

---

between man and God can only be a kind of relationship of true and intense love which is all comprehensive and powerful feeling of oneness. Again Tagore believed that such a relationship could be possible only if the lover and loved one are conceived as personal. For Tagore God and man go together. Man is considered to be the spark of the Divine and the Supreme is considered as the ideal which man can realize. Consequently, this ideal can not be an impersonal and indifferent absolute. God's presence has to be felt everywhere. Thus Tagore is convinced that proofs for God's existence are not at all necessary. Glimpses into God's nature can be had in any type of spiritual experience - aesthetic, moral or religious.

Tagore believed in the reality of creation and therefore he has a definite view on the nature of creation. His account of creation is theistic. In other words, God is the ultimate reality and therefore God is the basis of the universe. In a sense, creation is the manifestation or expression of God. Then, this manifestation is almost necessary in the sense that there is no sense in conceiving a creationless God -- a God who is just but does not create. B. K. Lal says:

According to Tagore: The reason for creation is
joy. Using the Indian concept of "lila" (joy) Tagore says that creation is the joy of creator. God creates in the fulness of joy -- just to find himself in the play of joy. It is on account of this that the act of creation does not give rise to any kind of duality. It is in the nature of joy to create another only to absorb it finally in the consummation of joy. Creation, thus, is separate from the creator, and yet united with him. It is separate because it has been created, but it is still united because both the creator and the created are aspects of the joy creation.

From the above statement, it is clear that there is a sense in which creation is necessary and in spite of the fact that it is necessary, creation is a free act of the creator. These two elements may appear as inconsistent with each other, as to how can a "free" act be "necessary" at the same time. But Tagore argues that creation is necessary because it is the expression of joy. According to Radhakrishnan's interpretation:

Our master himself has joyfully taken upon him the bonds of creation, he is bound with us all forever.

According to Tagore: The creation of the universe is only the realization of the Absolute, the revelation of its freedom. God finds himself by creating. It is the creative joy that gives birth to the universe. It is the self-sundering of the Eternal which calls into existence the universe of men and things. But this must have duality for its realization.

---

6 B. K. Lal, Contemporary Indian Philosophy, p. 57.
7 Tagore, Gitanjali, p. 31.
Thus, Tagore maintains that the whole world is the expression of God's joy and this joy manifests as the law of the universe. Tagore's conception of creation raises another fundamental question of nature. And that is -- "Is creation real or is it merely an appearance? On this point B. K. Lal comments:

Passages from Tagore can be quoted to show that the world has been conceived as an illusion. But such passages occur when Tagore is found recommending a withdrawal from finitude and a consequent extension of view it is fairly clear that Tagore believes that creation, although a manifestation or an appearance of the Absolute, is not false or illusory. It is real just as appearance is real.9

It is necessary to remark that Tagore has introduced the concept of "Maya" also in his philosophy of God and the world. Even though he derived the concept from the Vedanta philosophy, he interpreted the concept of nature of creation in his own way. B. K. Lal comments:

According to Tagore, "Maya" is ignorance on a universal scale, it is the principle of the cosmic error. It is the mist and not the sun. Truth stands for unity and Maya stands for separateness.10

Thus, Tagore explains the concept of Maya by using an analogy. He says:

A savage gets some currency notes from somewhere. He

---

9 Lal, p. 58.
10 Ibid., p. 59.
does not know their value, and so they are completely useless for him. One who knows, or one who considers the bank notes in relation to the bank, that is considers them not in their separateness, perceives a value in them. Likewise, if the creation is viewed as the creation of the creator, there would appear a value in creation. But, if the forms of the universe are viewed independently and apart from Him whose forms they are, then we would get a false picture of the universe, and then the universe will not appear to have any significant value for us. This is Maya -- the tendency to see from the wrong point of view.11

Tagore felt that this Maya is not really a separate entity. Moreover, this Maya does not exist by itself and it does not limit God's nature of infinity. Thus, Tagore continues that if God does everything in an arbitrary manner there would be no God's game of joy -- since creation is God's play of joy. Therefore, God must set limits willingly to his will and power. Consequently, this self-imposed limitation of God is Maya. Tagore says:

It is like a father's settling upon his son some allowance within the limits of which he is free to do what he likes.12

This makes it clear that the concept of Maya is not altogether an illusory principle of delusion. Also, Tagore adds to this principle a reality of its own. In other words, it is a power of God. It should be remembered

11 Sadhana, p. 80.
12 Sadhana, p. 86.
that its reality is just like the reality of error. It has a reality, however, it has to be superseded. It is Tagore's conviction that error, by its nature, can not remain with truth and cannot be stationary, but like a tramp it must quit its lodging as soon as it fails to pay its score in full.

Tagore is also described as a mystic. This description is probably because he did not formulate his beliefs on the strength of logical speculation. Nevertheless he seems to have them through his poetic insight, which is in all respects, the insight of a seer. K. S. Ramaswamy Sastri remarks:

Tagore is a great mystic, poet and saint. He is the rare power of mystical and spiritual vision. His spiritual vision has got a beauty, power and sweetness of its own - unique, unequalled and original. His mysticism is in alliance with the true love of country, the true joys of love, the true raptures of service and the highest moral life.13

Thus Tagore's philosophy can be described in various ways and yet it is interesting to note that all these different descriptions do throw some light on the general nature of his concepts.

Tagore conceives the nature of man without affecting

the nature of God. In other words, the center of his philosophy is man, not God. For Tagore, God is only a symbol of human unity and the perfection of man's personality. The Supreme Personality is thus essentially humane and could be realized only through love of man. Thus Tagore gives man a very important status. Metaphysically, according to Tagore, man in many respects is God-like and yet he is very much a creature along with others in this world. Perhaps, because of this concept, Tagore is often described as primarily a philosopher of humanity. Tagore has felt that man is not a tool in the hand of the physical forces. With the advent of man there appears a significant change in the nature of the evolutionary process. Somehow or other man has the capacity to play a part in evolution and he has the power to change the pattern of his behavior and responses. Man's responses are not automatic and they can not be predetermined. Tagore says:

From the time when man became truly conscious of his own self he also became conscious of a mysterious spirit of unity which found its manifestation through him in his society. Somehow man has felt that this comprehensive spirit of unity has a divine character which could claim the sacrifice of all that is individual in him, that in it dwells his highest meaning transcending his limited self, representing his best freedom.  

---

14

The Religion of Man, p. 143.
In other words Tagore does not mean that nature and physical forces do not have any determining influence on man. On the other hand, Tagore accepts that many of the human mechanisms like the eyes or the ears have developed in accordance with the laws of evolution. In a sense, human mechanisms are controlled by man's own inner power and decisions. In man these mechanisms can not function as instinctively or mechanically as they do in the case of other animals. Radhakrishnan comments on Tagore's concepts of the nature of man thus:

Rabindranath does not look upon the body as the tomb of the prison of the soul from which it has to be liberated. From him man is bound up with nature; the human spirit is wedded to the material organism. Contact with body, instead of being a tainting of the purity of the soul, is just the condition necessary for developing its nature. Nature is not as such, evil. It all depends.\(^\text{15}\)

Thus Tagore believes that as an animal man is still dependent on nature. As a man, he is a sovereign who builds his own world and controls it. So far we have discussed Tagore's ideas of reality, the individual and the universe. The importance of Tagore's philosophy, however, lies in their practical application to the problems of our daily lives.

life. One great problem that we have to face is how to reconcile the claims of the individual and those of the society or the entire world. Another problem is how to establish relationship with God and how to express our spirit of reverance to God. Tagore felt that we can worship God only by loving and adoring the Divinity in man. The most concrete and visible manifestation of the Supreme Being is in man. Even though we can not comprehend the infinite nature of God, yet we can serve Him and realize Him through love and service to humanity. Tagore holds the view that there is no fundamental conflict between the individual and the society or mankind. The true fulfillment of the individual personality lies in the extension of consciousness till it comprehends the entire mankind. B. C. Chakravarty says:

It is Tagore's belief that the happiness of the individual lies not in the contraction of his self, but in the expansion of his soul, for this is in accordance with man's inner nature. An animal lives the life of self but man seeks his highest enjoyment in communion with all. Love of human beings for Tagore, is an ethical ideal and is also regarded as the best method of worshipping God, which is the religious ideal. This is the most distinguishing characteristic of Tagore's contribution to modern thought.16

The process of reasoning by which the concept of the love of human beings has been beautifully expressed in his philosophy of international education. Therefore, let us examine next, the educational philosophy of Tagore which later he developed for international understanding.

Tagore was first and foremost concerned with Indian education. Tagore was not a professional educator. However, it is important to realize that he developed a well-integrated view of life and of the important role of education in life, and society. He was dissatisfied with the educational system of his own time. From his own experience in the school he felt strongly that there should be a new approach in education and he put it in practice in his own school. As a poet, philosopher and prophet of freedom he later advanced his theory of education for international unity -- the unity among the various cultures and the unity between the East and the West. For this purpose he founded his own school. According to Saiyidain:

In the interest of the future of Indian education as well as of intercultural contact Tagore had been dreaming of the establishment of a new pattern of institution and these were meant to provide the fulfillment of that dream. Today when the promotion of international contacts and exchanges has become a common place, such an idea may not sound very revolutionary or staggering but in the early twenties it seemed
to be audacious beyond reason.\textsuperscript{17}

Thus Tagore experimented his theories of education and developed it for the promotion of unified life not only for India but also for mankind. In the first two decades of the twentieth century Tagore was the most prominent commentator on Indian education and philosophy.

As a poet and philosopher he popularized national education. The aim of education, for Tagore, was the development of the whole person. According to H. B. Mukherjee:

Tagore's fundamental aim of education as the harmonious development of all human facilities in order to attain complete manhood must have been the reflection of his fundamental philosophy of life. The highest education is that, Tagore said, which makes our life in harmony with all existences. Harmony with all existence can be achieved only when all the faculties of an individual have been developed to the highest pitch of perfection, which represents Tagore's conception of complete manhood.\textsuperscript{18}

Tagore stressed that education should be balanced and complete without neglecting any part of man's nature. Education should not ignore any of man's capacities. To achieve this goal, according to Tagore, education should aim to develop all sides of man's nature -- his physical, intell-

\textsuperscript{17} K. S. Saiyidain, \textit{The Humanist Tradition in Modern Indian Educational Thought} (Madison: Dembar Educational Research Services, Inc. 1967), p. 38.

\textsuperscript{18} H. B. Mukherjee, p. 266.
lectual and moral powers. No part of man's nature should be separated or neglected. Tagore says:

The object of education is to give man the unity of truth. Formerly when life was simple all the different elements of man were in complete harmony. But when there came the separation of the intellect from the spiritual and the physical, the school of education put entire emphasis on the intellect and the physical side of man. We devote our attention to giving children information, not knowing that by this emphasis we are accentuating a break between the intellectual, physical and the spiritual life.\(^\text{19}\)

On the basis of this aim Tagore's educational philosophy contains three main features. They are: freedom, creative self-expression and active communion with nature and man. According to V. R. Taneja:

The genesis of the ideal freedom lies in his own experience as a child and his experience of the prevailing system of education which offered an education factory, lifeless, colorless, dissociated from the context of the universe. Indian education had taken the children away from their natural and its vitalizing and life-giving influences. It was dissociated with social contexts.\(^\text{20}\)

Thus, it is clear that Tagore stressed the attainment of an inner freedom, an inner power and enlightenment. This ideal of inner freedom may be expressed as the liberation of the individual from all kinds of slavery. There-


fore, the main character of good education, according to Tagore, is that it does not overpower man's nature but it emancipates him. This idea has an interesting parallelism in the observation of Dewey when he says:

Freedom means essentially the part played by thinking - which is personal - in learning; it means intellectual, initiative, independence in observation, judicious invention, foresight of consequences and ingenuity of adaptation to them. But because these are the mental phase of behavior, the needed play of individuality - or freedom - cannot be separated from opportunity for free play of physical movements.21

Further Tagore emphasized that true education should bestow upon man an inner sense of contentment, and poise which may serve as a bulwark against the usual uncertainties, unavoidable temptations and ordeals of life. Tagore's instructional method put emphasis on the process of education in accordance with nature. At the same time he felt that education should be useful for life. In other words, education should relate to the reality of life. He insisted on natural education. The child should learn in his natural environment according to his interests and inclinations. In this way, proper instruction aims for the harmonious human development. For Tagore instruction meant much more than

the imparting of information. The process should always be for the full development of the child. This is very similar to Pestalozzi's view of instruction. Dr. Gutek says:

Pestalozzi stressed the concept of the natural environment, a situation conforming to natural laws. His prepared educational environment was constructed upon the unchanging laws of human growth and development. ... Pestalozzi's educational theorizing sought to develop an art of instruction to assist man in growing naturally and harmoniously.22

It is clear now that Tagore, like certain European educators, advanced his realistic approach for physical, intellectual and moral growth of the child. The child is the center in his education process. As Tagore said:

Children are in love with love and it is their first love. All its color and movement attract their eager attention. And are we quite sure of our wisdom in stifling this love? Children are not born ascetics, fit to enter at once into the monistic discipline of acquiring knowledge. At first, they must gather knowledge through their love of life and they will renounce their lives to gain knowledge and then they will come back to their fuller lives with ripened wisdom.23

Thus Tagore felt that the environments of instruction should be natural and lovable to the learner. Also for Tagore, instruction should be gradual according to the

---

age and ability and other interests of the child. Since learning is natural to the child, the teacher should rouse interest and direct attention. Children should be motivated to feel the needs of the subject they are learning. For this, Tagore proposed that the child should learn by his own involvement. They should be encouraged to learn through interest. Tagore did not put too much stress on books, for education must be gained at first hand by personal experience, not through books and the thoughts of other persons. As a poet and a keen observer of nature Tagore had observed children and what he believed was the result of what he tried out in practice in his school. In his stories and poems Tagore had a unique place for the children. Therefore when he experimented his educational theories in his school it was natural for him to formulate his methods for the growth of the children. Tagore said:

In the teaching system of my school I have been trying all these years to carry out my theory of education, based upon my experience of children's minds. I believe, as I suggested before, that children have intelligence. A vast quantity of the most important of our lessons has been taught to us through this. This subconscious faculty of knowledge is completely one with our life. It is not like a lantern that can be lighted and trimmed from outside, but it is like the light that the glowworm possesses
by the exercise of its life-process. 24

Thus, Tagore by his own childhood experience was able to understand the mind of the child and strongly believed that the nature of the child was good and that it should be allowed to grow naturally without interference from outside forces. There is yet another aspect of his educational theory and that is the importance of arts, crafts and handiwork as part of the curriculum. Children are curious and creative. To allow their natural creative mind, there should be facilities for children to transfer their imagination into arts and crafts. According to Saiyidain:

Tagore stressed the need to bring education into close relationship with productive work, both as important in itself as a medium for the education of the mind and personality. What he wished to introduce in his school would today strike a responsive chord amongst educationalists of many lands. The various activities, Tagore believed, could bring teachers and students into a vital partnership of effort and also establish fruitful relations between the school and the community. 25

It is, then, necessary to note that like other educators Tagore discovered that when children were engaged in constructive work, they would be stimulated for creative work which would direct them for the pursuit of knowledge and

24 Rabindranath Tagore, Lectures and Addresses, p. 34.
25 Saiyidain, Indian Educational Thought, p. 49.
One other aspect of his theory is the importance of mother tongue in the system of education. This aspect may not seem pertinent in other countries, but it was so pertinent during Tagore's time when British system of education dominated all over India. Tagore felt that children should learn the subjects through their mother tongue. Later when they grew up they could learn other languages so that they appreciate other cultures. Tagore said:

For the perfect irrigation of learning, a foreign language cannot be a true medium. This is a truism whose utterance would bore men to sleep or to something worse, in any other part of the world, but in our country truisms appear as dangerous heresies, rousing our phlegmatic souls into active hostility. And this makes me bold to reiterate that when we are compelled to learn through the medium of English, the knocking at the gate and the turning of the key take away the best part of our life.\[^{26}\]

Thus Tagore was convinced that the natural education of the mind and the release of the creative impulse in children could naturally be achieved only with the mother tongue which was a great problem in the Indian educational system. In conclusion, it is necessary to concise Tagore's ideas of educational theories. Tagore believed that the

\[^{26}\] Rabindranath Tagore, *The Center of Indian Culture*, p. 18.
right education must enable the mind to find out the truth, to make this truth its own wherever found and to give expression to it in the proper manner as only it can do. In education the child is the most important factor. Therefore education should try to help for the full growth of the child — its physical, intellectual and moral. This process should be in the natural environment of the child without fear or punishment but rather with love and understanding; the child should learn everything in the mother tongue. There should be a close relationship between the teacher and students as it was in the ancient Indian forest school. There need not be a formal religious and moral instruction but education should facilitate the kind of practice which would be truly moral and religious. Thus the child would learn and grow every day. Finally he would reach his fullness of life to live with others in his own society and the people in other countries. This was Tagore's ultimate view of education which is termed as education for world understanding and love. The next chapter will analyze his idea of international education.
CHAPTER IV

TAGORE'S PHILOSOPHY OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

Tagore: A World Figure

In the centuries old history of India, it is difficult to find a person such as Tagore, whose contributions to social thought, culture and art were so great and diverse. The centennial of his birth, celebrated in 1961, was considered as an outstanding event in the history of world culture. Rabindranath Tagore reached world fame quite suddenly. There are few precedents in history of such a rise to public acclaim.

Tagore was long unknown in the West. When he was more than fifty years old he had already produced the greatest part of his poetical work, and he had been publicly recognized in India as the poet of poets. When in 1913 Tagore was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature, the West suddenly became aware of his genius. The West greeted the East with outstretched hands. Commenting on his genius, Rev. Pierre Fallon S.J. says:

Tagore knew then a fame and success such as no other poet ever knew outside his own country during his lifetime; all the countries of the West
acclaimed him and honored him with unbounded enthusiasm and deep veneration. Yet, today, though his name as a sage remains great, his best work is little read and his poetry, probably the world's greatest lyric poetry, is being forgotten in most parts of the Western world; few Western critics know him to be one of the purest representatives of world literature.  

Rabindranath's pre-war visit to England became the prelude to world-wide fame. The award of the Nobel Prize followed within eighteen months. The Calcutta University conferred on him the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters in December 1913. The British government conferred upon him a knighthood in June 1915. England and Europe were first captured by Tagore's *Gitanjali*. These poems combined the color and vividness of India with a universalist conception of God and a spirit of universal brotherhood. When *Gitanjali* was first published in English, the famous Irish poet W. B. Yeats wrote a very fascinating introduction. His praise of the poet and the poems added to the name and fame of Tagore. W. B. Yeats said in the introduction:

> I have carried the manuscript of these translations about with me for days, reading it in railway trains, or on the top of omnibuses and in restaurants, and I have often had to close it lest some stranger would see how much it moved me.  

---

In the next few years, Tagore’s most important works such as *The Gardener, Personality, The Religion of Man, Crescent Moon, Sadhana, Creative Unity, Post Office, Hungry Stones* and *Fruit Gathering* were published in various languages and the impression that the prize had been justly awarded was confirmed everywhere. In all his writings Tagore vividly expressed his ideas on educational, social, political and cultural aspects of life. His predominant theme was always international friendship through mutual understanding and respect. He also insisted that true international friendship could be created only through proper international education.

The award met with general approbation in India. Anders Osterling says:

I think it is reasonable to say that by honoring the then fifty-two year old Tagore, Sweden in fact paved the way for his international fame.3

To further illustrate Tagore as a prominent world figure, it is pertinent to note the comment of the famous British novelist Pearl S. Buck. She remarked in her message to the Centenary Committee:

I am happy and honored to have the opportunity

---

of joining with many others to commemorate the centenary of the great poet of India, Rabindranath Tagore. Of the many great Indians that we do know, Tagore and Gandhi are very different in their impact upon this Western world. Different and alike, alike in their spiritual leadership, different in their political positions. Gandhi, of course, had a great political influence, the greater, because of his historic power. Tagore stands to us for pure beauty, for the Universal, because he was not involved in politics. His poetry, his poetic prose reached deep and far, because he spoke to us of mind and soul, leading the human spirit towards God.

No narrow God created by man, but the spirit of the universe itself, creative, broad, and deep, transcending formal religions and race. In a very real sense, he was a world poet. The world needs such poets. Tagore's eyes were fixed upon the future of mankind, when goodness and beauty shall flower out of inspired love.

Then it is clear, now that Tagore was recognized as a world figure by prominent people of many countries, not only as a great poet, but as a great man of the world.

People all over the world highly valued and esteemed Tagore for his lofty humanism and for his love for mankind.

The Soviet Committee for Tagore's centenary made this remark:

Tagore is dear to us for one reason. In him the noble feelings of patriotism and devoted love for his country are merged with feelings of profound love and respect for all peoples on earth, for all mankind. Tagore is kind also because he was consistent and irreconcilable opponent of all aggression and war, violence and exploitation. He boldly

---

4 Centenary Volume, p. 119.
opposed fascism and militarism in all their forms and manifestations.  

Although Tagore's responsibilities were enhanced by world fame, the Bengalese poet took the homage of the world easily. He was called to attend to the affairs of the larger human family. Tagore criticized the narrow spirit of nationalism during World War I when total annihilation seemed certain. It made him very unpopular at the time. Tagore himself was aware of the fact that he was formally recognized by various countries of the world. He remarked about it:

Bewildered at heart by the great demonstration made in my honor in these countries, I have often tried to find out the real cause. I have been told that it was because I loved humanity. I hope that it is true, and all through my writings my love of man has found its utterances and touched human hearts across all barriers. If it be true, then let that truest note in my writings guide my own life henceforth.  

Thus Tagore became a world figure as a great humanitarian and a lover of mankind.

Tagore's Prominence Examined

The preceding pages discussed Tagore as a world

---

5 Centenary Volume, p. 303.
6 Rabindranath Tagore, Letters From Abroad (Madras: S. Ganeman, 1924), p. 130.
figure who was prominent in India as well as in many
countries of the world. Let us now examine the basis of
his prominence. Tagore was prominent because of his many-
sided personality. Different people liked him and admired
him for various reasons. As was already mentioned, he was
a great poet, philosopher, prophet, novelist, painter, artist,
social reformer and above all a man for all the people of the
world. Richard Church, while participating in the celebration
of Tagore's centenary, remarked:

I regard it as a privilege to come to India and to
take part in this centenary celebration. We are at
a moment in history, the history of a great reorgan-
ization of the human race throughout the world.
Tagore was an example of the harmonious man. He
seemed to be guided from the beginning by a direct
and unquestioning vision which led him toward a
philosophy of wholeness, of unity. That is one reason
why I have regarded him as a necessary prophet in these
later stages of the history of human thought where the
battle against the evil of dualism, of multiplicity, of
the overwhelming distraction of opposing peoples and
theories, has begun to be sorted out into something that
should be adequate in its unity for all men, no matter
what their origins or their claims upon nature and upon
each other. I believe that it was the poet in Tagore
which provided the lantern to guide him through this
confusion.\(^7\)

Tagore profoundly appealed to the whole world for a harmonious
life of all mankind. Many persons understood Tagore's genuine

\(^7\)Richard Church, "Tagore the Universal Man" Centenary
Volume, pp. 128-129.
interest for the human race and considered him as a prophet of peace and freedom. In his writings and speeches Tagore showed that the idea of mankind was not an abstraction, but a spiritual reality. He insisted that good relations among nations would be possible only from the accepted basis that the different philosophical and practical problems of the world can be solved by the good will of the people.

For many people, Tagore's fame rested on his philosophical poems. Leo Janacek, the great musician of Czechoslovakia, was one of such persons. He had great admiration for Tagore. Joseph Loewenbach, a great musician and artist in Czechoslovakia, said:

Leo Janacek did not speak any Bengali, nor did he understand Tagore's native language. But he listened to Tagore's poems like a musician, he understood the meaning of it, he penetrated spiritually deep into the world, into its inner melody, its inner rhythm. No wonder that, when he happened to meet the great stranger Rabindranath Tagore and listened to his strange and beautiful language, to its sound and melody, he felt highly impressed, touched and emotionally moved as man and as musician who had got used to explain everything and to get to understand everything in and by sound.8

Loewenbach, himself, has been acquainted with Tagore's poetry and music for over forty years and, in 1961, he partici-

---

8 Joseph Loewenbach, "Leo Janacek and Tagore", Centenary Volume, p. 160.
pated in the Czeschoslovak Tagore centenary celebrations by lecturing and writing on Tagore's associations with Indian and European music. It is obvious that when the Nobel Prize for Literature was awarded to Tagore, poets and novelists became interested to read more of Tagore's works. But the success of the then very little known Tagore astonished many. Readers in nearly all parts of the West could read translations of *Gitanjali* and other works of Tagore in most European languages. By his *Gitanjali*, he has been revealed to the West as a teacher of moral truths, as a humanist philosopher and the author of mystical quality. Great European poets themselves translated *Gitanjali* from the English version into other European languages. According to Pierre Fallon:

*Gitanjali* lent itself to good translation; the simplicity of its language, the universal character of its spiritual message, the subdued quietness of its tone made it easier for translators to render its poems into their various languages than would have been the case with poems richer in narrative or dramatic content. Within a few years, *Gitanjali* was read in nearly all the European languages; the French translation alone passed through some thirty-five editions and similar success obtained in other languages as well. Today still Tagore is, for the West, the author of *Gitanjali*.  

---

9 Pierre Fallon, "Tagore in the West"; *Centenary Volume*, p. 316.
Thus Tagore was known to Western readers through his works and he became prominent especially among authors and artists. His collected works were translated in English, German, Spanish, Italian, Hungarian, Danish, Swedish, Czech, Latvian, Russian, French, Polish and possibly other European languages. Another interesting point about his prominence is that he was very popular in Iceland. A native of Iceland, Halldor Laxness, remarks:

On the centenary of the great poet, the present writer only feels entitled to maintain the appearance of these poems in my country, Iceland and tell of the impression they made on myself. Four years after the *Gitanjali* was published in English we saw it translated into the old poetical language of the Eddas and Sagas, the Icelandic by a highly gifted young art lover, Mr. Magnus Aronson, who at the time was living in America. The *Gitanjali* was brought out in a tasteful little book that came into my hands when I was about fifteen years old. This strange distant and subtle voice at once found its way to the very depths of my youthful spiritual ears; and ever since at given moments, I feel its presence in the innermost labyrinths of my mind. In my country, as elsewhere among Western readers, the form and flavor of the *Gitanjali* had the effect of a wonderful flower we had not seen or heard of before.  

The above reference is just an example to show how Tagore was popular as a poet, artist and prophet of mankind.

---

Another aspect of Tagore's prominence can be explained by the response of Western writers about Tagore. It is necessary to examine how Tagore was treated by Western authors.

Without giving a complete bibliography of books and articles written about Tagore and his work by Western writers, it is pertinent to mention a few of these studies. Several biographies introduced Tagore to the West by various authors such as: P. Cremer (Berlin, 1914), E. Rhys (London, 1915), N. Sureto (Amsterdam, 1916), E. Engelhardt (Berlin, 1921), F. Bellon-Felippi (Rome, 1920), R. Assagioli (Florence, 1921), L. Vaillat (Paris, 1922) and the Swedish translation of B. K. Ray's work on Tagore (Stockholm, 1916), C. F. Andrews who lived at Santiniketan for several years has done much through his writings to make Tagore better known among the Western readers.

The most important work on Tagore by a Western writer is the book by Edward Thompson: Rabindranath Tagore, Poet and Dramatist (London, 2nd edition, 1948). Thompson, though at times severe in his criticism, loved Tagore and his works. Possessing a deep knowledge of Bengal and Bengali, Thompson lived at Tagore's Santiniketan for some time. V. Lesny, the Czech scholar, wrote in 1937 an important study of Tagore in
Czech and translated it into English: *Rabindranath Tagore, His Personality and Work*. Lesny learned Bengali while he was a visiting Professor at Santiniketan in 1928.

It is interesting to note that through all these works on Tagore and by Tagore, he has been considered more as an educational idealist for the world and the humanistic philosopher of mankind rather than as an artist, poet and musician. According to Pierre Fallon:

Studies of Tagore's poetry have been less numerous and less valuable than studies of his mysticism, of his educational ideal and of his humanistic philosophy. Many authors have written about Tagore's ideas on religion and education. E. Piecynska's *Tagore the Educator* (Paris, 1921) has been translated into Spanish, German and other languages. Farquhar, Von Glasenapp, Heiler, Otto, Winternitz, and others have studied the religious philosophy of the poet.  

This is the unique characteristic of Tagore. Along with his creative works as a poet and a novelist, Tagore was preaching for international relations through education. In Germany there are a number of publications which report on Tagore's contributions to literature, art, music, philosophy and above all to education and international relations. And Tagore's international school is often mentioned. In the pro-

---

gressive Bulgarian newspapers and periodicals of that time articles on Tagore's political educational and philosophical aspects were published. Very often fragments of his works and comments on them were published. Several prominent literary men in Bulgaria did extensive research on Tagore. Vassil Stavrev, an exceptionally cultured Bulgarian and a teacher of literature with progressive ideas, was the first Bulgarian to get in touch with Tagore's international University. He wrote a book on the life and work of Tagore which was published in 1927, a year before his death. This book was published as No. 5 in a series entitled Giants of Mankind by the Acadia Publishing House, Sofia, with an introduction by Professor Assen Zlatarov, a writer, journalist, well-known progressive scientist and public figure in Bulgaria. Vassil Stavrev also translated Tagore's philosophical work Sadhana into Bulgarian. One of Stavrev's pupils Vicho Ivanov became very interested in Tagore's works. He wrote a book on Tagore entitled The Wisdom of Tagore published in 1925 and the second edition in 1926. This book appeared with an introduction by the well-known Bulgarian writer

12 Vicho Ivanov, "Tagore in Bulgaria" Centenary Volume, p. 323.
Lyndmil Stoyanov, a member of the World Peace Council. Besides, Ivanov lectured extensively on Tagore in 1925 and 1926, interpreting Tagore's life, his works and his philosophical and social views as well. According to Ivanov:

I lectured on the work of Rabindranath Tagore in almost all the Bulgarian towns, holding him up as one of the most striking manifestations of India's national genius in literature and philosophy. At that time, after the defeat of the People's December Uprising of 1923, which was to have saved the country from fascism, and after it had been repressed with much bloodshed, every interpretation and presentation of humanistic ideas, the ideas of a worldwide regeneration held up by this Indian author, found a ready response among our progressive audiences. Tagore's optimism, his love of the Indian people and of all liberty-loving mankind, his devotion to the progressive traditions of the philosophical thought and culture of ancient India, acquired the significance of a call for Bulgaria. Tagore, the humanist and representative of the Renaissance in distant India, was virtually regarded to be on the side of the gallant Bulgarian people.13

The fact that Tagore was prominent in the West would support the argument that his ideas or philosophies were accepted. National leaders, educators and authors respected him and admired his principles. This is how, in one way, Tagore himself tested his educational principles, especially

13 Ibid., p. 324.
his philosophy of international education. This is very unique feature of Tagore's whole philosophy of education. It was not narrow and unrealistic. He verified it again and again whenever he had the occasion of meeting with educators and authors. In a sense, Tagore's philosophy of international education was universally accepted by the many prominent persons whom Tagore met in the West.

Tagore's Achievements

To maintain that Tagore was a world figure, very prominent and that his ideas were well known, it is necessary to examine certain of Tagore achievements. Tagore, through his writings and lectures, contributed extensively to literature and philosophy.

Tagore's own writings as a poet, traveler, diarist, short story writer, novelist, and a commentator on international affairs helped to shape the course of literature and philosophy in Asia and the West and deepened its resources extensively.\(^{14}\) His creative power and the impact of his spiritual personality had a strong influence in the minds of many progressive people all the world over. The specialty

\(^{14}\) Chakravarty, A Tagore Reader, p. xi.
in Tagore, as a poet and philosopher, is the fact that Tagore's writing created a new environment in human relations and sensitively enhanced a relationship of understanding between the East and West and also between different parts of the East.

Tagore's works are a treasure from which different people choose different values and interpret them in different meanings. It is the depth of his religious insights which appeal most to some people, whereas other readers admire him for his strong lifelong optimism and firm belief in man and humanity. Some readers would admire his deep humanism, his concept of nationalism and internationalism, his truly democratic outlook and his hatred of oppression and oppressors. Through his life, Tagore sought increasingly to interpret the love of God, as the love of man and the union between man and man. Thus he built his speculations on the possibility of creating a society from the synthesis of East and West. Keeping this new civilization as a goal he began to give reality to his dream and established his school of international education. Tagore's short stories stressed the theme of human relationships. Humanity has been represented in the concrete and endowed with elemental emotions and social
relations. Natural environment and the relationship of fellow human beings are mainly the fascinating plots of his stories.

Further, it is also important to note that Tagore dealt a great deal and with much interest in children and their education. He disapproved the prevailing system of education and condemned vehemently the methods which hamp- ered the children's personality and made them as slaves of text-books with the school as their prison house. Also Tagore's conscious faith in the meeting of the East and West made him his own translator into English. Tagore felt that modern civilization demanded to some extent an understanding of real life and culture beyond the immediate horizon of the local and indigenous life. Above all, Tagore as a prophet of mankind implemented his dreams in establishing his international school which is one of his greatest achievements.

Tagore's World Tour

To demonstrate that Tagore was a world figure, it is necessary to describe Tagore's personal experiences in the different countries of the world. Touring the world many times during his lifetime, Tagore met many people from differ-
ent walks of life. He recorded his experiences and ideas in his various letters, diaries, journals and articles.

It is not necessary to describe Tagore's foreign tours chronologically. Nevertheless, it would be pertinent to mention the countries that Tagore visited. Tagore visited all the countries in the East on the invitation of prominent men of letters, literary associations and philosophical societies. At Bangkok, Tagore was cordially received by the King and Queen of Thailand. The University of Bangkok arranged lectures and receptions for Tagore.15

Similarly Tagore was invited to all the important cities in the West and he gave lectures to various groups. Among the European countries, England was Tagore's first one. His first trip to England was for his studies. Then his second trip to England gave him the opportunity to make himself known to the West. Tagore had many happy memories of his experiences in England.

Tagore visited Russia briefly in September 1926 and was given receptions by various cultural associations. He lectured in Moscow to various groups. Tagore visited Holland

---

15 Kalidas Nag, "Tagore in Asia", Centenary Volume, p. 345.
in 1920 and met several prominent poets. Tagore was well known in Holland. He was widely read in the English versions even before he was awarded the Nobel Prize. After that award, Tagore's works first were translated into Dutch. These translations were made by outstanding Dutch poets.

Tagore visited Norway, Sweden and Germany in 1921 and gave lectures in important cities of these countries. In Stockholm Tagore was received by King Gustavus V and met many distinguished persons. The Swedish Academy gave him a grand reception. In Germany Tagore gave lectures at the University of Berlin and stayed at Darmstadt as the guest of the Grand Duke of Hesse. He also met the German philosopher Count Herman Keyserling whom Tagore had already met in India in 1911, during Keyserling's visit. Kripalani writes about this visit:

Tagore stayed in Darmstadt for nearly a week during which there were no official programs, no receptions and no formal lectures. But crowds used to gather in the grounds attached to the palace and every morning and evening Tagore would come out and meet them and invite questions which he would answer, Count Keyserling acting as interpreter. He was deeply impressed not only with the warm affection with which the common citizens welcomed him but with their genuine interest in philosophical and metaphysical problems.16

16 Kripalani, Rabindranath Tagore, p. 227.
Tagore visited Bulgaria in 1926. The public showed great enthusiasm; poets and writers extended a warm welcome. Many philosophers and translators took much interest to publish more of Tagore's works.

Tagore made a brief visit to Poland in September 1930. It was not a long visit. Nevertheless, he was linked with Poland by strong bonds of sympathy. Also Tagore toured in Czechoslovakia, first in 1921 and then 1926. As in other countries, Czech newspapers reported Tagore's journey, made comments on his new works and printed translations of his messages, speeches and open letters. Tagore visited Switzerland in 1921 and spent some time in Zurich and Geneva. Celebrating his birthday in Geneva on May 6, 1921, Tagore wrote:

Today is my birthday. But I do not feel it; for in reality, it is a day which is not for me, but for those who love me. I wish I had a little time to myself today, but this has not been possible. The day has been crowded with visitors and the talk has been incessant, some part of which has unfortunately lapsed into politics, giving rise to a temperature in my mental atmosphere of which I always repent. 17

Tagore visited Canada in April 1929 and addressed the National council of Education at Vancouver. On his way from Canada he visited Honolulu, Vietnam and Indonesia. Tagore also visit-

17 Tagore, Letters from Abroad, p. 118.
ed Brazil in 1922. He was already very popular there due to his works which several Brazilian authors translated and wrote comments on them.

At last but not the least mention must be made about Tagore's visit to the United States. His visit to the United States is very important in many aspects. He made two separate visits. First in 1912 and the second in 1930. During his first visit he stayed for six months in this country meeting several people and delivering lectures in the Universities of Chicago, Illinois (Urbana), Harvard, Boston, California, New York and in many other important cities to social groups, associations and societies. His son Rathindranath Tagore was doing his doctorate in the University of Illinois, Urbana, and this was another reason that he stayed longer than he planned. Tagore was given warm receptions in all the places he visited. It is important to note that among the topics of his lectures, his views on education occupied a major part. Tagore was appealing for the kind of education which would bring all peoples of the world together. For example, at a reception organized for him at Carnegie Hall, New York, on November 25, 1930, Tagore spoke on education. He explicitly expressed his views on education, espe-
cially the type of education which would lead to world friendship. He explained the various programs and activities of his international school and he pointed out how these programs were very appropriate for international education. In Washington D. C. Tagore was given a grand reception by President Hoover.18

In conclusion it could be said that Tagore, more than any other ordinary citizen, travelled in various countries of the world and was given grand receptions by prominent figures of those countries. This itself proves that Tagore, by his social environment, is a man for the whole world. No wonder, he was a prophet or philosopher for the world.

Tagore's Prominent Associates

The preceding paragraphs described Tagore's world tours and the people he met. However it is useful to refer only to those individuals who had some connection in the formation of his philosophy of international education.

Leonard Elmhirst, an Englishman, was the most important one. He was educated at Cambridge, England and at Cornell University, in the United States. He met Tagore in New York

18 Kripalani, Rabindranath Tagore, p. 354.
and went to India to work at Tagore's School Santiniketan from 1921 to 1925. He was largely responsible for building up Santiniketan as an ideal school for international relations. Another important person who was really instrumental for Tagore's fame in the West was Sir William Rothenstein, an English painter. He met Tagore in India in 1910 during his visit. When Tagore was visiting England in 1912 Rothenstein made arrangements for the meeting of several persons who became Tagore's lifelong friends. In June 1912 Rothenstein invited W. B. Yeats for a gathering where Yeats read Tagore's *Gitanjali*. This was a selected group that included Ezra pound, May Sinclair, Ernest Rhys, Alice Meynell, Henry Nevinson and Charles Trevelyan. It was already mentioned that Yeats wrote an introduction to Tagore's *Gitanjali*. The friendship of these two poets of the British colonies increased their mutual respect and admiration and they both were determined to preach for universal brotherhood, human freedom and dignity. At this gathering Tagore also met C. F. Andrews, who was at that time a missionary to India. Andrews left his missionary work and joined Tagore's school and continued his dedicated missionary life at Santiniketan. Andrews was also closely associated with Mahatma Gandhi and he had
many friends and admirers in India. He was also responsible for the implementation of Tagore's educational ideas at Santiniketan. While in England Tagore also met Bernard Shaw, H. G. Wells, Bertrand Russell, John Galsworthy, Robert Bridges, John Mansfield, Sturje Moore, W. H. Hudson and Stepford Brooke. The ease of Tagore's manners and his quiet wisdom made a remarkable impression on all of them. Tagore kept close contact with them and met some of them several times. These poets, philosophers, and historians shared with Tagore their ideas of humanitarianism, peace, and freedom for all mankind. Tagore discussed with them and expressed freely his ideas on international understanding through education. In his trip to the United States Tagore met John Dewey, Helen Keller, Robert Frost and engaged in fruitful dialectic with them. There were more intellectuals whom Tagore met with in the United States. In a sense Tagore's idea of establishing an institution was formulated during his trip to the United States. According to Kripalani:

The idea had germinated in his mind since his last tour of the United States and he made his first public announcement and exposition of the institution at a special gathering in Santiniketan on December 22, 1918. On almost the same day three years later the international University was formally inaugurated. During this period the nuclei of several branches
of learning and the arts were laid; in the course of time they grew and expanded and several more were added.

It would be beyond the scope of this dissertation to refer to all the intellectuals with whom Tagore became acquainted. However, it is important to note that among them were rulers of countries, progressive leaders, poets, philosophers, historians, artists, authors and evangelists. Undoubtedly it is evident that Tagore's mind was so broad and universal and his thoughts were refined in the various meetings and discussions with many, many intellectuals of most countries of the world. Therefore it is implied that his only aim was to achieve peace and freedom for all mankind and to achieve this goal, he believed that only education for international understanding is the proper method.

Tagore and International Education:

It is necessary to examine the relationship of Tagore's general educational philosophy to international education. Tagore believed that education must act not only as a transmitter of cultural values of different nations but also as a potentially powerful imitator of understanding.

19 Kripalani, Rabindranath Tagore, p. 267.
among nations. As Mukherjee mentioned, "Tagore thought and wrote on educational subjects for a full stretch of fifty years.\textsuperscript{20} In all of Tagore's works, freedom and joy are the main points of his philosophy of education. He felt that in the natural environment, the child's freedom would help him grow in his emotions and innate abilities. He also believed that education must nourish the mind to grow in the world of truth, in the genuine imagination, in order to appreciate beauty, art and nature and to have sympathy for the relationship of mankind. The child's freedom of mind, heart and will would lead him to spontaneous self-expression through a variety of creative activities. In other words the love of man and nature is the center of his educational philosophy. He strongly believed that this love of man and nature would eventually foster the love of all mankind and admire their true nature. From this idea Tagore continued to insist that education would result in the love of all men of all nations, regardless of race, color, creed or culture.

Thus Tagore established his school of international education at Santiniketan and hopefully arrived at the con-

\textsuperscript{20} Mukherjee, \textit{Education For Fullness}, p. 425.
elusion that his educational theory and practice would bring East and West together. As Kabir says:

After the establishment of his small school Tagore was engrossed in the task of building up a residential school where the national tradition would be taught in the context of close association with nature. As his experience and sympathy grew, he went on to establish Visva-Bharati school as an international university where the values of the East and West could be combined to develop a truly universal and humanitarian outlook based on faith in man. His emphasis on science and technology is gradually permeating the construction of studies at every level. Tagore's advocacy of the close union of education and life, the adaptation of western practices to Indian needs and a universal approach in all matters of education has influenced the thinking and practice of educationalists of modern India.21

Thus, it is evident that one of Tagore's major aims of education is international understanding and cooperation. As Tagore said:

I believe the unity of human civilization can be better maintained by the linking up in fellowship and cooperation of the different civilizations of the world.22

Because of this strong belief, Tagore, after his visit to England in 1890 decided to forego his family hopes for his living the life of a gentleman and dedicated himself to a more creative existence and turned to education as another

21 H. Kabir, Rabindranath Tagore, p. 50.
22 Chakravarty, A Tagore Reader, p. 106.
creative opportunity to serve mankind by establishing his own school of international education.

In other words Tagore's educational philosophy deliberately aimed at the creation of internationalism. With this goal in mind, he provided in his school opportunities for fellowship in an all Indian community, relationships with international representatives, coeducational learning and the absence of sectarian or any other barriers. Tagore's educational ideals are based on individual freedom and universal brotherhood. His ideas may be called a synthesis of religious experience and its practical aspects of application which evidently reveals a new approach to love and peace. He strongly believed that only through educational progress genuine love and true peace could be achieved. Through education people would understand other individuals and their problems and admire their achievements and respect their way of life. Thus there would be a mutual understanding and friendship. Tagore said:

The tendency in modern civilization is to make all the world uniform. Calcutta, Bombay, Hong Kong and other cities are more or less alike, wearing big masks which represent no country in particular. We have to create the new psychology needed for this age. We have to adjust ourselves to the new necessities and conditions of civilizations.23

---

23 Chakravarty, A Tagore Reader, p. 106.
Thus Tagore was insisting that the aim of education is not only to explore and obtain knowledge but also to achieve a truly civilized world community with mutual respect and relationship. He strongly felt only education can create opportunity for a real human society and he turned to education and decided to establish his own school where he tried to formulate all his ideas for international relationship. He expressed it:

I wish I could say that we have fully realized my dream in our school. We have only made the first introduction towards it and have given an opportunity to the children to find their freedom in nature by being able to love it. For love is freedom; it gives us that fulness of existence which saves us from paying with our soul for objects that are immensely cheap. Love lights up this world with its meaning and makes life feel that it has everywhere that enough which truly is its feast.\(^\text{24}\)

Tagore as a philosopher realized the need for the fundamental unity of creation and as a poet, he had the visionary experience of the unity of all mankind and as a world-minded person he wanted his fellowmen to share in this experience. He declared that the nature of this experience is joy, peace, intense and purifying the mind and opening the heart to all creation in abundant love flowing up from the depths of the

\(^{24}\text{R. Ray (ed.) Visva-Bharati and Its Institutions, p. 11.}\)
soul. He experimented with his educational ideals in planning for human destiny. By this educational philosophy he moved forward to the realization of universal happiness and peace through a spiritual transformation of mankind. Thus Tagore's educational ideals were processed into an all-embracing worldwide spiritual relationship of the whole mankind.

Tagore believed in the brotherhood of all mankind. He wished that people must consider the entire earth as one home of all peoples regardless of their cultural differences, national policies and social and economic institutions and political alliances. He vividly expressed that all nations have a problem in common -- the problem of selfishness and misunderstanding. Therefore he insisted that only international education would bring about mutual understanding, fellowship and brotherhood. This is his philosophy. This is the ideal he lived throughout his life.

East and West

One of the basic assumptions that Tagore made by implementing his philosophy of international education is the exchange of ideas and ideals between East and West. Tagore believed that the process of mutual offering and accepting cultural values would make the people agree and work for the
preservation of peace. Therefore let us examine Tagore's thoughts about what the East can offer to the West. When Tagore meant the East or the West he did not mean just the philosophers, diplomats, national leaders or foreign policymakers, but the entire mass of society. The common people must understand the people of other nations. Then only would there be a real mutual understanding, good will and cooperation. It is interesting to note that the same view was expressed by Milton Eisenhower, President of the National Commission for UNESCO sponsored by the Department of State. He put it this way:

I cannot say too emphatically that a people's peace can be determined only by the people. The understanding which a few government officials, diplomats, educators, scientists and artists may achieve will avail a democratic world nothing - nothing at all - unless that understanding is shared by all the people. I urge that each educative service club president, minister, editor, begin considering at once what his institution can do to help develop the relevant understanding.25

Tagore was convinced that this type of mutual offering would be a new imaginative and effective method of international education which would aim for one world.

One might wonder what can the East offer to the West through international education. When most Westerners were at school, all they learned about the Eastern religions and cultures was the mere fact of their existence. They were ignorant of the details of the Eastern lands wherein an incredible number of extremely varied peoples who speak an equally incredible number of languages, which are printed in incomprehensible characters of alphabets, profess various religions and practice traditional values which are quite ancient and yet curiously alive. To the Westerners these philosophic religions and literary traditions of the East seemed to be primitive and part of the past. The history and the cultural values of these people were rarely mentioned in Western textbooks except in relation to the West. Tagore personally experienced this during his several tours to the West. He realized that the ignorance of one people about other people can not be an excuse. It can no longer be tolerated. Due to the fast development of modern transportation and communication the world has become a smaller region. The global problems have become regional problems. The problems of the East affect the West because they are not any more isolated. As Tagore said:

The East and the West have met - this great fact of
history has so far produced only our pitiful politics, because it has not yet been turned into truth. Such a truthless fact is a burden for both parties. The fact of meeting of the East and the West still remains concentrated on the surface - it is external. But deep in the heart of this meeting is surely maturing the seed of a great future of union.26

For this union, Tagore believed, the East can offer its own ideologies, beliefs and faith. In spite of the diversities in the East, the people of the East can contribute their literature and philosophy, their faith in truth and their imperishable faith in the unity of man through God's love. Westerners may accept the fact that the East is not peopled by a different and peculiar kind of humanity and yet they refuse the idea that the East is really intelligible. It is not their fault. These two entities - the East and the West - for twenty or thirty centuries were ill-defined and separated and could hardly understand each other. But, through international education the East can reveal its valuable ideas, histories and cultures. Specifically speaking, it is necessary to note here how Tagore's school with its Indian background can offer anything to the West. Tagore had a strong faith and great confidence in India's offer.

26 Tagore, Letters from Abroad, p. 120.
Tagore said:

Men of feeble faith will say that India requires to be strong and rich before she can raise her for the sake of the whole world. But I refuse to believe it. That the measure of man's greatness is in his material resources is a gigantic illusion casting its shadow over the present day world - it is an insult to man. It lies in the power of the materially weak to save the world from this illusion, and India, in spite of her penury and humiliation can afford to come to the rescue of humanity. India has ever nourished faith in the truth of the spiritual man for whose realization she has made in the past innumerable experiments, sacrifices and penances.27

The faith is that in spite of innumerable failures and drawbacks in the progress of Indian people, she can offer something through her philosophy for the unity of mankind, and Tagore believed that his school would carry out this task.

Tagore felt that the East should not be too proud to listen to the West. Throughout his adult life Tagore manifested his great admiration for the Western contribution to man's progress in science, technology, social and political systems. He always insisted that the East should not stay aloof but learn from the West for its own progress.

Tagore said:

Our present struggle to alienate our heart and

27 Ghose, Tagore For You, p. 110.
mind from the West is an attempt at spiritual suicide. If in the spirit of national vain-gloriousness we shout from our house-tops that the West has produced nothing that has an infinite value for man, then we only create a serious cause of doubt about the worth of any produce of the eastern mind. For it is the mind of man in the East and West which is ever approaching Truth in her different aspects from different angles of vision. Let us be rid of all false pride and rejoice at any lamp being lit in any corner of the world, knowing that it is a part of the common illumination of our house.28

Tagore hoped that his theory of international education would facilitate mutual understanding of culture. Such understanding would create an atmosphere of mutual admiration and this would result in progress of various aspects of human society. Personally Tagore felt that he owed a lot to the West for the new avenues of human knowledge and progress. He said:

I have received the gift of love from the West and my heart acknowledges its claims to my service and I must unreservedly offer myself to her before I die.29

Many of his critics doubted whether his theory would work out or his school of international education would achieve his goal by knowing more about Western countries and listening

28 Tagore, Letters From Abroad, pp. 84-5.
29 Ibid., p. 44.
to western scholars and common people. Tagore was arguing that for the real progress of life, the East must find out what was going on in the West and should learn the recent advancement of knowledge. It would be necessary not only for the growth of knowledge and wisdom but also for the enrichment of cultural varieties of life. He remarked:

Our life today needs more color, more expansion, more nourishment, for all the variety of its famished functions. Whatever may be the case in other countries, we need in India more fullness of life and not asceticism.  

Tagore established his school of international education and experimented with his theory of international education during the period when Indian nationalists were strongly opposing English rule. This opposition against England created an unfortunate atmosphere of protesting against the entire West. But Tagore was against this kind of narrow-minded nationalism. He insisted that opposition to British rule should not blind Indians in learning from others for their own progress. Especially the Indians like other Orientals should learn a lot from the western man - their ideas and ideals, social institutions and goals of life. Tagore said in a speech:

From the beginning of their history Western races have

---

30 Tagore, Letters From Abroad, p. 57.
had to deal with nature as their antagonist. This fact has emphasized in their mind the dualistic aspect of truth, the eternal conflict between good and evil. Thus it has kept up the spirit of fight in the hearts of their civilization. They seek victory and cultivate power. It is the people in the Western countries that have produced its literature, its art, its music and dance; it is the spirit of the people that spoke through the voice of the great dramatists and artists of Greece, through the voice of Dante, Shakespeare and Goethe; it is the soul of your people which reigns in our homes, giving them a profound quiet of beauty, in the dignified self control of your behavior, in the combination of usefulness and grace in all things that you produce in your inimitable paintings and dramatic performances.31

Thus Tagore believed that international education would create a new world of people who would understand the problems and share their ideas to solve the problems. It is his theory that acquaintances with diverse traditions make people more tolerant, more understanding, more sympathetic and more cooperative. To foster this concord is the hope of Tagore. He said:

I ask once again, let us, the dreamers of the East and the West, keep our faith firm in life that creates and not the life that destroys one another. I ask to claim the right of manhood to be friends of men and not the right of a particular proud race or nation which may boast of the fatal quality of being the rulers of men.32

---

31 Ibid., p. 109.
Through his international school, Tagore hoped, it would achieve the goal and that the cultivated public in the East would feel more and more called to explore and appreciate the deeper realities where the Western people are concerned. In the same way the West will try to understand the mysterious East charged with ancient contradictions. 33 As a result of international education, people would tend simply to show that mutual appreciation of cultural values demands on both sides and above all an effort at lucidity. Moreover they would become wise to suspend judgment on other peoples and cultures until they have read, listened and understood.

It is important to point out here how Tagore's concept of international education related to Indian students. Indeed, Tagore was the first Indian of the modern time to direct peoples' attention to the ideas of internationalism. His famous poems and plays attracted the mass of India, especially the students. His spirit of patriotism was not limited to one geographical land of India. He asked his fellow Indians to widen their visions of mankind and share the joys and sorrows of all peoples of the world. He insis-

33 Ibid., p. 43.
ted that this could be possible, only through international education, and they would become intimately related with other people and share the burdens of mankind. He was aware of the fact that people could develop mutual friendship if they could realize that all are members of the human family. In one of his poems Tagore writes:

The world today is wild with the delirium of hatred, the conflicts are cruel and unceasing in anguish. Crooked are its paths, tangled its bonds of greed, All creatures are crying for a new birth of thine, Oh thou of boundless life, Save them, rouse the eternal voice of hope, ...34

Thus, Tagore appealed to the students as well as the mass of India by preaching his concept of fellowship and brotherhood which would be achieved by international education.

Similarly Tagore attracted students of various countries that he visited, not only in Asia and Europe but also in the Western hemisphere. Ping-Asin, a Chinese student during Tagore's time, became fascinated with Tagore's idea of internationalism and he wrote:

Who will not be deeply moved when reading his poems? With utmost fervour and sincerity, the poet consistently appealed to the sons and daughters of his own country, to write and enter the heaven of freedom.

34 S. Chose, Tagore For You, p. 147.
Tagore was a great patriot as well as an apostle of fellowship and brotherhood and that is why the Chinese people love to read his poems ... In the twenty years since his death, the dawn of the new age lighted up the East. In commemorating the great poet whom we all love profoundly, let the 1000 million people of both our countries remember forever his valuable advice and continue to lay the most solid foundation-stones of friendship and unity.35

Many Chinese and Japanese students were attracted toward Tagore and influenced by his philosophy of world community. A Japanese student, Toshihiko Katayama said:

The longer I live, the greater is my gratitude to Guru dev Rabindranath Tagore, a joyful gratitude of more than forty years. In Tagore's vision, love for humanity is the highest manifestation of consciousness. The open universe of Tagore's vision is animated by a wide and virile piety. Tagore's poetry gains force from its invitation to commune with mankind and his poetical expressions and philosophical statements are divinely sweet and humanly simple.36

Thus it is obvious that Tagore's concept of international education attracted many students and scholars. It was already referred to in the previous chapter that many scholars from various countries became Tagore's personal friends and some of them worked at his school as visiting professors. Quite a few persons spent a major part of their lifetime in working with Tagore.

35 Centenary Volume, p. 213.
36 Toshihiko Katayama, "Tagore in Asia", Centenary Volume, p. 214.
Further, it is pertinent to discuss how Tagore's concept of International education relates to all people of the world. Interestingly enough, there were many enthusiastic admirers of Tagore in all parts of the world. During his several tours of the world, Tagore attracted many people - poets and philosophers, national leaders and statesmen and students and scholars. These admirers manifested their profound interest and deep appreciation of Tagore's ideas in general. When he spoke and wrote about his concept of international education and his experimentation at his school more and more people expressed their satisfaction with his ideas and offered their cooperation in his endeavor. This universal acceptance of and admiration for his ideas were further re-echoed during Tagore's centenary in 1961. Various authors, poets and philosophers wrote articles on Tagore and his writings and ideas. Because Tagore lived for mankind. He untiringly worked for creating a common ground where people of all nations would meet as brothers and sisters. As Richard Church wrote in connection with Tagore's centenary celebrations:

Tagore fought all his life to unveil his ideas of mankind and I believe his triumph is that he succeeded by combining his work as a poet and his functioning as an administrator. He was a unified
man and as much was an example to his country of a missionary to the West who still points the way to final harmonizing of our differences and therefore toward our mutual strength through this coming phase of the struggle of the human race to understand itself and to make itself a clear reflection of that godhead out of which it has evolved toward a purpose greater than we know. This then is the message with which Tagore salutes us in our troubles.

Thus Tagore's works of great poetic beauty and philosophical themes imbued with a vigorous moral strain and full of great love for humanity put great emphasis on sympathy with the humble and the destitute. His great aspirations for peace are explicitly expressed in all his writings. As his works became more and more popular, most of his major works were translated in all European languages. For example, in Rumania his main volumes of verse were translated by various different authors and also there came out one comprehensive bibliography of Rumanian translations from Tagore's works. Hence it is imperative that Tagore through his works influenced people of Europe and America and made an unforgettable impression. The Rumanian author, Alexander Philippide, said:

A creator of poetical essence, a deep and subtle thinker, a consummate artist and at the same time an impassioned seeker after moral perfection,

---

37 The Centenary Volume, p. 132.
Tagore is a brilliant example of humaneness, honored by his homeland and by the entire mankind on this hundredth anniversary of his birth.38

Contemporary history is proving the increasingly urgent need to implement the general ideas that Tagore was preaching and practising, to bring the East and the West closer together. Similarly there are many direct actions that UNESCO is undertaking on the international plans to help develop mutual appreciation of cultural values of East and West. It shows, as a matter of fact, the action taken and planned by UNESCO was conceived and put in practice several years ago by Tagore. Cecilia Marides, the Brazilian admirer of Tagore, said:

The Universality of Tagore's genius is reflected in everything that is studied and fostered as being most modern and not only in Brazil but all over the world; the taste for folklore, the inclusion of art in the techniques of education, even the meaning of education as a group of disciplines and methods that leaves the realm of pure formality to become the process of human relations ....

Tagore's poetry leads to a vision of sanctity and serenity that modern generations find difficult to understand. However, all the fretsome bustle may be passing and superficial and, with the calming of the turbulent and chaotic wave, the young will once again believe in the supremacy of the spirit over all else and a rebirth of Tagore will not be

---
38 Ibid., p. 209.
beyond the bounds of possibility ....

May the centenary of his birth mark also
the revival of his influence that his light may
shine high and clear over the pervading darkness. 39

Thus it is quite evident that Tagore related his ideas with
the peoples of all nations and it is beyond all doubts that
his general ideas including the concept of international
education were acclaimed and accepted by many people all
over the world. It would be meaningful to conclude this
description by Dusan Zbavite of Czechoslovakia who said:

Has Tagore's poetry lost its vitality in our
days? Has it nothing or only very little to
say to the young people of today? Certainly
not. Tagore's poetry has all the qualities
which mark the works of the great masters of
literature. We must make the picture of Tagore,
the poet, writer, essayist, and statesman, more
complete by filling in its different aspects.
Selected works of Tagore were published in Czech,
main stress was laid upon those writings which
give the core of Tagore's views, his conception
of education, his profound love of live and man,
his realistic approach to the problems of India
and of the world and his opposition to every­
thing which holds up progress and hinders the
advance of humanity towards higher goals. Now
it is becoming evident that it was the right way.
Tagore's poetry is being accepted as eternal
jewels of world literature, his poems are now being
read and recited even more than before and the
interest in his works is rapidly increasing. 40

39
Centenary Volume, p. 337.
40
Ibid., p. 336.
SUMMARY

We have elaborated so far on Tagore's belief in the unity of mankind and his proposal to work through international education to promote that unity in human society, regardless of race, color, religion and creed. All this Tagore endeavored to put into effective practice at his school, Santiniketan. There are three eminent points to be stated briefly. First, Tagore conceived the idea of international education from his experience as a student in Indian schools run by the British, as a poet, essayist, and philosopher, and as a statesman and a friend of people of many countries of the East and West. Second, Tagore strongly believed that he was consistent in his idea of international education which would foster unity of mankind. He was happy to see that many people, as referred earlier, from all parts of the world accepted his ideas, and there was a strong support from all these friends and admirers. Third, Tagore was a world-minded man. He lived as a citizen of the world. He was Indian by birth but he was not a foreigner to the best of Western life and culture. He was universal in his beliefs and practices and he lived and worked for the love of man-
He said explicitly:

I have great faith in humanity. Like the Sun it can be clouded, but never extinguished. I admit that when the human races have met together as never before, the baser elements appear predominant. For men to come near to one another and yet to continue to ignore the claims of humanity is a sure process of humanity. We are waiting for the time when the spirit of the age will be incarnated in a complete human truth and the meeting of man will be translated with the unity of mankind.\textsuperscript{41}

Tagore was honest and sincere in his endeavor to develop the school of international education. He was convinced that it was a felt-need for the good life of mankind. He believed that he, too, had a responsibility in taking that responsibility to work for the whole world. He considered it as his mission and he hoped he would succeed. As Tagore said:

Things are working well, and I have cause to be sanguine of success - and yet I must not allow the lure of a possible success dominate my imagination too strongly. I must maintain by utmost faith in the idea of education itself and the power of truth in our own mission ....

What is needed of me is sacrifice. Our payment is for success, our sacrifice is for truth. If the spirit of my sacrifice is pure in quality, then its reward will be more than counted and proved. And let my gift to my country and to the world be a life of sacrifice. ...

\textsuperscript{41} Tagore's Lectures and Addresses, p. 146.
The problem of this new age is to help to build the new world. Let us accept the great task. My school at Santiniketan is to make accommodation for the workers from all parts of the world. 42

Thus Tagore, while undertaking his part, sent appeals to the men of good will to work for the same goal of achieving unity of mankind. In the next chapter, we will discuss the relevance of his theory of international education.

42 Tagore: Letters From Abroad, pp. 32-33.
CHAPTER V

CONCEPT OF TAGORE'S INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION, ITS RELEVANCE AND IMPLICATIONS

Relevance

In the preceding chapter, we explored Tagore's philosophy of international education. Now it is appropriate to relate this chapter to the relevancy of Tagore's concept of international education. To do so, there are certain questions to be answered. First what is the objective of Tagore's international education? What is the goal? How did Tagore implement his concept of international education? Did it work well? And finally, what concrete suggestions might be undertaken to improve the workability of his educational methods? The primary objective of Tagore's international education is world understanding. Early in life, Tagore became convinced that some kind of link among the peoples of the world was necessary to maintain good, peaceful, and harmonious relationships. Man-kind is threatened by a world created by man himself. Conflicts between nations created more conflicts and complicated the international situation. For centuries men have dreamed of creating a world community based on peace, justice, and
harmony. In the past, world order has been the dream of a few individuals scattered all over the globe. Today, it is the dream of many millions of individuals in all parts of the world.

Tagore strongly believed that only through international education would it be possible and feasible to develop mutual understanding of peoples and their cultures. And he earnestly took it as his mission to foster such an education. Tagore said:

The deepest source of all calamities in history, is misunderstandings. For where we do not understand, we can never be just.

Being strongly impressed with the need and the responsibility, which every individual today must realize according to his power, I have formed the nucleus of an International University in India, as one of the best means of promoting mutual understanding between the East and the West. This institution, according to the plan I have in mind invites students from the West and the Far East to study different systems of Indian philosophy, literature, art and music in their proper environment, encouraging them to carry on research work in collaboration with scholars already engaged in this task.¹

After several thousand years of civilization, human beings have not yet learned to live at peace and harmony, with one another. The failure to achieve peace twice with-

in one generation has started a tremor which made itself felt in the social attitudes of mankind. During his world tour after the First World War, Tagore personally saw the devastation caused by this great conflict. He was deeply moved while he witnessed the damage of homes and lands with countless loss of human beings. He wondered whether mankind would ever realize the harm caused by the irrational actions of nations.

During his several tours to the western countries, Tagore began to realize that there was a lack of proper communication between the East and the West. His broad outlook stimulated him to envisage international communication through his educational institution. Believing that his institution would create such a ground for meeting and sharing, Tagore said:

The meeting of the East and the West had remained incomplete, because the occasions of it have not been created ... The time has come when we must use all our wisdom to understand the situation, and to control it, with a stronger trust in moral guidance than in any of physical forces ... The first step towards realization is to create opportunities for revealing the different peoples to one another. We must find some meeting-ground, where there can be no question of conflicting interests. One of such places is the University where we can work together in a common pursuit of truth, share together our common heritage and realize that artists in all parts of the
world have created forms of beauty, scientists discovered secrets of the universe, philosophers solved the problems of existence, saints made the truth of spiritual world organic in their own lives, not merely for some particular race to which they belonged but for all mankind.  

In the decades between the two world wars, Tagore nurtured the hope that a world order might be created that would eliminate armed conflict from the conduct of human affairs. His great quest for world peace through education was a continuing one which encountered many frustrations. He hoped that mankind would embrace his vision of a congenial world order in which all men shared and participated in the international community. Unfortunately, Tagore had to witness the outbreak of still another world war before his death in 1941. For Tagore, man's survival and destiny remained the central theme of the Twentieth Century. Today, we still cannot say if Tagore's dream will ever become a reality. As Leonard Kenworthy, in his book World Horizons for Teachers, said:

There is much evidence to support the contention that the attainment of world community is outside the grasp of this generation, for mankind hovers today on the rim of an abyss into which it has plunged twice in the first half of this century.

---

2Ibid., p. 18.
Physically exhausted, mentally weary, politically distraught, psychologically disintegrated, morally shaken, humanity is at low ebb ... While the world talks peace, it prepares for war. While it proclaims the need for disarmament, it builds its stockpiles for another conflict, pours vast sums into armaments and frantically searches for even more deadly weapons than the atomic and hydrogen bombs.  

Kenworth's statement makes clear the need for world education. Like Kenworthy, Tagore strongly believed that international education is appropriate and necessary to attain true international understanding. Here, it is pertinent to relate a remark that Robert Ulich made about Tagore's belief in international education:

Obviously, so Tagore said, modern traffic will bring the nations of the world even closer to each other, but closeness will not create unity. The only remedy Tagore can conceive of is education toward an understanding of life which with due regard for the truth in nature, searches also for the truth in men. But so far, Tagore continues, education has been used mainly by the mighty for increasing their power and by the modern states for fanning the fires of nationalism. Only when education helps a man to recognize the deep and common interests of humanity can it change the inevitable internationalism from a physical and even dangerous fact into a new universality or we could say, make man aware of mankind. We would misinterpret Tagore's hopes for a new science of life, if we did not recognize in them a profoundly religious - though entirely undogmatic

---


Consistently Tagore believed that international education would improve international understanding, and it is the only way of educating people about other human beings. Gordon Swanson expressed the same view of international education when he said in an article:

In a search for the common interests of mankind, education must be conceived as having a broad case and unlimited horizons. Education must be more than transmission of knowledge. There must be concern with the crucial problems of our time. Education must give us a common point of view. In this sense, then, international education must be concerned with the improvement of humanity.\footnote{F. Robert Paulsen (ed.) Changing Dimensions in International Education (Tucson: The University of Arizona, 1969), p. 2.}

It is clear that Tagore regarded international understanding as the major objective of world education. International education was to bring about an understanding of other peoples, their cultures, and social systems on a cognitive level. To know other cultures meant that an objective examination need to be made of the various cultures of mankind. In addition to a cognitive knowing of other people, Tagore also regarded the affective or attitudinal
dimension to be of great educational significance. One can attain the goal of a world education when he could empathize with other human beings and share their problems, hopes, and dreams. In other words, an international attitude was one that enabled a person to put himself in the position of another. For Tagore, international education was the only instrument by which a people could shape the social aspects of their life by learning from and comparing them with other people. As Kenneth Melvin said in his book *Education in World Affairs*:

> But throughout human history it has been education which has developed system and order and refined man's concept of justice. In this sense education is mankind's paramount business, the next evolutionary step being its universalization. These at least are the axioms of international education, at home and abroad.  

What is Tagore's goal of international education and what is its relevancy? It is Tagore's assumption that the goal of international education is to foster fellowship, friendship and brotherhood among peoples of all nations. This goal aims at eradicating biased opinions and developing closer relations among peoples of the world. In other words,

---

It is the goal of Tagore's international education that the discovery of our particular nation and its culture will point the way to the rediscovery of all peoples of all nations. As Robert Hutchins remarked:

If education becomes in practice the deliberate organized attempt to help people to become human, then it will inevitably promote the world community. The republic, a true res publica, will maintain justice, peace, freedom and order only by the exercise of intelligence ... Truth is not long retained in human affairs without continual learning and re- learning. The world of law and justice for which we yearn, and the worldwide political republic cannot be realized without worldwide republic of learning. A world community is being formed by communication, by shared knowledge.  

Tagore sought to establish the concept that mere knowing of the other is not the expected-end-result. True international education is not just for knowledge's sake. Even though ignorance of other people is the source of most of the world's evils, knowledge alone cannot cure the evils of the world. People must learn to tolerate differences and to admire and develop commonalities. In consequence of the growing interdependence of nations today, modern man must learn more about other peoples than was necessary in earlier history. In the words of Tagore:

The social habit of mind which impels us to

make the life of our fellow beings a burden to them where they differ from us even in such a thing as their choice of food, is sure to persist in our political organization and result in creating engines of coercion to crush every regional difference which is the sign of life. And tyranny will only add to the inevitable lies and hypocrisy in our political life.8

Thus, it is evident that the goal of Tagore's international education is to achieve a real friendship and brotherhood through common understanding. Many scholars and educators agree with Tagore on the goal of international education. Without some kind of international education as a framework, the goal of world order is not possible. As Christopher Dawson says:

The survival of a civilization depends on the continuity of its educational tradition. A common educational system creates a common world of thought with common intellectual values and a common inheritance of knowledge which makes a society conscious of its identity and gives a common memory of its past.9

It is possible to relate some of Dawson's conceptions of a civilizational approach to education to Tagore's view of international education. First of all, a common educational system would be one which would emphasize

8 Tagore, Letters and Addresses, p. 117.
certain areas of knowledge and value. While educational systems have hitherto all been related primarily to the nation-state, Tagore's vision of international education would be one that has a knowledge and a value component that transcends the limitations imposed by the barriers of national political boundaries and frontiers. Second, Tagore's conception would make the knowledge and values that are now the possession of a particular people, the shared inheritance of all the peoples of the world. Third, an important point of Tagore's conception of international education is that of a common consciousness and a common identity. A major objective is that man would be aware of his identity as a resident of a common planet which he shares with other men. Another view to support the relevancy of Tagore's goal of international education is expressed by a great educator, R. Freeman Butts, who has been a long time worker in the field of international education. Butts remarked:

International education was now a stepped-up and more intensely serious business than cultural exchange had been ... The fact is that human life all over the planet is being transformed by a revolution in knowledge and its multiple consequences. In this condition, the people of the earth are dependent on education now as never before in history.
This situation mandates a kind of education that will produce people who are capable of continuing to learn throughout their lives. It is this hope and this confidence that have led me deeply into the field of international education in recent years.  

Tagore's Implementation of His Concept of International Education

Tagore took a notable venture in implementing his idea of international education. It was mentioned in the earlier chapters that during his several foreign tours Tagore tested the relevancy of his theory of international education by discussing it with many scholars, educators and statesmen. He came to the conclusion that his plan for international education was feasible, and converted his original school into a university of international education.

Tagore saw international education as a means toward world unity. In other words, his aim could best be stated in terms of cross-cultural understanding. This understanding of culture, Tagore believed, would be achieved in an institution where students and teachers of different cultures could meet and mutually learn from one another. He had a

strong hope that his institution, Visva-Bharati would serve the purpose. The elaborate programs and extensive activities at Visva-Bharati are very educationally and culturally oriented. In the following pages Tagore's international school, Visva-Bharati is described.

Tagore's International School: Visva-Bharati

During his Euro-American tour of May 11, 1920 to July 16, 1921 Tagore met many persons of international outlook. He saw personally the devastation caused by World War I. These sights moved him profoundly, and he felt that they were an outcome of the conflict of interests of people. He realized that international understanding would reduce destructive tensions and conflict and ultimately create fellowship and brotherhood. Similarly the peoples of East and the West could develop good relations through mutual knowledge and understanding of each other. Tagore became convinced that he could create such an atmosphere of understanding through an educational institution that would bring a true meeting of the East and the West. This idea lead him to establish his international school.

Like most schools that are internationally known, Visva-Bharati arose in a natural way from humble beginnings.
It grew out of a small school, Santiniketan Asrama. Therefore it is appropriate to describe the beginning and the growth of Santiniketan into a university of world culture.

"Santiniketan" means Abode of Peace. The history of Santiniketan began with the poet's father, Maharshi Devendranath Tagore, who in his early youth came there on one of his journeys. He was excited by the natural beauty of the place. The wilderness with its green tall trees and colorful landscape attracted him and inspired him toward God's creation of beauty and solemnity. The place, therefore, became very dear to him. He acquired the plot of land and had a beautiful garden planted there. In 1863, he built an attractive house and a magnificent temple with colored glasses. The floor was made with white marble. Later the Maharshi dedicated this whole place as an Asrama, or place of meditation, put a trust deed to the people. It was open to the public, and people who wanted to come and meditate in peace and seclusion for a few days were welcome as guests. Therefore "the place was known as a religious

12 Thompson, *Rabindranath Tagore*, p. 188.
hermitage before the school was thought of."

Occasionally Tagore used to go to this Asram for a few days of quiet reading and meditation. It was while Tagore was residing there that the idea of reviving the ancient forest school of India occurred to him. He said in his talk on "My School":

Fortunately for me I had a place ready to my hand where I could begin my work. My father in one of his numerous travels, had selected this lovely spot as the one suitable for his life of communion with God ... I had about ten boys with me when I came here and started my new life with no previous experience."

On December 22, 1901 Tagore started his new school. He wanted to administer the school in the old traditional way of the ancient Asram. In ancient India the parents send their sons to the forest schools where the Guru, the teacher, lived and taught his pupils. The learner as a disciple stayed with the Guru in his hermitage and led a simple ascetic life. The student attended the Guru and spent most of his day learning and meditating. So Tagore planned the life of his Asram-school in the same pattern. Meditation was the major part of the Asram life. Tagore said:

I believe in the hour of meditation, and I set

---

Rhys, Rabindranath Tagore, p. 140.
aside fifteen minutes in the morning for that purpose. I insist on this period of meditation, not, however, expecting the boys to be hypocrites and to make believe they are meditating but I do insist that they remain quiet, that they exert the power of self-control, even though, instead of contemplating on God, they may be watching the squirrels running the trees. 14

According to Tagore the atmosphere was like the Hindu traditional forest-school. Tagore himself was very much satisfied with it. He commented:

The natural atmosphere of the Asram was very conducive for learning and meditating. At the beginning all around the Asram was a vast open field except for sparsely growing date-palms and shrubs with ant-hills. It was away from the excitements of crowded life. This type of lovely seclusion made feasible prayer and meditation. 15

The daily life of the Asram was very vigorous and active for the physical, intellectual and spiritual growth of the students. Early in the morning a choir of boys would go around the school singing prayer songs. All other students would awake to the beauty and calm of early day. As Tagore described it:

In our school the boys rise very early in the morning, sometimes before it is light. They attend to the drawing of water for their bath. They make up their beds. They do all those things that tend

---

15 Ibid., p. 39
to cultivate the spirit of self-help.\textsuperscript{16}

In the morning, all the boys performed physical exercises in the open air. Then, they took their morning bath. After that, they would meditate for fifteen minutes. Before the School began at 8:30 there would be an assembly of prayer. The boys would chant together a Mantra, or prayer, from the "Upanishads". The following prayers are the translations of the daily Mantras:

**THE MANTRAS OF THE MORNING**

I. Thou art our Father. May we know Thee as our Father. Strike us not. May we truly bow to Thee.

II. O Lord! O Father! Take away all our sins, and give us that which is good.
We bow to Him in whom is the happiness.
We bow to Him in whom is the good.
We bow to Him from whom comes the happiness.
We bow to Him from whom comes the good.
We bow to Him who is the good.
We bow to Him who is the highest good.
Shanti Shanti Shanti Mari Om.

**THE MANTRA OF THE EVENING**

The God who is in fire, who is in water, who interpenetrates the whole world, who is in herbs, who is in trees, to that God I bow down again and again.\textsuperscript{17}

The following song of Tagore was used as an inspir-

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{17} Rhys, p. 149.
ational ritual which the boys sang before beginning their lessons. Tagore himself translated it into English from Bengali:

None lives forever, brother, and nothing lasts for long.
Keep that in mind and rejoice. Our life is not the one old burden. Our path is not the one long journey. One sole poet has not to sing one aged song. The flower fades and dies; but he who wears the flower has not to mourn for it forever. Brother, keep that in mind and rejoice.18

Tagore intended to develop a life-centered education based on spirituality. With this aim in mind, he developed the curriculum for his unique school.

The Curriculum:

The boys were taught Sanskrit, Bengali, English, Mathematics, Science, History, Geography and Nature Study. Agriculture and handicrafts were later introduced. Everyone was to pursue one of the handicrafts such as carpentry or weaving.

The boys lived constantly with the teachers. One or two teachers lived in the Asram with the boys to supervise and guide them. Special attention was given to the

training for the development of moral and spiritual life of the students. Tagore emphasized this major aim of his school whenever he spoke about Santiniketan. In response to a school master in England who had inquired about the aim and method of education at Santiniketan, Tagore wrote:

To give spiritual culture to our boys was my principal object in starting my school in Bolpur. Fortunately, in India we have the model before us in the tradition of our ancient forest schools where teachers whose aim was to realize their lives in God, had their homes. The atmosphere was full of the aspiration for the infinite, and the students also grew up with their teachers closely united with them in spiritual relationship felt the reality of God — for it was no mere creed imposed upon them or speculative abstraction.

Having this ideal of a school in my mind which should be a home and a temple in one, where teaching should be part of a worshipful life I selected this spot, away from all distractions of town hallowed by the memory of pious life, whose days were passed there in communion with God.

The religious atmosphere of Santiniketan was very unique. It was profoundly spiritual but without dogmatic indoctrination. According to Pearson:

... there is no definite dogmatic teaching, and for the development of the spiritual side of the boys' natures, the ideal has always been to leave that to the natural instinct of each individual boy. In this

20 Ibid.
considerable help is expected from the personal influence of the teachers, and in the silent but constant influence of close touch with Nature herself, which in India is the most wonderful teacher of spiritual truth.21

The same atmosphere continues to prevail today at Visva-Bharati. This spiritual characteristic of the school life is very vital to the ideals with which the school was started. The environment of the school seems more spiritual rather than academic. This author himself had the same feeling during his visit to Visva-Bharati in the summer of 1972. Tagore remarks:

I came to live in the Santiniketan sanctuary founded by my father and there gradually gathered round me, under the shades of sal trees, from distant homes.22

W. W. Pearson, a great friend and co-worker of Tagore at Visva-Bharati expressed his feelings when he visited Santiniketan for the first time.

When I arrived at the station picturesquely called in Bengal, the "cow dust" time, for it is then that the cattle are driven from the fields, and the sun sets behind a golden mist raised by the cows as they slowly make their way across the dusty fields, I was met by one of the masters and four of the older boys who took all my luggage from the carriage and carried it to the cart which was waiting outside the station. They welcomed me,

21 Ibid., pp. 70-71.
22 Ibid., pp. 18-20.
very warmly because I had just returned from England, where I had seen their Guru (Tagore), and as we drove slowly along in the bullock cart our talk was chiefly about him. As we approached the school, which stands on high ground, so that the lights shine out over the surrounding country one or two remarks such as, "That is one of his favorite walks:; and "Under these trees he often walks on moonlight nights", gave me the feeling that I was a saint rather than a visitor to the school.23

Thus it is evidently clear that the objective of Santiniketan is not only the intellectual and cultural growth of its students but also for the moral and spiritual growth of their personalities. With this aim in mind, Tagore started the forest school at Santiniketan. He comments:

All our great classic poets in their epic verses and dramas looked back with reverence upon that golden daybreak of the awakening of India's soul.

In the modern time my turn has also come to dream of that age towering above all ages of the subsequent history in the greatness of its simplicity, and wisdom of pure life ... I said to myself that we must seek for our own inheritance and with it by our true place in the world. Then came to me a vision of the fulness of the inner man which was attained in India in the solemn seclusion of her forests ... The voice came to me in the Vedic tongue from the Ashrams, the forest sanctuaries of the past, with the call ... "Come

23 Ibid.
to me as the rivers to the sea, as the days and
nights to the completion of their annual cycle"
... My heart responded to that call and I deter­
mined to do what I could to bring to the surface
for our daily use and purification the stream of
ideals ... the ideals of simplicity of life, clarity
of spiritual vision, purity of hearts, harmony with
the universe and consciousness of the infinite per­
sonality in all creation.24

The highest ideals of civilization in India has
ever remained the ideals of those forest sanctuaries. Tagore
wanted Santiniketan to continue the ideals of those sanct­
uaries.

In Santiniketan, therefore, the inner eye can
sense the presence of the perfume of perfectability.
That is why it has always been, in essence, more of
a movement than of a museum, more of an atmosphere
than of an institution, more of an astral environment
than of an ideology.25

The meaning and message of Santiniketan was expressed
by Tagore in the "Santiniketan song".26 Tagore composed
this song in Bengali and later translated it into English.

The Santiniketan Song:

She is our own, the darling of our hearts,
our Santiniketan;
Our dreams are rocked in her arms,
Her face is a fresh wonder of love every
time we see her,
for she is our own, the darling of our hearts.

---

24 Ibid., pp. 18-20
26 P. K. Das Gupta, (ed.) Visva-Bharati Prospectus
In the shadows of her trees we meet,
in the freedom of her open sky,
her mornings come and her evenings
bringing down heaven's kisses,
making us feel anew that she is our own,
the darling of our hearts.
The stillness of her shades is stirred
by the woodland whisper;
her amlaki groves are aquiver with the rapture
of leaves,
She dwells in us, and around us, however far
we may wander;
she weaves our heart in a song making us one in
music
tuning our strings of love with her own fingers,
and we ever remember that is our own,
the darling of our hearts.  

Tagore's first educational venture, the small school
of Santiniketan, marks the initial phase of his attempt to
concretize his concept of international education in an in-
stitutional form. It is significant to recall that Tagore
created his school in the light of India's educational past.
The school was patterned on the model of the close teacher-
student relationship of the forest schools of ancient India.
In these schools of India's past the relationship between
the teacher, the guru, and the student was a close one based
on master-discipleship. The student not only learned the
information, the knowledge, and the cognitive skills of the

master but he also was exposed to the master's values. From this exposure to the wise person, the student created his own world view. But the creation of the self concept and of the world view was a product of the emulation of the teacher by the student.

As he sought to fashion the institutional beginnings of his plan of international education, Tagore hoped to use the pattern of ancient Indian education but to infuse that pattern with a new and world wide dimension. It would be this new dimension that would transcend the cultural boundaries of both East and West and produce a new man of a humane world culture.

Visva-Bharati

Visva-Bharati28 has grown out of the Santiniketan Asram -- the little school for little children. This little school became a world university as a center of Indian culture and an international meeting place of the East and the West. Tagore selected an ancient Sanskrit verse as the motto for Visva-Bharati. It is "Yatra Visvam Chavatyekanidam."

28 Visva in Sanskrit means the universal world; Bharati means knowledge or wisdom. Bharati is the ancient name for India. So Visva-Bharati means Indian center for universal knowledge.
which means "where this world makes its home in a single
nest." 29

During his tour of Japan and the United States in 1916-1917, Tagore conceived of the idea of establishing an international school. The plan to establish Visva-Bharati was announced by Tagore on December 22, 1918. Tagore came to realize during his visit to Europe and America that Sainiketan must contribute the ideals of life and wisdom to the whole world. In his letter of December 17, 1920 from New York, he wrote:

The idea which has drawn us round Sainiketan is not a static one. It is growing, and we must keep up with it. When I left ... to start for Europe, I was laboring under the delusion that my mission was to build an Indian University in which Indian cultures would be represented in all their variety. But when I came to continental Europe and fully realized that I had been accepted by the Western people, as one of themselves, I realized that my mission was the mission of the present age. It was to make the meeting of the East and the West fruitful in truth. I felt that the call of Sainiketan was the invitation of India to the rest of the world. 30

Tagore was very optimistic in the future of his mission. He was explicitly consistent in his ideals of Sain-

29 Kripalini, Rabindranath Tagore, p. 267.
niketan. He wrote in the same letter:

   The idea is great. I accept it. I fully believe in it; it is leading me on in an unknown path ... We have our path across the mountains, but rubbish heaps made of daily refuse of life, lying scattered on our path, cause trouble and delay and produce fatigue.

   But the sun is shining overhead, and God's blessing is in my heart; the call is clear and help is waiting by the roadside.31

When Tagore returned to India from his tour of Western countries, the formal inauguration of the Visva-Bharati took place in December, 1921, at a meeting presided over by Bratendranath Seal.32 Since then Visva-Bharati became an international university for the understanding of the cultures of the world. Tagore himself expressed it:

   Visva-Bharati represents India where she has her wealth of mind is for all. Visva-Bharati acknowledges India's obligation to offer to others the hospitality of her best culture, and India's right to accept from others their best.33

Thus Visva-Bharati stands as a center of international learning where exchange and assimilation of varied cultures would take place. Therefore the following is summary of the aims and objects of Visva-Bharati:

To study the mind of man in its realization of differ-

31 Ibid., p. 39.
32 Visva-Bharati And Its Institutions, p. 42.
33 Ibid., p. 1.
ent aspects of truth from adverse points of view.

To bring into more intimate relation with one another through patient study and research, the different cultures of the East on the basis of their underlying unity.

To approach the West from the standpoint of such a unity of the life and thought of Asia.

To seek to realize in a common fellowship of study the meeting of the East and the West, and thus ultimately to strengthen the fundamental conditions of world peace through the establishment of free communication of ideas between the two hemispheres.

And with such ideals in view to provide at Santi-niketan a Centre of Culture where research into and study of the religion, literature, history, science and art of Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Islamic, Sikh, Christian, and other civilizations may be pursued along with the culture of the West, with that simplicity in externals which is necessary for true spiritual realization; in amity, good fellowship and cooperation between the thinkers and scholars of both Eastern and Western countries, free from all antagonism of race, nationality, creed or castes.34

Visva-Bharati would seek to bring the East and West together. People of different cultures would understand their cultural commonalities in different civilization. Also they would realize that there are more similarities than dissimilarities among human persons and would appreciate the other people's life styles. Visva-Bharati aims at creating such mutual appreciation and respect for one another regardless of the differences in various societies. Thus, it is clear that Tagore explicitly specified the educational

34 Ibid., p. 1.
goal of Visva-Bharati.

Tagore did not allow his plans for an international school to remain only at the theoretical level. Over the years since its founding to the present, the initial idea of Tagore has been elaborated in a number of schools and institutes. By examining the current organization and structure of Visva-Bharati, it is possible to gain an idea of the institutionalization of Tagore's concept of international education.

The Structure of Visva-Bharati

Visva-Bharati is a co-educational university with separate residential halls for men and women students. Students and teachers come from all over India as well as from foreign countries. Most of the faculty members live within the campus in separate homes. These faculty houses are located near the particular individual schools and students' residential halls. Consequently the ancient guru-disciple (teacher-pupil) relationship is maintained. Students are always welcome to the faculty-homes.

As an international institution, Visva-Bharati maintains several schools and departments to facilitate learning international culture. The following are the institutions
and departments:

**Higher Secondary School: Patha-Bhavana.**

This is the original school started by Tagore for young boys known as [Brahmacharyasram](https://example.com) (Asram for bachelors). The primary aim of this school is not merely to acquire knowledge but to contribute to a full development of an all-rounded personality of the child. Tagore explains the unique feature of Patha-Bhavana:

Close personal contact with the teacher, the influence of Nature and environment, the atmosphere of freedom, and joy, the practical training given in cooperation and self-government, the effort made to develop the self-expressive side of the child-mind through special, literary and artistic activities, supervision of physical activities and organization of excursions are some special features of the school.35

**The Curriculum:**

The curriculum of the original Santiniketan school was modified and improved to meet the new demands of modern Bengal. The curriculum is given in Appendix I.

**Institute of Chinese Studies (Cheena-Bhavana):**

Throughout his life, Tagore realized the world significance that China would come to exercise. He believed that it was particularly important for the Indian and Chinese

---

people to understand each other's culture, traditions, and institutions. In ancient times, there was cultural exchange between India and China. Tagore established the Cheena-Bhavana to revive these cultural relations between India and China. This goal "was a major step towards the development of the Eastern Studies at the Visva-Bharati, and this was the first institution of its kind to be started in India." Courses in Sinology and the Tibetan studies are offered through this institute. In light of the contemporary friction between India and China over border questions, Tagore's institute could prove to be a useful vehicle for improving cultural and educational exchange between these two major Asian nations.

Center of Advanced Study in Philosophy:

The department of Philosophy and Religion was raised to the status of Center of Advanced Study in Philosophy in 1962. It offers courses in Philosophy and Comparative Religions for under-graduate studies. Seminar courses are given for graduate and under-graduate studies. Also seminars are conducted on the national level for interested professors and research scholars. Very often these seminars are conducted

---

36 Visva-Bharati and Its Institutions, Dec. 1956, p. 49.
by visiting professors from foreign countries as well as from other parts of India. The center offers many Research Scholarships and Fellowships for interested persons of all nations. It publishes research volumes and a journal of research. 37

**College of Tagore Studies and Research (Rabindra-Bhavana):**

The College of Tagore Studies offers courses in Tagore's life and literary works. Facilities are available for research leading to the doctorate degree in Tagore's works and his contributions to various aspects of human life. This college also includes Tagore Memorial Museum (Rabindranath-Sadana). This museum is engaged in the collection, preservation and presentation of valuable materials relating to Rabindranath Tagore and his activities including those of the Visva-Bharati. The collections consist of manuscripts, letters, paintings, photographs, books, journals, newspaper-clippings, voice records, record tapes, musical scores, films and film-strips, mementors, souvenirs, personal effects and other articles relating to Rabindranath Institute of Hindi-Studies, Hindi-Bhavana. This institute offers courses and seminars in the Hindi-Languages and Literature. Hindi which

---

is a major language spoken in northern India is also the National Language of India. This institute also undertakes the supervision of Hindi translations of Tagore's works. Every year many valuable research works are published through this institute.

**College of Teaching (Vinaya-Bhavana):**

The Vinaya-Bhavana, or College of Teaching, offers both undergraduate (B.T., Bachelor of Teaching) and graduate (M.Ed., Master of Education) degrees in education. The B.T. degree program is one academic year. The candidates for the Bachelor of Teacher program should hold a Bachelor's degree in any subject and spend one academic year in further study in Education. The candidates for the M.Ed. program should hold a B.T. degree and have two years' teaching experiences. In both programs, special courses are offered in native crafts and other creative activities. Through the Department of Exterior Services this college offers various in-service courses for high school teachers. It also conducts seminars, organizes conventions of teachers and lend films and library books to area teachers.

**Basic Teachers' Training School (Siksha-Charcha Bhavana):**

The Siksha-Charcha Bhavana, or basic Teacher's Training
School, offers courses in education and training in student-teaching for elementary education. The school follows the curriculum prescribed by the State government of Bengal. The future elementary school teachers are trained here to meet the demands of the village communities. This school is located at Sriniketan, about two miles from the main campus Santiniketan.

Higher Secondary School for Rural Children (Siksha-Satra):

It was Tagore's belief that his institutions would provide education to children according to their tastes and interests that would enable them to face life in their environment. The Siksha-Satra, or Higher Secondary School for Rural Children offers high school education to rural children with special emphasis on rural life. Courses are offered in: (a) Humanities; (b) Home Science; (c) Science and (d) Wood craft. Tagore discussed the nature of this school in his "A Poet's Schools:"

In the meanwhile having realized that his daily practice in the adaptation of mind and body to life's necessities has made these boys intellectually alert, we have at last mustered courage to extend this system to primary section of our school which is furthest away from the military frontier of our University. The children of this section, under an ideal teacher who realizes that to teach is to learn, have just finished constructing
their first hut of which they are absurdly proud. I can see from their manner, they have dimly begun to think that education is a permanent part of the adventure of life, that it is not like a painful hospital treatment for curing them of the original malady of their ignorance, but is a function of health, the natural expression of their mind's vitality. 

**Cottage Industry Training Section (Silpa-Sadan):**

The Silpa-Sada, or Cottage Industry Training Section, is also located at Sriniketan. In this section, students receive training in various crafts and pursue various courses of study that are related to them. It should be pointed out that Tagore, like Gandhi, realized the importance of a revitalized handicraft industry for a renewal of Indian village life. Although cottage industry is more extensively a part of Gandhian basic education, Tagore also included it in his educational framework. A more detailed discussion of the courses by the Cottage Industry Training Section is provided in Appendix II.

**Department of Rural Reconstruction (Palli-Samgathana Vibhaga) at Sriniketan:**

Tagore was convinced that the progress of India depended heavily on the renewal of the village life, since

---

38 Tagore's Lectures and Addresses, p. 14.
India's major population lives in villages. Therefore, Tagore wanted to correlate his institution at Santiniketan with the economic and social life of the village people of the area. With this aim, The Institute of Rural Reconstruction was started in 1922 by Rabindranath Tagore with the active help of Leonard K. Elmhirst as the first Director. In expressing the aim of the Institute, Tagore said:

"It is to bring back life in its completeness into the villages, making the rural folk self-reliant and self-respectful, acquainted with the cultural traditions of their own country and competent to make an efficient use of modern resources for the improvement of their physical, intellectual and economic conditions." 39

The aim of this department is to revive indigenous industries and to provide subsidiary jobs to village peasants of this area. To implement the program the department has the following sections under its control:

1. **Agriculture and Animal Husbandry**

Since India's greatest problem is agricultural, the institute works to modernize agricultural conditions. It attempts to improve the quality and quantity of crops. It also trains village farmers in modern farming methods. It undertakes experiments to solve different problems in raising

---

39 **Ibid.**
crops and cattle. It also distributes improved varieties of seeds, saplings and better grades of poultry.

2. Health and Sanitation

Since the neighboring area is one of the worst victims of diseases and malnutrition, this section of the Institute helps improve health conditions. It maintains an out-patient clinic and a maternity and child welfare center and provides modern medicines and medical advice.

3. Education and Training

To improve literacy and to encourage continuing education this section of the Department of Rural Reconstruction provides home-study in the state of Bengal and to some extent in the neighboring states. Graded books on various subjects are prepared and made available to those who undertake home-study. Examinations are conducted in several centers within and outside Bengal.

4. Village Extension

It coordinates the health program of the state health department in organizing and supervising the Health centers in this area. Also this section supervises cooperative societies for artisans; helps to rehabilitate displaced artisans in the villages by providing them with artistic designs,
equipments, raw materials, etc.; establishes work centers in villages for training in production of artistic handicrafts; arranges for the marketing of the products; runs thirty-one Social Education Centers and thirty-one Literacy Centers; has a village scout organization; undertakes Maternity (both ante-natal and post-natal) and Child Welfare Work in villages; runs a Milk Canteen; carries on Anti-Malaria work, supervises three Leprosy Control Units with headquarters at Sriniketan financed by the Gandhi Memorial Leprosy Foundation; conducts Library Service through six branch and twelve village libraries and organizes Training Camps and Seminars for Co-operative workers. 40

Rabindranath Tagore was much concerned with the village peasants. He took great interest in developing farming and improving the life-patterns of the poor village peasants. When he was managing his father's estates, he keenly observed the roots of the problems of these people. Therefore he wanted his institutions to carry out village work.

College of Agriculture and Social Work (Pallisiksha Sadana):

The Pallisiksha Sadana or College of Agricultural

40 Ibid., pp. 55-56.
and Social Work Affairs offers:

1) A four year Degree program in Agricultural Science.

Courses are given in both basic and advanced theories in Agriculture with compulsory practical training. The primary aim of the study is to provide rural youths with scientific knowledge and modern methods of farming.

2) Three-year Degree course in Social Work.

The Department of Social Work seeks to provide sufficient scientific methods in social work. Courses are designed to examine and to improve the sociological, psychological and economic aspects of rural life.

College of Fine Art and Crafts (Kala-Bhavana):

Being a great poet, excellent artist and eminent musician Tagore placed great emphasis on Fine Arts. Kala-Bhavana, the College of Fine Arts and Crafts, has developed into a well-known Center of Indian Art. According to the Visva-Bharati Prospectus, "It owes its inspiration to the artistic renaissance in Bengal under the guiding spirit of Acharya Abanindranath Tagore (nephew of Rabindranath) and Dr. Nadalai Bose." It maintains a large library of books on fine-arts and other allied subjects. There is also a

---

spacious museum with a very large exhibition hall. Kala-Bhavana offers courses for programs shown in Appendix III.

**Publishing Department (Granthana-Vibhaga):**

Apart from its regular business activities of printing and publishing for Visva-Bharati University, the Publishing Department's main endeavor is to collect Tagore's writing and publish them. It maintains a very large reference library consisting of:

a) Different editions of Rabindranath Tagore's Works  
b) Works on Tagore, and  
c) Periodicals and Magazines containing Tagore's contributions.

It would be useful to note here that some of the earlier departments were raised to separate schools, colleges or institutes. Except for the departments of Arts and Sciences in Graduate School, all other departments are considered to be separate schools.

**Library:**

The University has a well-equipped Central Library which has a fairly representative collections. It contains over 185,000 books and about 8,000 manuscripts. There are also sectional libraries attached to different schools.
This author visited this Central Library which is a new attractive building with modern facilities.

Journals:

Visva-Bharati publishes two quarterly journals. One in English is The Visva-Bharati Quarterly. The other one is The Visva-Bharati Patrika in Bengali. Both the journals carry eminently scholarly articles. They also publish "social issues" from time to time. The Visva-Bharati Quarterly has considerable numbers of individual readers and institutions. Loyola University of Chicago is one of them. There is also a monthly news letter entitled Visva-Bharati News. Also a journal of the Inter-Department Study Circle is published annually. 42

Board and Lodging:

Every school of the University has its own separate dormitory. Dormitories are separate for male and female students. The cafeterias are administered by the University with the cooperation of student-delegates. As is often the case with college life, there are disagreements between the students and the administration in regard to food and other facilities.

42 Visva-Bharati and Its Institutions, p. 60.
International Guest House:

The International Guest House of Visva-Bharati is a new building with many modern facilities. Tagore's Institute is frequently visited by foreign visitors, scholars and students as well as parents and friends of the University students from all parts of India. Therefore the International Guest House is always a meeting-place of all nations.

Medical Facilities:

The Pearson Memorial Hospital, named after a great friend and co-worker of Tagore, William Pearson, an English Evangelical minister, is attached to the University. The hospital is well equipped with modern medical facilities. It also maintains an out-patient clinic.

Festivals and Functions:

Tagore wanted to establish a number of seasonal festivals in order to inspire the students and the university community as a whole to grow in close communion with nature and learn to appreciate the beauty of nature and also to develop their aesthetic appreciation. The School of Music and the School of Fine Arts and Crafts make extensive arrangements in decorating and planning the programs for each
festival. The whole university community (the students, professors and their families and other employees and their families) observes these festivals and participates in them. Some of the important festivals and functions with their approximate dates are given in Appendix IV.

Other Activities:

Games and sports are important aspect of Visva-Bharati. The National Cadet Corps (NCC) program is another significant part of physical education. It is merely a compulsory military training for students under Federal Law. Nevertheless, students generally enjoy the activities of this program.

Each school or department has its own club to create interest in and promote its ideals among the students. Student-Government is the recent unique feature of the University. This author, when he interviewed the students, noted that there were occasions that students protested against the administration for varied reasons.

Visva-Bharati as an International Institution:

Students attend Visva-Bharati from all parts of the world. Regular students for degree programs as well as
special students for some special courses are admitted. However, the special students must attend at least one full academic year, i.e., from July to June. The medium of instruction is English. Usually the following courses are taken by foreign students:

1. Modern Indian Culture with special reference to Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi.
2. Rabindra Literature
3. Indian Philosophy
4. Indian Classics.
5. Ancient Indian History and Culture.
6. Indian Art.
8. Indian Dance. (Manipuri Dance and Kathakali Dance.)

The International-Faculty at Visva-Bharati:

Tagore wanted Visva-Bharati to be place of international education. As is the case with students, professors and research scholars were attracted toward Visva-Bharati from different parts of the world.

---

Visva-Bharati was incorporated as a University in May 1951 by the Act XXIX of 1951, of the Indian Parliament. By virtue of the Act XXIX the Prime Minister is to be appointed as Chancellor of Visva-Bharati University. Hence Jawaharlal Nehru was appointed as the first Chancellor and Rathindranath, the poet's son, was appointed as the first Vice-Chancellor in 1951. Mrs. Indira Ghandi is the present Chancellor of Visva-Bharati.

Many students of Visva-Bharati became prominent leaders in India. For example, Mrs. Indira Ghandi attended Visva-Bharati in 1934.

Besides many distinguished Indian educators, scholars, and artists several foreign professors and scholars worked at Visva-Bharati. Mention must be made about some of these great humanitarians who contributed their services with great sacrifice.

C. F. Andrews and W. W. Pearson, were the two Englishmen who were Tagore's co-workers at Santiniketan. Leonard Elmhirst was the first foreign visitor who came to Santiniketan to help Tagore in establishing the Rural Reconstruction

44 Visva-Bharati and Its Institutions, December, 1956 p.49.
45 Kanolkar, Rabindranath Tagore, p. 299.
Center. Elmhirst met Tagore in New York and accepted the invitation to assist at Santiniketan with sufficient funds of their own to organize the center. This couple continued to help Visva-Bharati with general financial assistance even after their return to the United States.\footnote{46}

Sylvain Levi of Paris and Sorbonne Universities of France came in 1921 as the first visiting professor at Visva-Bharati.\footnote{47} He organized studies and research in Chinese and Tibetan. Moritz Winternitz of Prague University came in 1922. He was an eminent Sanskrit scholar. He was followed by his own student Professor Vince Lesny of Charles University, another scholar of Sanskrit. According to Mukherjee:

Both were invited by Tagore as visiting professors at Visva-Bharati. Lesny was the first foreign scholar to translate Tagore's writing from the original Bengali. His translation of a selection of Tagore's poetry and prose was published in Czech as early as 1914. After his visit to Santiniketan he wrote a biography of the poet.\footnote{48}

Mr. Ferdinand Benoit came from Switzerland to teach French in 1922. In the same year Stella Kramirsch came from Vienna University to teach Art. Sir Patrick Geddes,\footnote{46} Kripalani, Rabindranath Tagore, p. 299.\footnote{47} Mukherjee, Education Fullness, p. 201.\footnote{48} Ibid.
the distinguished biologist and sociologist, came from Edinburgh University. Tagore met him in France in 1921 and invited him to visit Santiniketan. Miss Gretchen Green from the United States and Arthur Geddes, the son of Sir Patrick, helped to organize the village welfare work. Santa Flaum, a Jewish lady with a degree in Child Education, helped to start the Children's Department in Santiniketan.49 L. Bogdanon, from Russia, came in 1923 to teach Persian. Madame Andre Karpeles who came from France in the same year taught art and handicrafts. Professor Sten Konow of Oslo University taught during 1924-25. He was a scholar of Sanskrit, Prakrit and Central Asian languages.50 According to Kripalani:

In the Winter of 1925, Mussolini ... sent the two distinguished Orientalists Carlo Fermici and Guiseppe Tucci as visiting professors from Italy to Visva-Bharati, with a collection of valuable Italian books as a gift to the University.51

Dr. Harry Timbers, from the United States, came in 1928 to assist in organizing the Medical Department and remained for two years. Professor Julius Germanus of Hungary taught history during 1929-30. Miss Christine Bosenc of

49 Ibid.
50 Ibid., p. 201.
51 Kripalani, p. 322.
France worked as superintendent of female students in 1935. Miss Johanson of Sweden taught weaving and handicrafts during 1933-35. Miss Aina Cederblom also from Sweden taught Swedish handicrafts for the next two years. Countess Hamilton of Sweden, who sent the above two ladies, came in 1935 to study Indian Philosophy.\(^5^2\) Dr. Alex Aronson of Haifa, in Palestine, taught English in 1938. Miss Marjorie Sykes of England helped in various works during 1939-40. In January 1933 the Shah of Persia, in appreciation of the Indian poet's visit to his country, sent the distinguished scholar and professor Pouré Davoud as a visiting professor to Visva-Bharati.\(^5^3\)

Professor Lim came from Rangoon in 1925 to teach Chinese Literature. Professor Tan Yun-Syan came in 1928 from China and helped to establish the Chinese-Indian Cultural Institute.

The Institutions' Progress: An Estimate

Tagore's educational ideas were astonishingly modern. Many of his educational concepts were an anticipation of later developments. His pragmatic and successful ideas

\(^{52}\) Mukherjee, p. 202.
\(^{53}\) Kripalani, p. 368.
of education were put into practice in his school. Thus, by founding his own school - Santiniketan - Tagore joined the groups of educators like Tolstoy, Pestalozzi, Herbart, Froebel and John Dewey, who experimented with their educational thoughts in their own schools. The implementation of Tagore's school is described by V. R. Taneja thus:

The fulfillment of Tagore's theories and concepts in practice found expression in the various directions. Tagore was not a dreamer only to leave behind a legacy of mere ideas and ideals. He worked them out in the most constructive way. He created Santiniketan which realized his educational ideals ... Originating with ten boys in 1901, Santiniketan became Visva-Bharati or International University in 1921 and since then it has been growing gradually. It is a full-pledged university with its degrees and diplomas at par with those of other universities.54

As a tribute to Tagore's ideals and in recognition of his schools' contributions toward international education the Indian government gives grant-in-aid to the school. Visva-Bharati is now one of the major universities in India that focuses on world understanding and culture. It is recognized by major universities of the world. Often educators of international relations or education comment on and mention of Visva-Bharati. When commenting on Tagore's philosophy

and his school, C. S. Brembeck said:

You will recall, I am sure, the philosophy that Tagore brought to the founding of his school at Santiniketan. Tagore wanted his school to relate itself to the life of villages and fields around it ... I know of no more compelling statement on education as an agent of social change. It is an illuminating personal declaration of philosophy by a great poet. But it is more than philosophy. It makes clear what must happen inside a school that intends to make a difference in the life of the people. It is a statement on methods of education for change. Tagore says that there should be a vital relationship between the school and the larger community around it. He strongly suggests there can be no vital relationship at all unless the school takes seriously its responsibility to do certain things. What are those things? To use Tagore's words, they are to devise "the best means" use "the best materials and call science to its aid".

For more than half a century, Visva-Bharati has contributed as a major university toward international understanding. Its structure and the programs which are described in earlier pages, attracted educators all over the world. The International Guest House within its campus is a profound symbol of its international activities. It is constantly occupied by foreign visitors - scholars, researchers, international educators and others who have heard of Tagore and his schools.

Here is another example to show how Visva-Bharati has been well acclaimed by educators. When describing some of the eminent schools of international education Leonard Kenworthy said:

The schools or systems whose programs are described briefly in the following paragraphs are chosen from various countries, from private and public schools, from institutions working with different age levels; they are schools or school systems which have undertaken practices which seem promising. They have been selected from a much larger list of similar schools cited by educators in many countries as schools with some aspects of education for a world society.56

From the selected list, Kenworthy describes only a few schools. They are:

1. The International School in Geneva.
2. Werkplaats Children's Community, Bilthoven, Netherlands.
3. International School, Copenhagen, Denmark.
5. The Public Schools, Cleveland, Ohio, U.S.A.
6. The Public Schools of Los Angeles, California.
7. The Public Schools of Philadelphia.

8. The Public Schools and University of Nebraska.

9. Council for Education in World Citizenship

Some outstanding examples in Institutes of Higher Learning:

1. The International People's College, Elsinore, Denmark.

2. The London University Institute of Education

3. Santiniketan and Sriniketan, (Visva-Bharati) India.\(^{57}\)

Commenting further on Tagore and his school, Kenworthy said:

Repulsed by the schools of his day, and desirous of creating an environment in which children could develop their creative powers through free physical, mental and social activities, the famous Indian poet and philosopher Rabindranath Tagore established a co-educational school for children in a beautiful rural setting at Santiniketan in the province of Bengal in 1901. Contact with nature, creative work in music, art, literature, and the dance and self-government were emphasized. The school has grown in size and in purpose until it has become a center of world culture, including a university, a teacher education institute, a crafts division and a rural reconstruction department ... Its library is one of the finest in the Asiatic world with outstanding collections on Islam, Chinese culture, and the fine arts. The staff includes persons from several countries, and the student body not only includes regular students but a large number of persons carrying on independent

\(^{57}\text{Ibid., p. 216.}\)
research and creative activities. Students from many countries and many religions share in the life of this Ashrama.\textsuperscript{58}

It was already mentioned that many eminent professors from various outstanding universities from all over the world visited Visva-Bharati and spent one or more years in teaching.

Many scholars praised Tagore and his institution some way or other in their writings. As a point of matter, while describing the pioneer institution for international understanding Michael Zweig pointed out:

Except for Rabindranath Tagore's International experiment, Visva-Bharati, in Santiniketan, India during the 1920's, all organized non-governmental activity in support of international higher education has emanated from Europe and the Western Hemisphere. Tagore invited intellectuals from many countries to lecture at his institute and for several years conducted a series of seminars on world issues with small groups of students mostly from India.\textsuperscript{59}

Tagore was distressed to see the low ebb of human attitudes - not only in India but all parts of the world. Many other thoughtful individuals all over the world felt the degrading of human life and human relations. For example Donald F.\textsuperscript{58}

\begin{itemize}
\item[58] \textit{Ibid.}, p. 226.\textsuperscript{59}
\end{itemize}
Verene, in his book, *Man and Culture*, said:

What is taking place in the world today is not a crisis of humanism, but the crisis of humanity. We are witnessing the process of dehumanization in all phases of culture and of social life. Above all moral consciousness is being dehumanized. Man has ceased to have any value at all. The youth of the whole world - communist, fascist, national socialist, or those simply carried away by techniques or sports - is not only antihumanistic in its attitudes, but often anti-human.60

Tagore realized that the conflicts among nations were due to misunderstandings. To avoid misunderstanding, cold war and competition and to create cooperation, and co-existence, Tagore felt that international understanding is a basic requirement. As V. R. Taneja said:

If the world of sorrow, cold war and competition is to be converted into a world of smiles, co-existence and co-operation, then international understanding is essential. Without such understanding the future of humanity is at stake ... Misunderstandings lead to dissentions; dissentions lead to war and wars destroy things that we prize in life - peace, prosperity, culture, civilization, etc.61

Therefore it is imperative that international understanding is essential for cooperation and good relations among people. But international understanding is a very compli-
cated matter. Sincere and genuine understanding must include a knowledge of all the fundamental aspects of the ideas, ideals and attitudes of a people.

There was no other institution in Asia except Visva-Bharati for international education. Paul Otlet of Brussels was one of the pioneers of international education. He came to Edinburgh University hoping to achieve his goal. But he did not receive any support from Edinburgh and he left it. Speaking at the first Biennial Conference of the World Federation Association in Edinburgh, Otlet explained again his hope. In commenting on international education, Otlet mentioned the international institute of Tagore and the Law Academy in The Hague.

Robert Ulich in his article "The Ambiguities in the Great Movements of Thought" has also commented on Tagore. Ulich remarked:

While Tagore acknowledged without prejudice the reasons for the material and intellectual superiority of the West he also perceived its inner weakness. Obviously, so Tagore said, modern traffic will bring the nations of the world ever closer to each other, but closeness will not create unity. The only remedy Tagore can conceive of is education toward an

---

understanding of life, which, with due regard for the truth in nature, searches also for truth in men. We would misinterpret Tagore's hopes for a new science of life if we did not recognize in them a profoundly religious - though entirely un­
dogmatic - element. 63

Thus, it would suffice to conclude that Tagore's concepts of International education have evidently mater­
ialized in his institution. Through this school Tagore sought to establish a true international relationship and understanding to achieve this goal of the unification of mankind.

Suggestions for Improvement

Tagore's work at Visva-Bharati was an excellent beginning at both the theoretical and institutional level to initiate the teaching and study of international edu­
cation. Although much has been written about international education throughout the centuries, very litter genuinely practical work has been done. Tagore is the rare exception in that he was a theorist who also was an implementor. In this section of the chapter, we shall try to provide some suggestions for improving international education at Visva-

63 Ibid., p. 226.
Visva-Bharati, which is the subject of this dissertation. These suggestions hopefully will also be relevant to the improvement of international education on a larger basis.

Financial Assistance

At the base of institutional development are the financial and economic requirements of the institution. As is true of almost all educational institutions, Visva-Bharati needs to attain greater funding. It needs support from both governmental and non-governmental agencies. It does receive support from the Government of India through the University Grants Commission. It also needs support from foundations. These grants can be used to support more visiting professors and to support a broader body of students from the international community. Universities could assist by lending their faculty members for a year or two as visiting professors. Such financial assistance programs would contribute to furthering the objective of international education.

Research in International Education

Although a greater volume of research and writing was undertaken in the field of international education in
the 1950's and 1960's, the area still remains a field in which much more research is needed. This research needs to take the form of broad, integrative studies about the purposes, needs, and possibilities of international education. There is also a need for carefully done empirical research on definite areas of international education that deals with present programs, their faculties, their students, and the populations that they are designed to serve. Another area that needs both research and implementation is a kind of international education that is directed to the solving of problems that have a bearing on all of mankind.

According to Steven E. Deutsch in his book International Education and Exchange, it is important to see...

... how each of these populations participates, what their subjective orientations are, and what their specific experiences are and to obtain an overview of the university and college community with emphasis on the place of international education and exchange with it.64

Also this research would help to improve courses and activities in international education programs.

Information For and About Foreign Students

A body of literature for foreign students ought to be developed to give them general orientation about the country and campus where they will live and study. Proper statistical data should be maintained to provide accurate information about foreign students. Perhaps, most important of all, there needs to be a professionally trained body of foreign student advisers to provide counseling for foreign students. The entire program relating to foreign students needs evaluation. When this author was visiting Visva-Bharati in August 1972, adequate information was not available about foreign students even in that institution which is devoted to furthering international education.

**Teacher Education**

Of great importance to the success of any program of international education is teacher preparation. It will be the classroom teachers at all educational levels who will implement the principles, knowledge, and attitudes that will contribute to international education and world understanding. In the case of Visva-Bharati, there are several faculty members who have studied in such foreign
countries as England, West Germany, Canada, and the United States. It is necessary that professors who are involved in international education have had some international experience themselves. They should visit foreign countries, become acquainted with foreign cultures and educational system, and participate in a world wide exchange of ideas and information. It is this kind of program that will contribute to developing international education as an area study and that will lead to further experiments that seek to elaborate and extend man's world orientation. The words of John Gardner are especially appropriate to conclude this section of the dissertation:

All education worthy of the name enhances the individual. It heightens awareness, or deepens understanding or enlarges one's power or introduces one to new models of appreciation and enjoyment. It promotes individual fulfillment. It is a means of self-discovery ... We all know in our bones that over the long haul what we do in education has the greatest relevance to building up the kind of society we want. 65

Conclusion

Thus far, we have analyzed the relevancy of Tagore's concepts of international education and how his concept

materialized as an institution. We also explored in detail the structure of his school, Visva-Bharati, and examined how consistently it carries out Tagore's goal of creating brotherhood in a world community. Finally, we offered some suggestions for the further improvement of international education at Visva-Bharati. It is a unique institution founded by a unique educator and philosopher who yearned for peace and prosperity for mankind and who strongly believed in the fact that education alone can change man and create a new society. In this sense, Tagore, again, re-echoed the view of other great educators like Dewey and Pestalozzi. To conclude in Tagore's words:

Santiniketan has been the playground of my own spirit. When I created on its soil, it was made of my own dream-stuff. Its materials are few, its regulations are elastic and its freedom has the inner restraint of beauty. But the International University will be stupendous in weight and rigid in construction and if we try to move it it will crack. 66

Thus Tagore warns his co-workers to remain faithful to work diligently toward the goal of international relations through his institution.

66 Tagore, Letters From Abroad, p. 100.
CHAPTER VI
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Part of Tagore's greatness as an educator lies in the fact that he actually translated many of his ideas into practice. His constructive work in the field of education is represented by his international school where the whole world has become a single nest. Tagore worked for one noble cause, the union of all sections of humanity in understanding and sympathy and in love and truth. In his institution, Tagore tried to impart the background of international fellowship and brotherhood and help his students to realize the true nature of our interlinked humanity and deeper unities of the East and West civilization.¹

As it was mentioned earlier, the main objective of Tagore's international education is to develop relations among the peoples and nations. This relationship is essential to achieve the goal of creating a new world of peace and brotherhood. This understanding is necessary not only to the common citizens but also the men who make foreign policies. Without understanding the cultural, social, and

¹Centennial Volume, p. xxiii.
economic problems of a people, policy makers cannot have a real picture of the problem. For example, as Chester Bowles, former United States Ambassador to India, said:

Paradoxically, we have provided this massive assistance to a nation which most of our harassed top policy-makers have visited only briefly or in many cases have never seen, and of which, consequently, they have had only a limited knowledge and hazy understanding ... The average number of Representatives and Senators visiting India each year during my eight years there as Ambassador was nine — most of them for relatively short visits in and around the large cities. Lacking first hand knowledge of the complexities of Indian society and the hopes and fear of its people, it is not surprising that the Kiplingesque impressions of India as an ancient land of cobras, maharajahs, monkeys, famines, polo players, overcrowded with cows and babies, still persists in the minds of many top officials in our government. ²

Thomas Hardy once said: "The exchange of international thought is the only possible solution of the world." This was the aim of Tagore in establishing Visva-Bharati University. He had a benevolent object to perform. His unique ideal was the development of whole human personality in an atmosphere of freedom and fellowship. Tagore believed that the real and genuine international relations would help to eradicate ethnocentrism. During his world tours,

²Chester Bowles, "America and Russia in India", Foreign Affairs, Vol. 49 (Julu 1) No. 4, pp. 638-39.
Tagore personally observed that countries still have a great deal of ethnic and nationalistic bitterness, and he strongly hoped that this bitterness would disappear when there is better communication and greater understanding of peoples of the world. He insisted that there is a desperate need for abroad international understanding of cultural, economic, political and social systems of the various peoples of the world. This could be done, Tagore argued, only through international education. But this education is meant not for competition but for cooperation, not for conflict but for compromise and not for hostility but for prosperity and enduring peace. This is what Tagore tried to implement in his school. Tagore believed that the eternal personality of man can spring into being only from the harmony of all peoples.

Tagore was profound, logical and penetrating. He was in line with the rishis, the great sages of India drawing the wisdom from the Upanishads and interpreting it in a clear form and meaning in the present. Thus he gave India's own message to the world in a new language in keeping with the spirit of the times. According to Nehru, a former Prime
minister of India:

This great and highly sensitive man was not only a poet of India, but also a poet of humanity and of freedom everywhere.³

He was a practical idealist and not a dreamer. He was more an idealist than a naturalist. As was mentioned, his educational ideals are more similar to that of Pestalozzi than any other educators. Tagore, as a poet, set an ideal, the ideal of beauty and truth, individual, national and international as a counter balance to the materialistic philosophy and he earnestly emphasized the triumph of the human spirit over the world of matter.

Tagore loved humanity and the purest form of humanity -- the child. In Hungary, Tagore stayed for a while near the Balaton Lake where he recouped from his illness. At the request of his friends Tagore planted a tree on November 8, 1926 and wrote in the Guest Book the following:

When I am no longer on this earth, my tree, let the ever renewed leaves of thy spring murmur to the wayfarers, "The poet did love while he lived."⁴

Like Pestalozzi, Tagore gave the child respect, love, freedom, sympathy and initiative. A foremost teacher

---

⁴ Ibid., p. xxv.
and a poet of the highest order and excellence, Tagore wrote beautiful and simple poems and stories for the children. Besides he was a versatile genius, thinker and philosopher, artist and painter, actor and musician. His versatile genius gave the Indian National Anthem - "Jana gana mana" and called upon the Indians to nourish the unity of the country and be devoted to it. Tagore was not a mere nationalist and patriot but was an internationalist and universalist. He was a world citizen with the faith that all races and nations belong to the one world. According to Nehru:

More than any other Indian, he has helped to bring into harmony the ideals of the East and the West, and broadened the bases of Indian nationalism. He has been India's internationalist par excellence, believing and working for international co-operation, taking India's messages to other countries. Nationalism, for Tagore, was a narrowing creed and nationalism in conflict with a dominating imperialism produced all manner of frustrations and complexes. It was Tagore's immense service to India, as it has been Gandhi's in a different plane, that he forced the people in some measure out of their narrow grooves of thought and made them think of broader issues affecting humanity. Tagore was the great humanist of India.

The greatness of Tagore, as an educator may lie in the fact that he devoted his entire life to the cause of

---

5 V. R. Taneja, p. 69.
6 Nehru, The Discovery of India, p. 257.
education of the child, to develop into a whole human personality and as a citizen of the world. Like Rousseau and Pestalozzi, Tagore gave concrete meaning to educational thoughts which were vaguely perceived by others. Also, like Forebel and Pestalozzi he experimented his educational ideas in actual educational activity. As Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Herbart, Froebel and Dewey did in the West, Tagore made a great influence on educational theory and practice in India. 7 As Ernest Rhys observed, "there is no doubt about that the genius of Santiniketan is one of originality, enthusiasm and freshness of experiment." 8 The more significant fact is that Tagore formulated an education for the citizens of the world. His remarkable educational ideal produced a great synthesis of the educational concepts of the East and the West. Like Tolstoy, Tagore not only experimented with his theories, but in all his writings of great diversity and depth, expressed his profound belief in quality education and great ideals of humanism. For example Tagore's best novel, Gora is just like Tolstoy's War and Peace. 9

---

7 H. B. Mukherjee, p. 441.
8 E. Rhys, p. 155.
9 K. Kripalani, p. 207.
Tagore's view of international education was generated by frustrations. Tagore felt that the failure to recognize the central fact of inter-relations among people would lead to more conflict and misconceptions. Only international education would eradicate such misconceptions and misunderstanding among people. His concerns were not unlike those of other prominent educators like John Dewey, Madame Montessori. His attitude was similar to many social reformers like Bertrand Russell, and Jane Addams. As a point of matter, A. Chakravarty mentioned:

Tagore discussed his educational theories and projects with such internationally known educators as Madame Montessori, the pioneer in Children's education in the West and with John Dewey.10

Undoubtedly it would be assumed that Tagore extensively discussed with John Dewey his educational theories and practices.

Tagore's contribution for the idea of International education is very unique by itself. While India was still a British colony, Tagore's love for humanity extended all political boundaries. He thought of the whole world. He was consistent in the fact that there could be no more pos-

10 A. Chakravarty, A Tagore Reader, p. 388.
sibility of isolation of nations. All nations must work together for the happiness of all mankind. Tagore was more and more convinced after his Euro-American tour that he had that responsibility on him to offer for the growth of humanity. He believed it and he was consistent about it and accomplished it through his international school, Visva-Bharati.

For Tagore the context of international education is the world. He believed that his international education would lead people to be aware of one world society and the ultimate goal of such society would be to create an equality of people and not a uniformity among people of different cultures. He insisted that people must learn to live in a world of different customs, traditions, and beliefs and must try to recognize the commonalities among human beings. Ultimately they must accept the possibilities of living harmoniously in a pluralistic cultural society. This is the aim of Tagore's international education.

With this in mind and strong faith in God, Tagore sent his call to men of humanitarian ideals to work for this common goal that is - the meeting of the East and West for the purpose of achieving a true, spiritual and
happy life for all mankind. Thus Tagore appealed:

I ask once again, let us the dreamers of the East and the West keep our faith firm in the life that creates and not in the Machine that constructs ... in the power that hides its force and blossoms in beauty and not in the power that bares its arms and chuckles at its capacity to make itself obnoxious. Let us know that the machine is good when it helps, but not so when it exploits life; that science is great when it destroys evil but not when the two enter into unholy alliance.\textsuperscript{11}

Tagore was the embodiment of the characteristics of both the East and the West. He was admired and respected all over the world for not only as a great poet and philosopher, but also for his great love and affection for humanity regardless of race and religion. He professed his creed that all must strive to live in harmony for the greater happiness of all mankind. In this connection it is very appropriate to produce his poem which reveals his profound desire for humanity.

The World today is wild with delirium of hatred, The conflicts are cruel and unceasing in anguish, Crooked are its paths, tangled its bonds of greed, All creatures are crying for a new birth of thine, Oh thou of boundless life, Save them, rouse thine eternal voice of hope, Let love's lotus with its inexhaustible treasure of honey Open its petals in thy light

\textsuperscript{11} Ghose (ed.) \textit{Tagore For You}, p. 43.
Man's heart is anguished with the fever of unrest,
With the poison of self-seeking,
With a thirst that knows no end,
Countries far and wide flaunt on their foreheads
The blood-red mark of hatred.
Touch them with thy right hand,
Make them one in spirit,
Bring harmony into their life,
Bring rhythm of beauty.12

Tagore earnestly hoped that humanity, like a
lotus is remarkable for its beauty, harmony and inex-
haustible honey, and must live in harmony with inexhaustible
love of fellowmen.

Tagore was a mystic and a unique spiritualist.
In all his writings he endeavored to promote a peculiar
combination of individualism and universalism which was not
based on any religious denominational faith but universally
on the most common aspirations of mankind. Tagore's hu-
manistic philosophy is distinguishable from the thinking
of Indians. His philosophy is the philosophy of harmony
and love of mankind.

To show the authenticity of Tagore's great ideas
of education for mankind, it would suffice to mention a
few remarks by eminent persons of the West. Jane Addams,
Hull House of Chicago, who met Tagore during his visit to

12 S. Ghose (ed.) Tagore For You, pp. 147-8.
Chicago remarked:

Rabindranath Tagore has met all the requirements of genius combined in a man who is at once a poet, a philosopher, a humanitarian, an educator ... He has once more made clear to us the saying we so often used in the early days of the University Settlement—the things that make us alike are finer and deeper that the things that make us different.\(^{13}\)

There were men of spiritual stature and great writers and artists in India, but Tagore towered them all. In fact, his position all over India achieved an unchallenged supremacy. "His long life of creative activity covered two entire generations and he seems almost of our present day."\(^{14}\) We have so far presented Tagore's argument for international education which would lead to friendship and to a harmonious life of peace and prosperity of mankind. To achieve this, Tagore dreamed that man would ultimately face intelligently the issues of the diversified world and would begin to realize that there is no help for a future life without the constant cooperation of all nations. Even though Tagore did not live to see the powerful and dangerous weapons like atomic and hydrogen bombs, he envisioned the future destructive forces that men might use. Nevertheless, he loved

\(^{13}\) A. Chakravarty (ed.), *A Tagore Reader*, p. 386.
\(^{14}\) Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, p. 257.
mankind and lived for the world. In a personal address to Tagore, Albert Einstein mentioned in an article sent to Visva-Bharati in 1931 thus:

You saw the fierce strife of creatures, a strife that wells forth from need and dark desire. You saw the withdrawal in calm meditation and in creation of beauty. Cherishing these, you serve mankind all through a long and fruitful life, spreading everywhere a gentle and free thought in a manner such as the seers of your people have proclaimed as the ideal.¹⁵

He hoped that thoughtful nations and top leaders would come forward, for a realistic approach to man's happiness. He died with that hope and dream.

One this is sure. As Seymour Itzkoff said:

The world will not see the vast differences in cultural patterns that it once did and that so be-deviled traditional American educators. The day of total cultural incommensurability and untranslatability is over. In that sense it is a world society our grandchildren are destined to inhabit.¹⁶

We can realistically hope that such a world community would be a reality through international education. As Helen Keller in her letter to Tagore mentioned:

Your school at Visva-Bharati is a bright pledge of a nobler civilization; for it is a

¹⁵ A. Chakravarty (ed.), A Tagore Reader, p. 382.

meeting-ground of the East and the West. There you teach in object lessons of sympathy and goodwill that the true happiness of individuals and nations is identified with the highest good of mankind. 17

There could be more research on the different aspects of Tagore's philosophy of "International Education". Up until now there is not much work done on this specific topic. Nevertheless, there could be many more new approaches to analyze his works and synthesize various new ideas along with the present topic. However, the main problems for a non-Bengali scholar is that most of Tagore's great works which contain his authentic pronouncements are in Bengali. Only by the great effort of Visva-Bharati more and more translations of Tagore's works could be made and they would offer easy source materials for future research.

Tagore, throughout his life, longed for peace and harmony of mankind. Tagore appealed for international relations to go beyond national boundaries. He meant his message to all people. As Robert Frost in a letter of September 19, 1959, to A. Chakravarty mentioned:

Fortunately Tagore's poetry overflowed national bounds to reach us in his own English. He belongs

17 A. Chakravarty, (ed.), *Tagore Reader*, p. 383.
little less to us than to his own country. He was my friend and I am proud to take part in celebrating his greatness."\textsuperscript{18}

Now new directions and new programs must be created to meet the challenge that threatens humanity, for there is no alternative at all.

\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 388.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES

BOOKS


DOCUMENTS PUBLISHED BY TAGORE'S INSTITUTION


SECONDARY SOURCES

BOOKS


**ARTICLES**

Bowles, Chester. *America and Russia in India*, *Foreign Affairs*. IL, No. 4 (July, 1971)


**NEWSPAPERS**


The Florida Tirness-Union, Jacksonville, April 29, 1972.

INTERVIEWS

Dr. H. B. Mukherjee, Professor of Education, Visva-Bharati, on August 5, 1972.

H. E. Majumdar, Chairman, Department of Education, Visva-Bharati, on August 5, 1972.

Professor D. M. Datta, Retired Professor of Philosophy, Patna University, on August 6, 1972.

Dr. J. E. De, Professor of Education, Visva-Bharati, on August 6, 1972.

Graduate Students of Education, at Visva-Bharati, on August 6, 1972.
APPENDIX I

The subjects offered:

I. Compulsory subjects:

1. Bengali
2. English
3. Sanskrit
4. Mathematics
5. Social Studies and
6. General Science

II. Elective subjects: (Humanities)

1. Hindi
2. Oriya
3. History
4. Civics
5. Economics
6. Ethics
7. Psychology
8. Vocal Music
9. Instrumental Music
10. Drawing
11. Painting
12. Modelling
13. Home Science and
14. Geography

III. Elective subjects: (Science)

1. Biology
2. Botany
3. Chemistry
4. Mathematics and
5. Physics

COLLEGE OF UNDERGRADUATE AND GRADUATE STUDIES
(SIKSHA-BHAVANA):

Regular undergraduate and Honors programs are
offered.
APPENDIX I continued

Subjects for the Honors Program:

Science: 1. Chemistry
         2. Mathematics and
         3. Physics

Humanities and Social Science:

1. Bengali 5. English
2. Hindi 6. History
3. Oriya 7. Ancient Indian History and culture
4. Sanskrit 8. Economics
         9. Philosophy

Courses are also offered in:

2. Japanese 5. German
3. Tibetan

Many of these are seminar courses.

COLLEGE OF POST GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
(VIDYA-BHAVANA):

Vidya-Bhavana provides for two-year M.A. course in

the following subjects:

APPENDIX I continued

1. Bengali  6. Ancient History & Culture
2. Hindi    7. History
3. Oriya    8. Economics
5. English 10. Mathematics

Also two-year Miscellaneous course is offered in
the following subjects:

1. Botany  4. Physics
2. Chemistry 5. Zoology
3. Mathematics

Two-year Research studies leading to Ph.D. are
offered in any subject in which courses are given.
1. Three-year University Diploma Course in
   a. Weaving
   b. Wood Work

   Admission is open to candidates holding School Final Certificate or equivalent.

2. Two-year Artisan Course in
   a. Weaving and
   b. Wood Work

   Candidates for admission must have read up to Class IV and must not be less than 14 years of age.

3. Two-Year Certificate Course in
   a. Artistic Leather Work and
   b. Glazed Pottery

   Age and educational qualification for admission:
   Same as in (2).

4. Two-year Apprenticeship Course in Electrical and Mechanical Training. Candidates for admission must have passed the examination of Class VIII in High School and must not be less than seventeen years of age.
5. One-year Certificate Course in
   a. Basketry
   b. Book binding and
   c. Lac Work

   Age and educational qualifications for admission:
   Same as in (2).

6. One-year Course in Women's Handicrafts (for local women only) in the following subjects:
   a. Manipuri Weaving
   b. Elementary Tailoring and Senior Tailoring
   c. Embroidery and Knitting
   d. Toy-Making

---

APPENDIX III

1. Five-year Degree Program in Fine Art and Crafts with majors in:
   a) Painting
   b) Sculpture and
   c) Graphic Art

2. Two-year Certificate Program in Artistic Handcrafts courses are offered in:
   a) Embroidery
   b) Leather Works
   c) Weaving
   d) Dyeing
   e) Design
   f) Cardboard Work
   g) Engraving and
   h) Ornamental Design

Only women students between 15 and 40 years of age are eligible for admission to this program.

COLLEGE OF MUSIC AND DANCE (SANGIT-BHAVANA):

Tagore gave importance to music and dancing in his scheme of education. Here instruction is given for:
   a) Four-year Degree Program
   b) Four-year Certificate Program for those who are not high school graduates, and
   c) Two-year certificate Program courses are offered in:
APPENDIX III continued

Vocal:  a) Ragindra-Sangit  
        b) Hindustani Music  
        c) Classical Music  

Instruments:  
        a) Sitar  
        b) Esraj, and  
        c) Veena  

Dance:  a) Manipuri Dance, and  
        b) Kathakali Dance\(^3\)

\(^3\)Ibid., p. 26.
APPENDIX IV

1. The Bengali - New Year and Rabindranath's Birthday, April 14-15.

2. Festival of Fellowship

3. Festival of Rains

4. Death Anniversary of Rabindranath and Tree Planting Festival

5. Ploughing Ceremony

6. Crafts Festival

7. Autumn Festival

8. Anniversaries of Santiniketan Asrama School and Visva-Bharati University December 21-24

9. Christmas Festival

10. Harvest Festival

11. Anniversary of Sriniketan

12. Chandi Festival

13. Spring Festival

14. Last day of Bengali year

4 This author attended this festival during his visit (August 72). A very interesting program in a big hall. The audience was a little more than 1000 people.

The dissertation submitted by Asirvatham Periaswamy has been read and approved by the following Committee:

Dr. Gerald L. Gutek  
Professor, Foundations of Education, Loyola

Dr. John Wozniak  
Dean, School of Education, Loyola

Dr. Rosemary Donatelli  
Associate Professor and Chairman, Foundations of Education, Loyola

The final copies have been examined by the director of the dissertation and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the dissertation is now given final approval by the Committee with reference to content and form. The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

May 12, 1976
Date

Gerald L. Gutek
Director's Signature