

2nd

Nirmal Kumar Bose Memorial Lecture, 1996

**Gandhi's Impact on Bose's Scholarship
Rabindranath and Gandhi: Response to Indian Reality**

by
Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya



**Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts
New Delhi**



Professor Nirmal Kumar Bose
(January 22, 1901 - October 15, 1972)

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Second (1996)**

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**INDIRA GANDHI NATIONAL CENTRE FOR THE ARTS
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Gandhi's Impact on Bose's Scholarship

I feel honoured for being invited by an institution like the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts — an institution, which in Stella Kramrisch's words, is endowed with a new vision of creativity — to deliver the second Nirmal Kumar Bose Memorial Lecture. I confess I have few qualifications to deserve such an honour. I am neither a social scientist nor a competent interpreter of Indian culture like late Bose or Smt. Kapila Vatsyayan. However, Professor Bose was one of those social scientists whose ideas and activities always inspired me. His lectures on Gandhiji delivered in the Guwahati University in 1969 deeply impressed me. The meeting was presided over by Dr. Mathura Nath Mohan Goswami, the then Vice-Chancellor, who himself was a well-known Gandhian scholar. Bose's exposition of Gandhiji's life and activities was one of the best that I had ever heard. He proved to be a wonderful speaker too. He had no written text before him. Neither had he any notes. Words came straight from his heart, and it was a unique experience for me.

What deeply impressed me was his estimate of Gandhiji. He presented Gandhiji neither as a saint nor as a sage, but as a man. He did not use the word 'rebel' to describe Gandhiji, but that was the underlying theme of his speech. I was acquainted with the writings on Gandhiji by eminent political thinkers like Jawaharlal Nehru, Acharya Kripalani, Jayaprakash Narayan and Rammanohar Lohia. They all

knew Gandhiji personally. Yet it must be said that to study Gandhiji is not that easy. As Lohia pointed out, Gandhiji wrote and spoke voluminously, but whatever he wrote and spoke was a commentary on how he lived and how he acted. Gandhiji also was not consistent in the ordinary sense of the word. Lohia said: "from his belief that the caste system was a part of religion, he went on to say that it was a sin; from his belief that the sum-total of the British empire tended to act for the good he went on to say that it was satanic, and from a certain underlying belief in the sanctity of private property he went on to demand its confiscation without compensation, and termination of land ownership." This personal dynamism of Gandhiji is often not correctly understood. It creates confusion, and as a result, his sense of rebellion cannot be properly projected. The key factor in the Gandhian studies is the knowledge of the man Gandhi. Nirmal Kumar Bose knew Gandhi very well. He discovered in this naked *fakir* a scientist, a genuine seeker after truth. This *fakir* could welcome new truths and act according to them. Bose could speak on Gandhiji without emotion but with a deep sense of inner commitment. He was the first scientist who presented Gandhiji not only as a man, but also as a rebel, who wanted to change himself as well as change other men and the society through love and non-violent persuasion. That series of lectures created an invisible bond between me and Professor Bose. It is not personal but spiritual.

When I started reading Bose's writings on Gandhiji, I discovered a different Bose. Bose was a man who shared many of Gandhiji's personal qualities: his compassion for the poor and the deprived, his insistence on self-culture and self-regulation, and above all, his spirit of love and his faith in the brotherhood of man. I was particularly struck by Bose's approach to *Hind Swaraj*, a book much criticised in communist and modernist circles as antiquated. According to Bose, the key passage in this maiden book of

Gandhiji, published about nine years before the Bolshevik revolution, was a statement about the nature of freedom he was dreaming of. This statement records Gandhiji's conscious determination to judge issues and actions on behalf of the poorest sections of the people.

Gandhiji said in *Hind Swaraj*: "If you believe that because Italians rule Italy, the Italian nation is happy, you are groping in darkness. Mazzini has shown conclusively that Italy did not become free. Victor Emanuel gave one meaning to the expression; Mazzini gave another. According to Emanuel, Cavour and even Garibaldi, Italy meant the king of Italy and his henchmen. According to Mazzini, it meant the whole of Italian people, that is, its agriculturists. Emanuel was only its servant. The Italy of Mazzini still remains as much in a state of slavery as at the time of the national war it was a game of chess between two rival kings with the people of Italy as pawns. The working classes in that land are still unhappy. They, therefore, indulge in assassination, rise in revolt, and rebellion on their part is always expected. What substantial gain did Italy obtain after the Austrian troops? The gain was nominal. The reforms for which the war was supposed to have been undertaken have not been yet granted. The condition of the people in general still remains the same. I am sure you do not wish to reproduce such a condition in India. I believe that you want millions of India to be happy, not that you want the reins of Government in your hands. If that be so, we have to consider only one thing: how can the millions obtain self rule? . . . By patriotism I mean the welfare of the whole people, and if I could secure it at the hands of the English, I could bow down my head to them. If any English man dedicated his life to securing freedom of India, resisting tyranny and serving the land, I would welcome the Englishman as Indian."

We have come across many commentators who have criticised Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj* for its queer views on

industrialisation and economic thinking. But none have so far like Bose pointed to the significance of the statement quoted above. Gandhiji's primary task in life was to lead the movement for India's freedom. Even before he accepted its leadership, he committed himself to a kind of freedom that should come to the masses, not to the classes. Gandhiji's strategy was also important. He did not create any organisation separately for carrying on the freedom movement.

The existing Congress organisation was enough for him. He knew that it was primarily an organisation of the middle classes. Many of its leaders were lawyers. They believed simply in petitioning to the government for redressing their grievances. They never dreamt of handing over the *swaraj* to the masses. They wanted power for themselves. When the British government realised that they can no longer rule India, they decided to hand over the power to the middle classes. The Congress and the Muslim League were middle class organisations. Despite Gandhiji's insistence on transference of power to the masses, neither the Congress nor the Muslim League seemed eager for it. The division of India was not in the interests of the masses. But the middle class leadership after a great deal of hesitation became ultimately reconciled to it. Nirmal Kumar Bose in his book *Gandhi In Indian Politics* has shown that though Gandhiji realised that the leadership of the Congress looked upon the transfer of power from white to brown hands as the best course under the circumstances, he could clearly see that the people would soon be disillusioned. They did not get the real power. Bose writes: "When the realisation came, his idea was to tour the country, feel the pulse of the nation, and decide upon some new plan of action." It might have led him to Pakistan, amongst his brave comrades, the Pathans. To some of those near him he said: 'When I go to West Pakistan, how many of you will come with me? It is going to be a

dangerous adventure.' At that point one of us raised another question: 'Could you not have prevented partition by creating a new *situation* yourself?' Gandhiji replied: 'In my life I never created a situation. I can see more clearly than you. When two streams of thought are running through the whole nation I can see clearly which is becoming stronger or which one needs to be strengthened and then I base my programme on that which is healthy and needs support. Then people say that I create a situation. This is not true. I have never created one situation in my life. This was like a historian speaking who knows that men individually are too small to create a situation by their own endeavour."

No doubt Gandhiji lay low for the time being as he felt that continuing the rebellion at that critical moment was dependent upon a correct reading of history. He waited for the masses to realise the tragedy. He felt that sooner or later a new movement for the real *swaraj* of the masses had to be started. He wanted to prepare an instrument for this by converting the Congress into a Loka Sevak Sangha. He wanted the Congress workers 'to educate and organise the people politically and also economically'. He wanted to dedicate himself to the task of helping the masses to earn social and economic freedom. This was no new task he outlined for himself: it had been inherent in the Karachi resolution of the Congress which he had drafted.

Bose's analysis of Gandhiji's political thinking is of enormous significance to those who wanted to continue the Gandhian rebellion, or more correctly the unfinished freedom movement of India in independent India. Still more significant is Bose's remark that the killing of Gandhiji by a fanatical Indian at a time he was planning to continue the rebellion in independent India (and independent Pakistan) for handing over the power to the masses was a great tragedy. It is a great tragedy because the idea he pursued was a great ideal: handing over the freedom to the masses.

That had been the aim of all modern revolutions including the Indian.

Today we have ceased to see Gandhiji as he was and to appreciate the revolutionary element in his philosophy which made him what he really was. Amidst the ritualistic celebrations of his sainthood we have ceased to see the real man of action. Today there are only a few Indian thinkers who have really assimilated into own system of thought the basic spirit of Gandhian rebellion. Professor Bose was one such who pursued faithfully this spirit of rebellion in his thoughts and deeds.

Professor Bose discovered the real Gandhi in a scientific manner. The process started in 1921 when he came under Gandhiji's spell. He actually took to *khadi* work and, living in an *ashram* in Bolpur near Santiniketan, he carried it out in practice. He found Gandhiji's programme relevant to the Indian conditions. The work also opened his eyes to the meaning of many things which Gandhiji had written about the economic system. He also discovered that Gandhiji's quest for truth in matters of politics and economics was never theoretical but realised through practice. Bose was with Gandhiji in his Noakhali tour. He found that Gandhiji's study of economic, religious and political conditions of the villages in Noakhali were methodical and thorough. He found that Gandhiji was a great educator and a great communicator. He used every moment of his life usefully under the belief that not a single minute of the nation's time should be wasted.

Today when the politicians have allowed themselves to be mere pawns in the game of power and many of them actually degrade themselves by adhering to the wrong means for achieving otherwise laudable goals, Nirmal Kumar Bose's studies on Gandhi and Gandhism remind us of better times when honesty had prevailed. These studies communicate to us the values of a new kind of politics

based on non-violence and truth. It is a politics that endows the moment with the spirit of eternity and yet makes it possible for the adherents to carry it on in the realm of practice. Bose's presentation of the Gandhian tradition was also scientific. He saw Gandhiji as a man and his humanism as a product of rigorous self-culture.

Was there any impact of the Gandhian movement on Bose's study of human geography, culture and civilisation of India? Whatever knowledge he gathered about man and environment in India through college education was perhaps not sufficient for him to discover India and inspire him to work at a higher level for realising some general aims of life. The anthropologists till his time did not seem to think seriously about the alternative role of selfless individuals like Socrates, Christ or Gandhi in cultural change. Bose felt that the subjective factors are equally important as the objective factors in determining the change. It is true that such subjective factors act discontinuously and unpredictably, and therefore cannot be determined accurately. But a *satyagrahi* by his conscientious will or action (the objective conditions of course permitting) can contribute a decisive element in such a situation.

About Gandhi's originality in activating the subjective factor in cultural change, Bose's observations are worth quoting: "Gandhiji, on the other hand (in contrast to Marx), relied more upon a basic change in the present mental organisation of mankind. This was to be brought about not by the association of individuals who had perfected themselves by solitary personal endeavour, but by the corporate activity of people who tried to be more and more perfect as they worked out his twin programmes of constructive work and non-violent non-cooperation. This is where one of the points of his originality lay . . . Gandhî's plan of bringing about social change not through punishment, but through persuasion has a deep appeal for me; and I believe it would be worthwhile to give it a fair trial on a large

scale in a world now living under the dark shadow of war. Indeed Gandhi recognised that the supreme task facing mankind was to find an effective substitute for war.

After reading Bose's writing on different subjects, one can be convinced that the impact of Gandhian rebellion on his thoughts was substantial. Bose considered the human factor in cultural change as the most important factor. As far back as 1929 he wrote: "The historical, geographical, economic or morphological aspects of culture are, in fact, setting of a drama which is essentially human in import and direction."

By far, Bose's most significant theoretical anthropological work was the small book called *Cultural Anthropology*. Its importance has been recognised internationally. It is interesting to note that even in his work, Gandhiji's emphasis on the key role of the individual and his love in shaping change has been given due recognition. Cultural changes are not morally neutral. He was sure that all knowledge, including science, cannot be divorced from morality. Bose writes: "We have already said that the observed amounts of progress in man's culture has been due to the part of human love. But that does not mean that human love expresses itself only through material enrichment of life. It may take other forms as well. Mahatma Gandhi, for example, believed that material enrichment or sensual satisfaction, as he put it, does go some way in creating the condition of human happiness. But the pleasure that men derive from it is not of the highest type, as it is variable in character and ultimately rooted in self. Gandhi believed that there is another type of happiness which results from the realisation of the brotherhood of man and ordering of one's personal life in accordance with the interest of the whole community. Such exercise of human love which springs from a sense of human unity gives a more lasting type of happiness than the mere satisfaction of hunger and sex can bring about.

But such happiness never comes to a man who is suffering from poverty, disease or overwork. So that material conditions under which men live must be so developed that men may have the leisure and mood to exercise their love for mankind and ultimately gather the conviction from their own experience that humanity is after all one."

Like many independent thinkers of our times, Bose believed that the evolution of culture was not necessarily conditioned by history, for history leaves many significant human endeavours unrecorded. Moreover history is more or less a record of war and violence. In the modern age, there is an increasing tendency to make man the slave or victim of history. Bose seemed to have made room for non-historical factors to operate in the evolution of culture. He ends his book *Cultural Anthropology* with the following observation:

"The mind of some men does not seem to be conditioned by prevailing economic circumstances at all. When Jesus was born, conditions were very far from tying together many human races into one economic whole. We are far from the position even now; but two thousand years ago, Jesus dared to think in terms of human brotherhood of man and live up to the ideal."

From the above analysis it is quite clear that Professor Bose's scholarship was influenced to a great extent by the Gandhian rebellion which rejected the society as it was and wanted to rebuild it on the basis of non-violence and truth. The means adopted in this rebellion was convertible with the end at least in spirit. Bose tried to systematise Gandhiji's thoughts into a theory of non-violent egalitarian social change and in this he achieved visible success.

But he also carried on investigations in a number of cultural subjects and wrote extensively on them. The mere

mention of subjects would convince us that these were related to same aspect or the other of the historical evolution of culture in India. Some of the essays like the "Organisation of Services in the Lingaraja Temple" are descriptive and deal primarily with the material cultural traits provided by the architecture, rituals, organised services and men of various castes engaged in these services, etc. Essays like "Methods of Dating Indian Temples" are specifically concerned with methods of investigation and other similar topics. The essays like the "Culture Zones of India", "History of Orissa and Its Lessons", "Tribal Economy" or "Social and Cultural life of Calcutta" were studies in specific areas of past, or existing, corporate life and its environment. The focus in these articles was always on what happened in the past, how the present was shaped and what was the relationship between the past and the present. These essays therefore hardly raise the problems of building the future. But even in these areas of specific studies there seems to be an unseen image of India hovering about. This image is important. The golden thread that binds India together is both material and spiritual at the same time. Rabindranath Tagore in his discourse on Gandhi observed that it was from the west that we got the invigorating message of achieving national unity for attaining independence. Until then India was divided into her atomistic village territories. The average Indian never felt that India was one country. The leaders who first advocated this idea of unity were Ranade, Gokhale, Surendranath and others. Tagore remarked that it was Mahatma Gandhi who mobilising all his energies quickened the process of Indian unity and brought it almost to a level of wonderful fulfilment.

This is a true observation. Mahatma Gandhi made even the villagers living in remote areas feel that India was their country. But this feeling of unity was not enough. The inquisitive persons began to investigate the cultural heritage

of the Indian people and tried to discover this unity in the mind and culture of the people. The sensitive Indian anthropologists joined this quest for unity. Bose's works show that he was one of the first social scientists to be involved in it. Surajit Sinha in his biography of Bose describes the earnest efforts made by Bose as the Director of Anthropological Survey of India to organise a project to study a carefully selected list of material cultural traits found in the villages of India. The project resulted in a book called *Peasant Life in India : A Study in Unity and Diversity in India*. Bose's Preface to the book contains a memorable line: "There is more unity and variety in India than one is likely to admit in moments of forgetfulness." The next two sentences are equally important: "And if this lesson can be brought home by the efforts of the Anthropological Survey of India, every worker in the department will feel amply rewarded. A deep acquaintance with the facts of life is perhaps the best introduction to any form of social science." Gandhiji believed that India lived in the villages. Culture also similarly lived in the villages. Bose tried to link up village uplift work with anthropological studies. It is not for nothing that he said: "Let our action in India be inspired by the noblest ideals to which we have been made heirs through the life and martyrdom of Mahatma Gandhi. Nothing sort of that ought to satisfy our great nation. And let our altruistic endeavours, at the same time, not be coloured by any kind of sentimentalism but be inspired by the highest academic discipline which we can attain in our scientific enterprises."

Indian anthropology which, in the hands of scholars like Hutton and Mill, became merely a descriptive exercise that recorded the material cultural traits of a particular tribe in isolation from the rest and without any reference to unity of India, was an anthropology that, in an indirect manner, subserved the intention of the Imperialist rulers to keep their subjects divided. Bose's anthropology was shaped in

tune with the rising consciousness of the Indians to unite and achieve freedom.

It would be however wrong to think that the anthropological studies of Professor Bose can be appreciated only in terms of the impact of the Gandhian rebellion. What concerned Bose most was not his alliance to Gandhiji but upgrading anthropological study and research by inventing the right methodology for investigating Indian culture and social reality.

The Gandhian influence only gave a new general goal to Bose's otherwise very sound studies of various aspects of India's culture. Almost all his works seem interesting to me because of his restless search for facts and his underlying quest for unity in diversities. As a restless writer myself, I find his works very interesting. Particularly fascinating were his works on the culture of Orissa. His study on Orissan temples led him to study other temples in neighbouring provinces, and the comparative investigation of the origin, spread and accentuation of their various structured elements revealed that these temples have a sort of history of development as well as, common starting point. What he said about the spread of the Rekha temple is very interesting:

"North India developed a specific type of temple called the Rekha some time between the sixth and seventh centuries A.D. and even earlier. By the eighth century the form had spread all over the Indo-Gangetic plain and extended southwards into the Deccan both along the eastern coastal plain to Andhra and along the west peninsula to the kingdom of Chalukyas. Examples are also found in the middle of the Peninsula as at Alampur near Giddalur, all over the province of the Rekha temple — Osian in Rajputana,

Chamba and Almora, in Madhya Pradesh in the east and Aihole and Pattadakal in the west or Arampur in Giddalur in the valley of Krishna. The earlier forms of the temple show more points of similarity in structure and ornamentation than those belonging to a later age."

His study of the development of the cult of Jagannath also suggests a composite formation in which the tribal, the Buddhist, the Saivite and the Vaisnavite elements of culture mixed and merged. Similarly his investigation of the hut paintings of Orissa revealed the existence of several designs like the Gands Bhairava, waterpot with fish, musicians with cymbals, flute and drum, and humanheaded cow. These designs seemed to have a story of their origin and spread too. In this way Bose tried to show that culture could not be provincial and static in a narrow sense. The material as well as spiritual elements spread beyond the space and time of their origin and adopt new forms in course of time.

One of the most interesting studies by Professor Bose related to the *Spring Festival of India*. After making field studies on the forms of the festival as found in Bengal, Orissa, Bihar and Central Provinces, etc. and studying the references made about it in the ancient literary texts, Bose concluded that both the tribal and non-tribal groups contributed to its formation. The six distinct material cultural traits that mixed and merged in the festival were as follows:

1. Burning of an effigy in bonfire
2. Its connection with agriculture
3. Sexual license in an attenuated form
4. Rites centered round the swinging idol of Krishna

5. Sprinkling coloured water or powder
6. A procession in which a mock-king is carried through the village

Out of these traits, the first three elements form one group and their assemblage are distributed all over northern, central, southern and eastern India. In the rest of India wherever this form travelled the above elements are found in varying combinations of the attenuated forms. Such studies are important because they show that the culture of the masses in India have forms which seem to have many common traits that testify to their inner unity.

One of the most important problems that our country is faced with today is regarding the abolition of the caste system. Bose studied the institution of caste in a historical perspective and the factors that led to its origin, growth, decay and obsolescence. Today the caste system is an anachronism. In Bose's analysis, the caste system in its first phase was loose and there was no insistence on hereditary occupations and restriction on inter-dining and inter-marriage. The four *varnas* were probably classes. Gradually a new economy based mainly on the guild system got more or less fixed. The tribes which were absorbed into the system seemed to enjoy a degree of *laissez-faire* within its rigid framework that seemed to have given them a sort of security. But equality in status and opportunity in the social hierarchy in which the brahmanas as a priestly class used to predominate was denied to them and this was often resented. The first challenge to the caste inequalities and immobility was given by the adherents of Muslim religion which did not take kindly to the rigid *varna* system based on inequality. The challenge resulted in several types of reactions. The lower or poor castes in certain localities were converted into Islam. The second type of reaction was religious; a number of religious reformers arose in different parts of India and they began

to preach more egalitarian forms of religion. The third reaction was of a serious nature. The Hindu religion became insular and rigid. The caste system became ossified. But still the caste system thrived because there was no alternative to the prevailing economic system based on caste.

The final blow was given to caste by the capitalist economic system introduced by the British imperialists. The new masters frowned upon the monopolies and state interference in economic matter which had been characteristic features of the caste system. The consequences were fatal to the caste system. Bose writes: "The consequent growth of individualism is now having serious effects upon the social and cultural life of modern India. Capitalism has gone a long way in breaking up the ancient Indian village communities. The interdependence of castes have become attenuated in the villages, while the caste system itself now fails on account of its political bankruptcy to guarantee monopolies to occupational groups or preserve them from the ravages of unemployment and famine. There is consequently no longer any reason for Indians to be loyal to the caste system."

Bose's analysis thus makes a convincing case for abolition of the caste system. But the fact is that it is not yet abolished. Various political and social strategies have been devised by men like Gandhiji, Ambedkar and Rammanohar Lohia for the abolition of the system. It has been asked whether the economic factor is enough to bring about the end of the moribund caste system. The political parties are exploiting the caste sentiments to create vote banks and this seems to have given an artificial lease of life to the system. There are other reasons for its artificial longevity. Bose recognises the delay when he says; "Caste has to go. But it seems to have roots which prevent its final liquidation. If we are to hasten the process of formation of

a casteless and classless society, an ideal the Indian nation is determined to achieve, then it is of greatest importance, by way of fundamental research, to accumulate by painstaking and intelligent endeavour, information of this kind which will make our efforts more efficient and more fruitful." He called upon the Tribal Research Centres, universities and the anthropologists to address themselves to this task, thus paving way for a real "National Reconstruction".

Bose's studies on culture have not only strengthened our conviction that there is a real unity of culture but also made us alive to the negative factors like caste, communalism and ethnic separatism that pose serious challenges to our very unified existence. His humanism was as wide as the Indian ocean, and his desire for knowledge and knowledge-based action soared high into the sky. At a time when our temples of learning and centres of power are being invaded by a spirit of narrowness, intolerance and fanaticism, the battle for knowledge and right action which Bose prized as dear as his life have to be carried on till the evil forces are defeated. That will be a real tribute to Professor Bose's memory.

Rabindranath and Gandhi

Response to Indian Reality

I begin with a few words from Gandhi: "The poet is an inventor, he creates, destroys and recreates. I am an explorer and having discovered a thing I must cling to it. The poet presents the world with new and attractive things from day to day. I merely show the hidden possibilities of old and worn out things. The world easily finds an honourable place for the magician who produces new and dazzling things. Thus there is no competition between us but I may say in all humility that we complement each other's activity." (*Young India*, 5 Nov. 1925, p. 270)

"Mahatma has won the heart of India with his Love; for that we have all acknowledged his sovereignty. He has given us a vision of *shakti* of Truth; for that our gratitude to him is unbounded. We read about truth in books, we talk about it; but it is indeed a red-letter day, when we see it face to face.

We can make and break the Congress every other day. It is at any time possible for us to stump the country preaching politics in English. But the golden rod which can awaken our country to Truth and Love is not a thing which can be manufactured by the nearest goldsmith. To the wielder of that rod our profound salutation: But if, having seen the truth, our belief in it is not confirmed what is the good of it all".

Our mind must acknowledge the truth of intellect just as our heart does the truth of love. No Congress or other

outside institution succeeded in touching the heart of India. It was aroused by the touch of love. Having had such a clear vision of this wonderful power of truth, are we to cease to believe in it where the attainment of *swaraj* is concerned? Has the truth, which was needed in the process of awakening, to be got rid of in the process of achievement?

Culture viewed as a way of life includes within it all aspects of individual and social life whether it is political, economic, social, spiritual or artistic. But culture is viewed also as the flowering of the arts in any society. When we make a comparative study of the responses of Gandhi and Rabindranath to Indian reality culture in both the senses is to be taken into account. The subject is vast and therefore I would like to confine myself only to some significant aspects of reality in which both the great men came to be mutually involved. These responses were at times similar; but there were occasions when their individual viewpoints differed sharply. The agreements and disagreements now belong to history, but viewed as clashes of values, this history has a bearing to the current reality of the country that is being shaped. As Nehru said these two great men were "the most outstanding and dominating figures in the first half of the twentieth century" in India. Gandhi was more than a mere politician, and Rabindranath was more than a mere poet. Both of them interpreted Indian tradition creatively though with differing emphases and took part in shaping contemporary Indian culture as a way of life.

When we were young, several persons used to influence and shape our thoughts and feelings. Out of them the most outstanding were Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath. Both were great exponents of Indian culture, yet they seemed so different and unlike each other. Gandhiji called Rabindranath 'Gurudev' and regarded him as the 'great sentinel' while Rabindranath addressed Gandhiji as 'Mahatma'. They differed from each other on so many

things, but in their fundamental approaches to life, they felt a kind of affinity that revealed itself in their behaviour to each other. Many writers have harped on the differences of their opinions and tried to prove that they stood on opposite poles on some vital questions of their age. Yet they had many things in common. Both of them were the best ultimate products of the modern Indian renaissance that started with Raja Rammohun Roy and I venture to suggest that the renaissance came to full flowering in their personalities. They believed in the greatness and universality of Indian culture which had displayed a wonderful capacity of growth, diffusion and creative synthesis in the past ages and renewed itself in their own age absorbing many new and dynamic elements from the western civilisation into its fold in a harmonious manner. A dispassionate comparative study of their basic views on Indian culture and the social reality that not only sustained it but created the necessary momentum for change in its structure, shall give us insights into the secrets of that great awakening called renaissance. It would enable us to tap again those sources of spiritual strength of our people which apparently seem to have dried up for us today due to the lopsided capitalist growth of our economy and disruption of the cultural unity of India by destructive forces.

Despite differences in approach to the physical basis of life and engagements in different fields of work, both Gandhiji and Rabindranath expressed their fundamental loyalty to a common image of India. Even when we descend from the metaphorical level to the ground realities which inspired their imagination to create images, we find that both the poet and the political philosopher shared the common belief that India lived in the villages and without the reawakening and rebuilding of life at this grassroot level, the modern India of our dream could not emerge. I can quote both from Rabindranath's and Gandhiji's writings to show that their fundamental allegiance to the poverty-

stricken rural Indian humanity was a basic driving force of their lives. But like the sunrays on a cloudy weather, this allegiance is not always obvious and visible, at least in the case of Rabindranath. So far Gandhiji's allegiance to the village India is concerned, Nirmal Kumar Bose's analysis of Gandhiji's political philosophy (which I have already dealt with in the first lecture) has established it beyond doubt. Gandhiji started his life with this allegiance, and pursued it till the end. His last testament which envisaged the dissolution of the Indian National Congress and its conversion into a Loka Sevak Sangha supports this conclusion. The Indian people also knew Gandhiji's concern for the villagers so well that it hardly needs any reiteration here. But Rabindranath was essentially a versatile and talented writer whose concern for the poverty-stricken rural masses was expressed more in his writings than in his activities, which were confined mainly to some parts of undivided Bengal where his zamindari was located and where the two unique institutions Viswa-Bharati and Sriniketan were built up. Here we have also to take into account his brief participation in the anti-partition movement. His writings like *Palli Prakiti*, *Samabai-Niti* and *Viswa-Bharati* bear witness to this fact. In *Palli Prakiti*, one gets an idea of the development of the poet's perception of rural life in East Bengal and his determination to rebuild it through improved methods of cultivation, introduction of the cooperative enterprise, suitable education, revival of crafts and arts. Tagore realised that the rural masses had been so demoralised by poverty and deprivation that they lost their sense of self-confidence for initiating measures on their own to improve their lot. He came to realise that any programme of development and change initiated by city-educated workers was likely to prove futile and unrealistic in the beginning. Yet like Gandhiji he too felt that the educated workers must return to the villages to take up all-round village upliftment work as a matter of a social obligation. Rabindranath said "Today our villages are half-

dead. It would be wrong to think that we can remain fully alive when the people in the villages are in a moribund state. There can be no real cooperation between the half-dead and the living. Such cooperation paves the way for extinction for death."

We all know how Rabindranath discovered India in the villages. As a writer too, his commitment to the village life and virgin nature is well-known to his readers. He believed that unity of India could be best realised through village uplift work, not merely through the poet's songs and the *rasa* of literature. Therefore in his own way he started village uplift work. Behind the establishment of the two institutions of Santiniketan and Sriniketan was also this noble gospel of education and work viewed as a universal perspective. Constructive work alone enabled a citizen to know his own country fully and intimately. The poet's gospel of work was similar to Gandhiji's ideal of selfless service. *Isopanisad* and *Geeta* inspired them both, though not exactly in the same manner. Both aspired for a modernisation that is not divorced from the vital traditions of Indian culture. In their interpretations of Indian religion, literature and philosophy, etc., both of them avoided orthodoxy and always were constantly in search of truth (*rita*). In their attitude towards life, the Mahatma and the Kavi differed from each other often very sharply. Though Gandhiji claimed that he was not an ascetic, his insistence on *brahmacharya* in marital relationship, voluntary suffering and his denial of the pleasures of flesh, etc. amounted to a kind of asceticism, which, however, did not mean any withdrawal from the world. Neither as a man nor as a poet, Rabindranath believed in this kind of ascetic austerity and self-suffering. As David Atkinson says, "If Gandhi was a pragmatic who responded to the immediate political and social circumstances the other, a poet, removed from the political area, drew more from the romantic traditions of both east and west." Rabindranath was more realistic and

natural in the depiction of man-woman relationship and human nature in his literature. If Gandhiji was primarily an artist of life, Rabindranath was the artist of winged word, melodious sound and rhythmical lines. But both were rebels in Camus's sense. Both of them rejected the society and civilisation around them and lived in *ashrams*. *Ashrams* like *communes* of Europe were sacred spaces where the ideal state of society is realised amidst value-based living. Yet Gandhiji as a rebel had the distinction of showing to the common man a new way of living based on brotherhood, love and truth. His greatest contribution to mankind was the value-based actions, i.e. *satyagraha* that always presupposed a harmonious relationship between ends and means. He gave to the world intoxicated with worst forms of violence, terrorism and war an alternative mode of struggle for justice, and equality based on the principles of non-violence and truth. Rabindranath was not a rebel in this sense. His rebellion was mostly confined to the arts and, in a significant way, in his educational and craft-based works in Santiniketan and Sriniketan. In case of Tagore, it can perhaps be said in parenthesis that if Gandhiji fought injustice and equality with the weapons of truth and non-violence, Rabindranath carried on the battle in an indirect manner, i.e. through beauty and contemplation. He created a closed universe in words and invested it with a complete life of truth in beauty. As a hero of this struggle, he initially saw limitations and inadequacies in the Gandhian movements. At such moments he offered basic criticism as well as contemplative support. In ancient India this complementary role had been assigned to the *rishi* or the seer. It is not for nothing that Gandhiji acknowledged his poetic compeer as 'Gurudev', the great sentinel. The poet found in him the ideal man of action, the great-souled warrior. However, Rabindranath often differed from Gandhi on vital issues and *vice-versa*.

Tagore's essays on Gandhiji bring out clearly this unity

of perceptions. One of these perceptions was material and spiritual unity of India, of which one has a glimpse in the *Mahabharata* and the *Geeta*. Gandhiji was the first politician to transform this sense of Indian unity, which was largely religious and mythical, into a secular human concept embracing the whole body and soul of this country. Tagore realised that Gandhiji was unique as a leader of men. Gandhiji relentlessly pursued truth and saw beauty in it. Tagore on the other hand saw truth in beauty, but it was truth of form or art. He actually stated that truth is beauty. It is not the scientific or historical truth, but the truth of art or form. There is a difference in the two approaches and history shows that unless they are reconciled the difference may spell disaster to politics as well as arts. Pisarev, the Russian nihilist, claimed that he would rather be a Russian shoemaker than a Russian Raphael, since a pair of boots was more useful than Shakespeare.

One vital issue on which both of them differed was Gandhiji's emphasis during the non-cooperation on *charkha* as a symbol of economic and moral development of the poverty-stricken Indian masses. Reinforced by his bitter experience of the excesses of the Bengal partition movement of 1905, Tagore was apprehensive that this movement also might degenerate in the hands of his delinquent followers into a narrow jingoistic group activity characterised by egoism, violence and chauvinism. As G. Ramachandran has pointed out, Tagore specially warned the nation against the emergence of fanaticism, narrow nationalism, blind opposition to industrialism, rigid asceticism and moral dictatorship. He also cautioned his countrymen against "slavishly mimicking the call of *charkha*", calling upon them not to be victims of "mass hypnotism of the magic formula" of spinning and cloth-burning. He said: "The *charkha* in its proper place can do no harm, but will do much good. But where, by reason of failure to acknowledge the differences in man's temperament, it is in the wrong

place, there the thread can be spun at the cost of a great deal of the mind itself. Mind is no less valuable than the cotton thread." (PTMI, Vol. 25, p. 83). He warned against dead uniformity.

However the Gandhian rebellion was not a traditional national revolution and it was not even a mechanical replica of the anti-partition movement of Bengal. It was based on non-violence and truth, values which Tagore whole-heartedly approved. Gandhi's answer to the poet's criticism was sincere and adequate. He said: "I regard the poet as a sentinel warning us against the approach of enemies called Bigotry, Lethargy, Intolerance, Ignorance, Inertia and other members of the babel." (PTMI, Vol. 25, p. 265). He further assured Rabindranath: "Where the differences between us are not fundamental and all these I have endeavoured to state, there is nothing in the poet's argument which I cannot endorse and still maintain my position regarding *charkha*. The many things about the *charkha* which he has ridiculed I have not said. The merits I have claimed for the *charkha* remained undamaged by the poet's battery." (PTMI, Vol. 25, p. 273) Gandhiji was closer to Tagore when he stated that "Indian nationalism is not exclusive, nor destructive. It is health-giving, religious and therefore humanitarian."

While the area of agreement was large in the realm of values, the area of disagreement was large in the realm of practical politics. Rabindranath did not approve universal spinning as a mode of political action. He felt that it involved some sort of moral compulsion and temperamental violence. The idea of bread-labour as defined by Gandhiji did not perhaps appeal to him. I feel that the basic difference in the two approaches lay in the difference in the two attitudes to the national freedom movement. Gandhi's approach was pragmatically political (though he had a holistic attitude towards life), while Rabindranath's approach was aesthetic. He, too, maintained a holistic attitude

towards life. The poet distrusted nationalism. He advocated a national upsurge of individual creativities as a means for freedom of India. Perhaps he started from the realm of the values and wanted to translate his ideal into reality. This is essentially a true poetic rebellion. It mainly expressed itself in songs, poems, novels and dramas, and partly through efforts to impart creative education and encourage constructive work. But Gandhiji's rebellion expressed itself mainly through *satyagraha* and constructive work. It was mass hunger that persuaded Gandhiji to take the *charkha* and sponsor its application. It was a call of truth in the moral-material sense. It was the dream of all-round harmony in man and universe that drove Tagore to create an art of subtle beauty and an abode of universal peace in Santiniketan.

These differences are natural, but these did not stand in the way of their common allegiance to the essential values of Indian culture. None of them developed any system of philosophy. If there was any philosophy, it was an eclectic philosophy. They interpreted the Indian cultural heritage in their own creative ways. Often they found inspiration in the most significant verses of our spiritual literature. One such verse was the first verse of *Isopanisad*, where it is said: "All that moves in this moving world is enveloped by God. Therefore, enjoy by renunciation; never covet others' possessions." In this verse science and spirituality or philosophy of the infinite got merged. This merger according to Tagore was "the union of the east and west." The second line of the verse signifies the idea of equality. This is one of the most vital passages of Indian literature which inspired not only Rabindranath and Gandhi, but also a socialist thinker like Lohia who seemed to have discovered in this verse the germs of utopian socialist thought.

At one point the debate on *charkha* took a sharp turn and was converted into a debate concerning the relationship

of art with the political truth of rebellion. When Gandhiji entered into a controversy with Tagore regarding the usefulness of *charkha*, he nearly accused Tagore of being a class artist indifferent to the poverty of the masses. However, his accusations do not seem to have much resemblance to the nihilist thinking of Pisarev. He never preferred *charkha* to Tagore's lyrics. Yet his words are worth quoting here:

"True to the poetical instinct, the poet lives for the morrow and would have us do likewise. He presents to us the admiring gaze, the beautiful pictures of birds early in the morning singing hymns of praise as they soar into the sky. These birds have had their day's food and soared with rested wings in whose veins new blood has flown during the previous night. But I have had the pain of watching birds who for want of strength could not be coaxed even to flutter the wings. The human bird in the Indian sky gets up weaker than when we pretended to retire. For the millions it is the eternal vigil or eternal trance. It is an indescribably painful state which has got to be experienced to be realised. I have found it impossible to soothe suffering patients with a song from Kabir. The hungry millions ask for one poem: invigorating food. They cannot be given it. They must earn it. And they can earn only by the sweat of their brow." This naturally raised the question whether a man like Rabindranath or a Raman should also earn his bread by manual labour? Is it not sheer waste? Why should brain workers be considered on a par with manual workers? For both of them perform useful social work. Many revolutionaries would insist that the poets and scientists also do manual labour in order to learn from the people who are their master. In China I met two writers: Ai Ching and Ding Ling. One was an eminent poet and the other an eminent novelist. Both happened to be colleagues of Mao De Zong. Both these writers were forced to leave Beijing to some remote provinces to do manual labour during the

cultural revolution in order to learn from the labouring masses the reality of life, which was the true source of literature according to the communist doctrine. Gandhiji's reply to the question about bread-labour seemed to resemble the communist stand on corrective labour, but he did not believe in forcing intellectual workers to do manual work. The use of force was against his creed. Yet his reply has to be noted for its revolutionary implication. Gandhiji said, "Intellectual work is important and has an undoubted place in scheme of life. But what I insist on is the necessity of physical labour. It will serve to improve even the quality of his intellectual output . . . I would refer to the life of Tolstoy and how he made famous the theory of Bread-labour first propounded in his country by the Russian peasant Bondaref."

By its very nature the Gandhian rebellion was not coercive. It therefore did not lead to any excommunication of art. In India no politician would dare substitute Kabir's song for a dish of invigorating food. A Russian poet Nekrassove asserted that he prefers a piece of cheese to all of Pushkin. This is a dangerous trend of depriving our civilisation and the nation of the 'additional bread' called Beauty. Happily in India we had no Nekrassov. The Gandhian tradition legitimised the coexistence of art and rebellion. While Rabindranath's protest against *charkha* was prompted by the artist's instinct of rebellion, it must be added that Gandhiji never disputed the rights of the scientist and the artist to invent and create. Moreover his insistence on non-violence and convertibility of means and ends made him cultivate humility enough to acclaim the nature of man and beauty of art. Albert Camus's words ring true in my ears like the voice of a sage. He says: "Every great reformer tries to create in history what Shakespeare, Cervantes, Moliere and Tolstoy knew how to create: a world always ready to satisfy the hunger for freedom and dignity which every man carries in his heart. Beauty no

doubt does not make revolutions. But a day will come when revolutions will have need of beauty. The procedure of beauty, which is to resist the real while conferring unity upon it, is also the procedure of rebellion." The controversy between Gandhi and Rabindranath raised a very vital question. Can beauty be reconciled with a non-violent fight for justice and equality? I think the answer is yes. When the confrontation between the ends and the means ends in a harmonious equilibrium in action through conferring a metaphysical yet, at the same time real, unity on it, beauty emerges as a quality of life itself.

The real test of this integration of beauty with rebellion is provided by man's struggle to achieve harmony of all his cherished values enshrined in his soul. The Gandhian revolution seems to pass this test and Gandhiji can rightly be called an artist of life. However in literature, the rebellion takes the form of rhetoric and results in a closed universe built with winged words. Rabindranath's novels *Home and the World* and *Gora* are such closed universes of words which satisfy our inner hunger for oneness of life of humanity, unity and coherence of existence. These novels in a way conform to the definition of the novel given by Camus that its world is only a rectification of the world we live in pursuance of men's deepest longings.

This rebellion in art, specially in literature, was carried on by *post* Rabindric generation of the Indian writers in different languages. This rebellion cannot be summed up in a few lines and paragraphs. Moreover, not all significant writers and writings of the post-Rabindric age have been evaluated properly from this specific point of view. It is not my intention to focus all forms of artistic rebellion that were manifest during the last century. Poets like Agneya, Adiga, Bendre, Mardhekar, Sudhindra Nath Dutta, Jivanananda, Nilmani Phukan and other modern poets had or have given us new images of man and reality in new forms. Probably among the novelists also, there were or

are worthy rebels whose works deserve special mention. But this work I do not want to take up now. Today I want to refer to those writers whose rebellions came in the wake of the Gandhian rebellions. They seemed to come specially under the Gandhian impact and responded to the material and spiritual reality of their age according to their talents.

It appears that Gandhiji's impact on Indian literature operated mainly through the medium of his personality and his unique mass movement which drew a large number of writers to its fold. The middle class, from which the writers came, maintained a dubious attitude to his philosophy, but his movements espousing the cause of freedom, justice and equality in Indian society, roused their conscience and induced them to study the social reality in a new light from the standpoint of the masses. Some of the distinguished poets who responded to the Gandhian movement in an artistic manner were Chandra Kumar Agarwalla and Ratna Barkakati in Assamese, Satyendra Nath Dutta, Kazi Nazrul Islam, Bisnu De and Premendra Mitra in Bangla, Umashankar Joshi, Sundaram and Meghani in Gujrati, Nirala, Maithili Sharan Gupta, Siyaramcaran Gupta, Pant, Mahadevi and Dinkar in Hindi, Puttapa and Bendre in Kannada, Vallathol and Sankar Kurup in Malayalam, Kalindicaran Panigrahi, Nityananda Mahapatra and Bankanathanath Patnaik in Oriya and Bhai Vir Singh in Punjabi. They wrote poems which were inspired either by Gandhiji's personality or the spiritual forces he released or the plight of the poor peasant or Harijan Gandhiji had discovered. Even Rabindranath responded poetically to the Gandhian impact when he said in his poem 'Gandhi Maharaj'.

Among the disciples of Gandhi Maharaj

Some are rich, Some indigent

But in one respect we have affinity with one another

We do not fill our belly by killing the poor

We do not bow down our head to a rich man

Our faces do not get pale in senseless fright.

However the impact was greater in novels, which as a genre offered more scope for discovering and depicting the genuine human relationship in Indian society. In Assamese Laksmidhar Sarma's short stories, Birinchi Kumar Barua's novel (*Jivanar Batat*) and Jyotiprasad Agarwalla's drama (*Labhita*) are some of the best examples of good literature produced under the impact. It is not possible to deal with this subject exhaustively, but a brief reference may be made to some other works of fiction produced under the Gandhian influence in other Indian languages. Tara-shankar's *Ganadevata* in Bangla, Kalinidi Caran Panigrahi's *Matira Manusha* in Oriya, Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* Raja Rao's *Kantha Pura* in English, Ramanlal Desai's *Bharelo Agni* and *Gramlaxmi* in Gujarati, Premchand's *Rangabhumi* and *Godan* (as also Jainendra Kumar's *Suneeta*) in Hindi, Shivram Karanath's *Choman Dudi* in Kannada, and some of the works of authors like Keshava Deva and M. Govindan in Malayalam deserve mention in this regard.

This list is not exhaustive or final. But it shows that the impact of the Gandhian ideas on the romantic movement in the Indian literature was characterised by the emphasis on the freedom of the individual and on the depiction of the reality of hitherto neglected life of the poor peasants and Harijans. This shift in themes and contents from romanticism to realism was certainly accompanied by a search for new forms and language. Gandhiji's impact was immediate in his own language, where his autobiography and other prose-writings gave the fellow writers and readers a new vision of India consisting of the village poor and the untouchable and a new vision of the world where the victims of colonial exploitation, colour prejudice, injustices based on caste, weapon, sex, dictatorship, private property, class inequality and productivity imperialism could hope to find courage to stand up as human beings. Very few novelists and poets could grasp the infinite significance of the total Gandhian rebellion for a new human order, as their

response to his rebellion was according to their own class experience and to the individual capacity of each writer to grasp the social reality of the age. However amongst the novels I have read, I would like to discuss one only. As a representative Gandhian novel, Tarasankar's *Ganadevata* has been successful to a great extent in giving a total picture of a village society in transition. Hinduism is still tied here with the Brahmanical belief in hierarchy, class exploitation, empty ritualism, and a *Dharma* which sanctions untouchability. The Gandhian political activist, Debu, (in the novel) who is a primary school teacher and a shudra, believes in equality amongst the higher castes. And after being released from jail, he conceives of a new family. He outlines his dream thus: "We shall have the same right in our household. The man will no longer be the master, the wife no longer the maid-servant. We shall work together and go hand in hand. You (Swarna) will teach the girls here, I shall teach the boys and young men. Our joint income will sustain our home." Yet this call for equality does not touch the heart of Durga Muchini, the untouchable heroine, who had to earn her bread through prostitution and was a victim of sexual exploitation by the village bullies. Listening to Debu's dream, tears roll down her eyes. She does not find a place in the new family where equality of sex and caste is yet to be a reality.

What had been said above should not make us oblivious of the fact that there were other writers outside the pale of the Gandhian impact who dealt with this social reality in their own way. Interestingly enough, it was Tagore who seemed to have been the first ever Indian writer to write fiction on the village-oriented themes and contents. He did it even before the Gandhian impact on Indian literature came to be felt. Throughout his life he was suspect as an upper class writer hailing from the zaminder class who loved to wield the winged words in a romantic and closed world of rich individual imagination. Tagore's capacity to

transcend the limitations of his class was not recognised, but his short stories and many poems and essays actually demonstrated his capacity to attain living transcendence. I believe when Tagore says:

"All the gladness, enthusiasm and literary creations of my past life had their origin within the four corners of the village life. I spent many days of my life outside the city in the villages sharing the happiness and sorrows of their inhabitants. When I lived on the bank of Padma, I saw that the villagers suffered from many wants and had many grievances. Their miseries caused pain in my heart. I realised their helplessness. Soon I became well acquainted with their life and realised that the foundation of our life lay in the village. I also realised that the villages were like our mothers and wet-nurses whose breasts had dried up. The villagers lacked food and health. Their sad eyes constantly communicated to me a sense of utter helplessness. My heart was deeply affected by their sadness and helplessness. It was then that I depicted their life in short stories, poems and essays. I depicted not only their sorrows, but also the moments of their happiness. Therefore, I can claim that no (Indian) writer before me did try to depict the village life and the sufferings of the helpless rural masses in creative literature. Many of you must have come across these depictions in my short stories and poems."

I would have liked to discuss some of Tagore's short stories and poems to show how capable he was in giving a form and style of his own to the reality of life he undertook to depict. But neither am I fully prepared for it, nor have

I the time for the same.

Rabindranath knew that in his literature history left its imprint, but it was the business of art to express the universal truth beyond history common to all men in a language that gives it a true form. It could not be isolated from life which helps the artists in projecting the multifaceted living image of man valid for all times. This truth was not crude everyday reality, but the actual inner realisation of the essence of existence. Literature and art are one of the major ways of realising this truth. Rabindranath and Gandhi shared in common this belief in the pursuit of truth, although their goals were different.

In his articles on Mahatma Gandhi written in the thirties, Rabindranath hailed this relentless votary of truth in politics and life as one who has shown a humane and non-violent way to fight for the freedom of India. He knew that he could not always agree with what Gandhiji did or said. On the other hand, Gandhiji had the inner strength to admit his mistakes and adopt the new truth as it came to him. Mahatma was dynamic enough to change his ideas whenever they were found inadequate or unreal. During his lifetime he changed his earlier opinions on the caste system, on the character of the British imperialist order and on the nature of the institution of private property. Rabindranath was deeply impressed by Gandhiji's final stand on the caste system and the trends of social obscurantism and conservatism prevailing in the Hindu society. During Gandhiji's famous fast unto death in the Pune jail in 1932, Rabindranath wholeheartedly supported his fight against the move of the British government to provide a separate electorate to scheduled castes and thus divide the caste-ridden Hindu society into two clear segments. At that time Gandhiji embarked on a new path of social reform by starting a movement for abolition of untouchability in the caste-ridden Hindu society. The Pune fast came in its wake.

Rabindranath hailed Gandhiji's movement for caste equality and said: "Mahatmaji has been leading a revolt against the centuries-old blind and foolish practices in Indian society from a viewpoint of his own. Our work should be aimed at intensifying this stir to its maximum extent. As long as we continue to be swayed by caste divisions, religious conflicts and foolish customs, it is virtually impossible for us to gain freedom. Merely counting the number of voters or hair-splitting stock-taking of gains in safeguarding mutual rights cannot put an end to the nation's woes and miseries . . . We should remember that fighting external enemies does not require that much strength as is needed to fight the enemies lying low within our minds. The *Better Fight* compels us to subject our humanism to severe (or final) trial". Tagore called the ghettos inhabited by the so-called untouchables in villages and towns as "Social prison-houses". The real human bondage lies in restricting human rights. He called upon the people to take up the cause for which Mahatma was staking his life in their own hands and show moral courage to end social inequality. According to the poet the political conspiracy to divide the Hindu community was as fatal as death itself. It was like dividing the Christians consisting of the Roman-catholic and the protestant communities of Europe into separate sects. Giving a clarion call for equality, he called upon the Indians to put an end to the sufferings of the untouchables and bring social equality amongst the Hindus. His religion of man too compelled him to declare that man should not do injustice to man. Like Gandhiji he opined that a really free man should be free from all kinds of fears including the fears for powers that be, superstition-ridden masses and forces of social bondage and inequality.

Language and literature were recognised by Gandhiji as vital fields of national progress. Though the approaches of Gandhi and Tagore were different to these issues, both of them recognised the immense potentialities of language

and literature for national progress and human development. As a political thinker, Gandhiji was interested in the development of the people's languages in India, as these languages served as very effective mediums of communication of ideas to the masses. He also earnestly advocated the cause of development of modern literature in these languages, as literature was the best means for imparting human knowledge to the educated community within the nation and spreading real enlightenment to the masses in the country. He also believed that production by the masses and self-government by the people in the villages cannot be brought about without the widespread use of the popular languages. Another idea that Gandhiji used to popularise was a kind of national enterprise of translation of all distinguished works found in the rich languages of the world into the Indian languages and *vice-versa*. This vision of a new Indian literature written in many languages was contained in his well-known statement on future Indian culture. He opposed the spirit of provincialism and exclusivism when he said: "I do not want my house to be walled on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet. I would have our young men and women with literary tastes to learn as much English and other world languages as they like, and then expect them to give the benefits of their learning to India and to the world like a Bose, a Roy or the poet himself (i.e. Rabindranath). But I would not have a single Indian to forget that he or she cannot think or express the best thoughts in his or her own vernacular. Mine is not a religion of the prison-house." This rich vision of culture naturally envisaged the growth of a multilingual Indian literature to its pristine glory through various means including that of translation. Rabindranath's vision of literature and culture was embedded in his numerous writings as well as in the ideal institution of Santiniketan he built up. Some of his statements as found in his book

Sahityer Swarup give us a magnificent insight into literature and aesthetics of arts in general. In *sahitya* the *roop* and *rasa* merge into each other and become a thing of truth in beauty that gives *ananda* and *saundarya* simultaneously. The truth depicted in a work of art is heart's own emotional truth, not a fragment of ordinary reality that is isolated from a whole entity. In Rabindranath's literature three streams of traditions converged: the heritage of the Upanishadic and Indian poetic literature, the folk and oral culture, and the Western romantic literature. He was the first modern Indian lyric poet and novelist of India in whose creative works a spirit of universal joy and beauty expressed itself. This literature certainly conforms to the literary standard outlined in Gandhiji's statement quoted above.

The relationship between Gandhi and Rabindranath was established on a higher plane of philosophy. Here their views usually converged. This was despite the fact that they often found themselves in mutually opposite poles. As the spiritual bond between the two giants was always very strong, they never allowed their relationship to degrade to the level of destructive antagonism. In a letter dated 29-9-32, Gandhiji wrote to Tagore: "You have been a true friend because you have been a candid friend often speaking your thoughts aloud." He highly valued the poet's candid comments on his actions and opinions. On the Pune fast for abolishing untouchability Rabindranath's comment was forthright and bold. He said: "It is well worth sacrificing a precious life for the sake of India's unity and her social integrity. Though we cannot anticipate what effect it may have upon our rulers who may not understand its immense importance for our people, we feel certain that the supreme appeal of such self-suffering to the conscience of our own countrymen will not be in vain."

Gandhiji as a pro-poor and pro-worker national leader was interested in the all-round development of the nation. His motto was 'unto the last'. In the sphere of language

and literature, he did yeoman's service by creating an ideological environment for their growth against the strong currents of mindless their growth against the strong currents of mindless westernisation and false modernisation during the colonial era. It was also a cause dear to Rabindranath, who always held that a writer best expresses himself or herself only in his own native language. At the same time he did not hesitate to assimilate what is best in the western literature. It is to be highly regretted that the Gandhian heritage on this vital sphere of activities has been allowed to be kept in cold storage. Today very few politicians and administrators bother about the development of the people's languages and the Indian literature written in them. No worthwhile project for translation of classics has been so far undertaken by the Indian nation. Gandhiji's programme for growth of Indian languages and literature was essentially social, and its relevance today cannot be disputed. Today Indian literature outside India, specially in Europe and America, is represented mostly by Indian writings in English. Indian literature, written in Indian languages, is little known outside India. Even within India, books written in one Indian language does not usually travel beyond its region, because of a lack of good infrastructure for multilingual translation. This disquieting development may continue till the time when the masses assert themselves and replace the class rule.

Gandhiji's alliance with the middle class in his struggle for the emancipation of the masses was never smooth-sailing, and after his martyrdom there were only a few leaders who could take up his cause for a genuine cultural awakening amongst the masses. The social milieu in India today is essentially capitalist. The middle class culture is being influenced by the forces of the globalisation of the market whose chief media today have become the television and commercial journals. During the era of Indian struggle for freedom, Rabindranath was the most distinguished

representative of the middle class culture in India. His aesthetical philosophy was influenced by his deep humanism and his literature, in addition to other sources, drew inspiration from India's village life and vital cultural heritage of the past ages. He had differences with Gandhiji on nature of understanding the physical basis of life, both biological and economic; his aesthetics also was perhaps different from that of Gandhiji, who was deeply influenced by Tolstoy in his views on art. As Rammanohar Lohia points out, Gandhiji had many quaint ideas about food, clothes, man-woman relationship and individual purity. Rabindranath did not like austerity or *vairagya*. Despite their difference of outlook Gandhiji always tried to involve Rabindranath emotionally in the struggle for the emancipation of the masses. In this he was largely successful.

Perhaps, as Lohia has pointed out, Gandhiji did not really come to terms with the devil of gold, or its music or loveliness or what may be called rising economic standards. Like his great spiritual predecessors he derided or overwhelmingly reduced the material. But this he did in the name of the poor masses of India. He wanted to identify himself completely with the basic interests of the masses. That is why he was too much involved in the material struggle for bread and living. He could never quite see that matter and spirit both inhere in man. I believe Rabindranath also was more oriented to the spirit though in quite another sense. Most of the leading thinkers of Indian renaissance before Gandhi and Rabindranath themselves were indifferent to the cause of cultural awakening of the masses. Indeed we are living in an era of very rapid development of the middle class culture on a global basis. Even the poor masses are being swamped by it. All the mediums of mass culture are now being controlled by this class. In such a situation, Gandhiji's ideas have relevance to us, specially to those who want to continue the unfinished task of

Gandhiji for cultural awakening and creative upsurge of the masses. Along with Gandhi, Rabindranath also inspires us to accept a new vision of India and of universal man.

Nirmal Kumar Bose, one of India's greatest sons, a humanist, a Gandhian and a radical anthropologist for whom social reconstruction was more important than building sociological theories — was a carry over of the nineteenth century Renaissance in Bengal. He was a great mind, a great visionary who was never confined to the conventional boundary of an academic discipline, be it anthropology, geography, geology, prehistory, archaeology, and even gandhiology (if that term may be used). Professor Bose used anthropology to demonstrate India's unity in the diversity of cultures. He possessed in his heart a precious thing — the love for his countrymen — that was much greater than his passion for anthropology. Historians of world anthropology are aware of Bose's pioneer thinking and his original contribution to the concept of culture. But, regrettably and not so regrettably, Bose could not pursue it further, because in his judgement something else was more important. That was India's national Freedom Movement. He preferred to remain in the prison rather than in the luxury of intellectual pursuit.

IGNCA Memorial Lecture Series was initiated in honour of renowned scholars who have done singular service and made path-breaking contributions in different fields of study, and whose academic approach and directions are of direct relevance to the conceptual base of the centre. In this Memorial Lecture Series, so far included, are Hazariprasad Dwivedi (1907-1979), the great stalwart of Hindi literature, Nirmal Kumar Bose (1901-1972), an eminent anthropologist, and Suniti Kumar Chatterjee (1890-1977), a noted linguist.

Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya, an eminent literary figure, a social activist, and a freedom fighter, currently he holds the Ram Manohar Lohia chair at the Kurukshetra University. He was formerly the Vice-President and the President, respectively, of the Sahitya Academy, President of the Assam Sahitya Sabha, and member of several prestigious institutions. He has to his credit more than twenty novels, sixty short stories, hundred poems, ten plays and innumerable essays and articles. He has written a biography of Sri Aurobindo and translated classics from Bengali and English into Assamese. Widely travelled, his works have been translated into various other languages. Recipient of the Sahitya Academy Award in 1961 for his novel *Iyruingam*, and the prestigious Jnanpith Award for his famous work *Mrtyunjaya*, his novels are the panorama woven around the rivers, trees and evergreen hills of Assam which give the glimpse of the simplicity of the tribal soul which his characters portray magnificently.