CHAPTER V

THE MESSAGE OF RABINDRANATH TAGORE TO THE WORLD

I

I dreamed in a dream I saw a city invincible to the attacks of the whole of the rest of the earth;
I dreamed that was the new city of friends.
Nothing was greater there than the quality of robust love, it led the rest.
It was seen every hour in the actions of the men of that city, And in all their looks and words.

Whitman.

But what wealth then shall be left us
When none shall gather gold
To buy his friend in the market,
And pinch and pine the sold?

Nay what save the lovely city,
And the little house on the hill,
And the wastes and the woodland beauty,
And the happy fields we till;

And the homes of ancient stories,
The tombs of the mighty dead;
And, the wise men seeking out marvels,
And the poet's teeming head;
And the painter’s hand of wonder;
And the marvellous fiddle-bow,
And the banded choirs of music:
All those that do and know.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

We have incidentally referred to Rabindranath’s views about the spirit and the ideal which animate the West. It is not true to say that Rabindranath is blind to the virtues of the West or the faults of the East. As an ideal servant of truth and freedom he takes up arms against all shams, Eastern or Western. Rabindranath admits that he was struck by the spirit of social service prevailing in the West. He says: "It was an inspiration to me." He has only praise for the Western ideals of law, order, and freedom. "Through the smoke of cannons and dust of markets, the light of her moral nature has shone bright, whose foundation lies deeper than social conventions and whose province of activity is world-wide. . . . Europe has been teaching us the higher obligations of public good above those of the family and the clan, and the sacredness of law, which makes society independent of caprice, securing for it continuity of

progress, and guarantees justice to all men in all positions in life. Above all things Europe has held high before our minds the banner of liberty through centuries of martyrdom and achievement—liberty of conscience, liberty of thought and action, liberty in the ideas of art and literature.”¹ In another connection we have noticed how Rabindranath is thankful to the West for the spread of these ideals in the East.

II

The Western civilisation is more mechanical than spiritual, more political than religious, more mindful of power than of peace. This political tendency is expressing itself in many ways. The woman problem is one symptom of it as the European War is another. Rabindranath devotes a chapter in his *Personality* to the problem of the woman. Of the two aspects of life, rest and movement, or being and becoming, the woman has the being aspect predominating in her nature. To the woman belongs domestic life and everything which is personal and human. She takes no real

¹ *The Spirit of Japan.*
interest in the things themselves; her interest is for the sake of the son or the father or the husband. "Wherever there is something which is concretely personal and human, there is woman’s world. The domestic world is the world where every individual finds his worth as an individual, therefore his value is not the market value, but the value of love; that is to say, the value that God in his infinite mercy has set upon all his creatures. This domestic world has been the gift of God to woman.”

Indian thought compares the relationship of man and woman to that of subject and object, form and matter, Purusha and Prakriti. They are organically related as the complementary functions of one whole. Most of the present-day discussions assume that man and woman are alike in everything but sex, like white and black balls which differ only in colour. But there are basic differences which make the analogy unsound. Man and woman are not copies of each other but mutual supplements. Sentiment, feeling, and emotion predominate in woman, while thought, reflection, and composure characterise man. The joys of passivity

1 Personality, p. 177.
and surrender are the woman's, while those of activity and energising are the man's. The woman is made for marriage, while man is made for business. If the man idles away at home, he is said to be unemployed; if the woman does not marry, she is unemployed.

At the present day, woman is being carried away by the intoxication of power. She does not feel that her vocation lies at home. She is restless. She fears marriage and maternity. She is struggling against man's monopoly of business. She is unsexing herself by seeking situations in shops and stations, factories and offices. She is trying to imitate man, and make her life artificial and unnatural. She is craving to acquire man's character and position in public life. The true woman will have neither the desire nor the capacity for it. The yearning for marriage is rooted in the woman's heart. Let us hear what a woman says: "There is not one woman in a million who would not be married if . . . she could have a chance. How do I know? Just as I know that the stars are now shining in the sky, though it is high noon. I never saw a star at noonday, but it is the nature of the stars to
shine in the sky and of the sky to hold its stars.”

The rebellion of the woman is to be ultimately traced to the masculine character of the present civilisation. It is one of power and movement. “It is a civilisation of power, in which woman has been thrust aside.” Man is responsible for the unrest of woman. “But because men in their pride of power have taken to deriding things that are living, and relationships that are human, a large number of women are screaming themselves hoarse to prove that they are not women, that they are true where they represent power and organisation. In the present age they feel that their pride is hurt when they are taken as mere mothers of the race, as the ministers to the vital needs of its existence, and to its deeper spiritual necessity of sympathy and love.”

Due to the over-busy-ness of man, the woman’s world has been getting thinner and thinner. “In its inordinate lust for power and wealth it has robbed woman of the most part of her world, and the home is every day being crowded out by the office.” There is hardly any room

1 Gail Hamilton.  
2 Personality, p. 172.  
3 Ibid, p. 129.
for woman in life now. As man puts obstacles and hindrances in the way of woman's free development, she calls for emancipation. As man insults woman, woman is taking vengeance on man. In the modern civilisation the being or the foundational aspects of life are lost sight of, and so "it has lost its balance and it is moving by hopping from war to war." To bring it back to its balance, "woman must step in and impart its life-rhythm to this reckless movement of power." To the true woman the individual is sacred, more sacred than armies and navies, shops and factories. When woman exercises her function in life then will man learn that love is of more value than power. For the woman to acquire her true place the economic civilisation based on competition should give place to a spiritual one based on co-operation. Then shall the meek inherit the earth.

III

The European War—which is another name for hell raging on earth—has pained the poet to the quick and confirmed his view of the
spiritual destitution of Europe. His heart is filled with anguish at the colossal waste of life, and a cry of compassion bursts from his lips. "When, mad in their mirth, they raised dust to soil thy robe, O Beautiful, it made my heart sick."¹ The bleeding of the body of God pierced him to the quick. Unrighteous dealing and an aggressive spirit of nationalism are the causes of the European cataclysm. It is Rabindranath’s opinion that Europe is now reaping reward for that organised greed called nationalism. “In this War the death-throes of the nation have commenced. It is the fifth act of the tragedy of the unreal. . . . There is a moral law in this world which has its application both to individuals and organised bodies of men. You cannot go on violating these laws in the name of your nation, yet enjoy their advantage as individuals. We may forget truth for our convenience, but truth does not forget us. Prosperity cannot save itself without moral foundation. Until man can see the gaping chasm between his full storehouse and his humanity, until he can feel the unity of mankind, the kind of barbarism which you call

¹ *Fruit-Gathering*, XXXVI.
civilisation will exist." Europe has sown the wind and must reap the whirlwind. Matter is enthroned; science has become the ally of destruction, and in fury of greed one nation is pitilessly destroying another.

All the black evils in the world have overflowed their banks,

The heat growing in the heart of God for ages—
The cowardice of the weak, the arrogance of the strong,
   the greed of fat prosperity, the rancour of the wronged,
   pride of race, and insult to man—
Has burst God's peace, raging in storm.¹

The War is a sign that the Western civilisation is dead and not alive, inert and not alert, mechanical and not spiritual. It looks upon man as a machine and not a soul. It stands for matter with its automatism and not life with its joy. It exalts intellect at the expense of intuition and soul. "Thus man with his mental and material power far outgrowing his moral strength is like an exaggerated giraffe whose head has suddenly shot up miles away from the rest of him, making normal communication difficult to establish. Its greedy head, with its huge dental organisation, has been munching

¹ *Fruit-Gathering*, LXXXIV.
all the topmost foliage of the world, but the nourishment is too late in reaching his digestive organs, and his heart is suffering from want of blood." Rabindranath burns with indignation when he reflects on the spirit of the present European civilisation. "The vital ambition of the present civilisation of Europe is to have the exclusive possession of the devil. All her armaments and diplomacy are directed upon this one object. But these costly rituals for the invocation of the evil spirit lead through a path of prosperity to the brink of cataclysm. The furies of terror which the West has let loose upon God's world come back to threaten herself and goad her into preparations of more and more frightfulness. This gives her no rest, and makes her forget all else but the perils that she causes to others and incurs herself. To the worship of this devil of politics she sacrifices other countries as victims. . . . After centuries of civilisation, nations fearing each other like the prowling wild beasts of the night-time; shutting their doors of hospitality; combining only for purpose of aggression or defence; hiding in

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1 Nationalism, pp. 35-36.
the holes their trade secrets, State secrets, secrets of their armaments, making peace-offerings to each other's barking dogs with the meat which does not belong to them; holding down fallen races which struggle to stand upon their feet; with their right hand dispensing religion to weaker peoples while robbing them with their left—is there anything in this to make us envious?"¹ All the evils of the Western civilisation can be ultimately traced to the false spirit of nationalism. The Westerns bow down before the false God, "that dominant intellectual abstraction which you call a nation." Nationality is not in itself bad, but when it is interpreted in a false, selfish, and aggressive sense, then it becomes an evil principle. As Mr. G. Lowes Dickinson observes: "Nationality is a Janus, facing both ways. So far as it stands for the right of a people to govern itself, it stands for freedom. So far as it stands for the ambition to govern other people, or to destroy them or to shape them into an alien mould, it stands for domination. Nationality is respectable only when it is on the defence, when it is waging

¹ *Nationalism*, pp. 83-84.
wars of liberation it is sacred; when those of domination it is accursed."¹ In the West Nationalism is interpreted in a small and selfish sense. It develops a narrow devotion to one's own country and encourages an exclusive patriotism. "Every nation overestimates itself; without this feeling of itself it would also lack the consciousness of being a community; as Fichte truly said, a nation cannot dispense with arrogance."² Religion and morality do not make such a strong appeal as the feeling for one's own soil and people. When the people of one nation sincerely and strongly feel that their country is the best, that it is the bearer of the true culture and civilisation, the herald of all progress and liberty, then it is not an unjust procedure for them to try to force light and sweetness into other countries, whether they are willing or unwilling. We have the light, and others outside the country perish for want of it. It then becomes our duty to let them have light and obtain salvation. The progressive nations naturally feel that they are the elect of God and the Almighty has given them a right to enter by peaceful penetration if possible, or

¹ After the War. ² Treitschke, Politics, i. p. 284.
forced attack if necessary, other people's houses
to set them in order. Thus naturally and
unconsciously, the spirit of nationalism results
in forced conversion, aggressive expansion
and predatory imperialism. "The civic, the
feudal, or the oligarchic state passes into
the national, the national into the imperial."\(^1\)
Attempts are made to force unwilling nations
like the Poles, the Finns, and the Alsatians
into absorption in nations of superior strength
and numbers. Each man loves his country, and
where there is increase of population closely
pressing on the margin of subsistence, it is
too much to think that he will devise measures
other than extension of territory to satisfy his
growing needs. A desire to get as much of
the earth's surface as possible becomes the
dominant motive. "All over the globe to-day
we see the peoples of Europe creating a mighty
aristocracy of the white races. Those who
take no share in this great rivalry will play a
pitiable part in time to come. The colonising
impulse has become a vital question for a great
nation." "Up to the present, Germany has
always had too small a share of the spoils in

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\(^1\) Cramb, *The Origins and Destiny of Imperial Britain*. 
the partition of non-European territories among the powers of Europe, and yet our existence as a state of the first rank is vitally affected by the question whether we can become a power beyond the seas.”¹ While anxious to extend their dominions for self-aggrandisement, they do not publicly avow their purpose; they are not fools to flout the moral sense of the world. They take their stand on the highest ideals of humanity, and say they are out on the mission of civilising the backward races of the earth. If it is a sword which we see in the one hand to cut the way, the other hand will have the Bible to deceive the world. There is also the consideration of the great loss to humanity if large portions of the world are left undeveloped. If inferior races are not able to develop the resources of their regions, it becomes the duty of the higher and the more civilised to do it. This is nothing extraordinary, for it is the law written on every page of the book of nature, the law of the survival of the fittest. The more efficient should displace the less efficient. Thus the necessity to find room for the surplus popula-

¹ Treitschke, Politics, i. pp. 7 and 13.
tion, the civilising mission of the more evolved, the need for developing the unexploited portions of the earth's surface, and the vital faith in the higher purpose and destiny of one's own nation, all converge in imperialism.

Realpolitik, which has for its principle, "It is good when I steal your cow, and bad when you steal my cow," has been the governing force of European relations all these four or five centuries. Self-interest is the end; brute-force, the means; conscience is taboo. "In every part of the world, where British interests are at stake, I am in favour of advancing and upholding these interests, even at the cost of annexation and at the risk of war. The only qualification I admit is that the country we desire to annex, or take under our protection, the claims we choose to assert, and the cause we desire to espouse, should be calculated to confer a tangible advantage upon the British Empire." ¹ Here we have an open

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¹ Edward Dicey, "Peace and War," Nineteenth Century, September 1899. This quotation from a British writer is likely to mislead the reader into thinking that the imperialistic creed which is the logical outcome of the mechanical ideal is practised by Britain to the exclusion of higher considerations. But this suggestion is far from our intention. We give it as a definition of the low imperialistic creed and not as the policy of the British Empire. The imperialism which
avowal of the *Realpolitik* and a definition of the imperialist creed. Let your one aim be to extend the Empire; do not lift your little finger, unless by so doing, some tangible advantage is secured; if your material interests holds extension of empire to be the sole aim, is not characteristic of the present time, at all events, of the British Empire. Seeley has taught us that the British Empire was acquired absent-mindedly, without any deliberate design, almost without effort at a time when colonies were easy to acquire. Now that Britain finds herself at the head of an Empire, she is trying to interpret her duty in a broad and liberal sense—we need not mind the croakers. She has not tried to impose her culture and civilisation on her dominions. The Prime Minister of England, Mr. Lloyd George, declared in a recent speech: "The idea that you cannot have many nations in the Empire is perishing of its own folly." Australia, Canada, New Zealand, etc., are free dominions; South Africa was granted self-government immediately after annexation; Home Rule for Ireland is on the Statute Book. Britain is determined to grant India ere long complete autonomy within the Empire, whatever vested interests might say. Empire in the sense of the federation of the free, is the ideal of Britain, and it has the hearty approval and sympathy of Rabindranath Tagore, as of all right-thinking men. Since writing the above, we have had definite statements from Messrs. Asquith and Lloyd George about the war aims of Britain. In an interview with Mr. Edward Marshall of the *Observer*, Mr. Asquith said: "The first thing needed is without doubt not a re-establishment of the balance of power but the removal of one of the chief of the chronic causes of unsettlement by the emancipation and regrouping of subject peoples in accordance with their aspirations and interests." He reiterated this view in his speech at Birmingham (December 1917), when he declared that "it is a root principle of democracy that every organised people is the true, the authentic, the final and the only responsible judge of its own form of government." Mr. Lloyd George, in his speech at Westminster on the 5th of January, emphasised that democratic principles should be applied not only in the settlement of the European questions but throughout the world. Judged by these utterances, it is clear that Britain does not intend to be imperialistic in the narrow sense of the term.
require annexation, war, and brutal treatment of other nations, do not scruple to adopt them.

The present War is the penalty which Europe pays for its steadfast loyalty to a false ideal. Selfish nationalism which despised the coloured races of the world is the root cause of this World War. The War is the logical result of the jealousy and rivalry among European nations who had all the one aim of using the backward peoples for their own selfish gain and interest.

On the seashore of the West
The funeral pyres are emitting
The last flames
Caught from the torch of a selfish, decadent civilisation.

The worship of energy
In the battlefield or factories
Is not worshipping thee,
The protector of the Universe.¹

This imperialism is an elusive force which assumes different shapes. When we are in a mood to condemn it, we put it down for the expression of nationalist pride; when we wish to justify it, it becomes the only medium through which light and sweetness can be spread. Nationalism defeats itself if imperialism

is justified. Selfish nationalism has within it the seeds of its own destruction. Imperialism means nationalism or independence of the stronger and parasitism or subjection for the weaker. When we justify imperialism, that is, the substitution of the stronger for the weaker, we also justify wars. The races which are exploited will regard themselves as unjustly held in bondage, and will struggle to gain their independence. If they are strong like Germany and Italy in the nineteenth century, they throw off their yoke and attain freedom; if weak like Poland, or China at the present moment, they are trampled under foot. Empire is the enemy of nationality. It includes within it nations which, through lack of political genius or superiority of the conquering host, are controlled by an alien nation. These subject countries will always be a thorn in the side, unless they are treated in a spirit of liberal statesmanship. Empires can only be maintained by force. The task to establish world-unity by force and subjection has been essayed by many nations of the world—Egypt, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, Spain, France, etc., but without success. Where these have
failed no nation of the present day can hope to succeed.

Some people wrongly imagine that recasting the map of Europe on the principle of nationality would secure abiding peace. Rabindranath is clear that this is of no use. "You say these machines will come into an agreement, for their mutual protection, based upon a conspiracy of fear. But will this federation of steam-boilers supply you with a soul, a soul which has her conscience and her God? What is to happen to that larger part of the world where fear will have no hand in restraining you?" Peace will not last long if it is based only on fear and weakness. For with a mechanical basis and a mechanical ideal, there is room in the world for one nation, and peace will not break out until that end is attained. The system proceeds on the view that the gain of one nation is the loss of another. Until the material basis and aim are removed there will be wars and fresh wars till the world gets cold and the last man sinks into sleep, wars bred by territorial acquisition in tropical regions, commercial exploitation

1 Nationalism.
and desire to possess exclusive markets. When the freed European nations stand up face to face with their full individualities developed, their one interest will be to push onward and upward and get as much as possible of the non-European world. So long as there is one dark spot on earth, unpossessed by European nations, all eyes will be turned to it and inevitably there will be a conflict among the competitors. The earth is neither unlimited nor its wealth boundless to satisfy all the nations of Europe for all time. Supposing the whole world is parcelled out among the powers, even then wars will not cease. If another planet does not drop at the feet of Europe to keep it engaged, the overlordship of the universe will be contested. In this race only one nation can be at the top, and all European powers will struggle to gain that top place. No one can hope to have an easy climb up, for the European nations trained in militarist methods, unless they are crushed beyond the possibility of revival, will not allow one of themselves to steal a march over others. They will devise a delicate balance of power which even small differences will upset. If
imperialism at any time can give us peace it is only after the whole world has passed under the domination of one single nation, for it requires at least two to make a quarrel. This consummation of a single world-power will not occur before the world is converted into a charnel-house and collapses into a heap of dust. Professor Cramb says: "In the light of history, universal peace appears less as a dream than as a nightmare which shall be realised only when the ice has crept into the heart of the sun, and the stars, left black and trackless, start from their orbits."¹ To the same effect, Treitschke: "War will endure to the end of history. The laws of human thought and of human nature forbid any alternative, neither is one to be wished for."² Nationality becomes a curse; it separates nations from one another. Neither love nor idealism governs their relations: fear and jealousy develop. Nations acquire faith in armaments and navies, aeroplanes and Krupp guns. In countries where the political civilisation prevails nations "live in an atmosphere of fear, greed,

¹ _The Origin and Destiny of Imperial Britain._
² _Politics, i._ p. 65.
and panic, due to the preying of one nation upon other for material wealth. Its civilisation is carnivorous and cannibalistic, feeding upon the blood of weaker nations. Its one idea is to thwart all greatness outside its own boundaries. Never before were there such terrible jealousies, such betrayals of trust; all this is called patriotism, whose creed is politics."¹ Millions of human beings have been the victims of this false idol. The sacrifice of body and the torture of heart, the wastage of spirit and the wreckage of soul occasioned by the worship of this idol are appalling. Highly civilised Europe does not feel the odium of its policy, for it is accustomed to traditions of conquest and exploitation. It is the air it breathes, and therefore it does not stupefy. But outsiders feel the poison. Unless the gospel of imperialism which cuts athwart the fundamentals of democracy and humanity is laid to rest for all time, there is no hope for the world. If the spirit of nationalism is not ended, we shall soon have an end of nations. Any tinkering with this clear goal will dash to pieces the hope of humanity and cause a

¹ Nationalism.
repetition of all this madness. The truth about nationalism, viz.: rule with the consent of the governed, should be extended to the non-European countries. At the present day the principle of nationality recognises the barriers of race and colour; but until these adventitious barriers are broken down, there is no chance of permanent peace. Democracy asserts that, not only man must not be exploited by man, but also that nation must not be allowed to exploit nation. What Europe has come to believe to be necessary for the individual's highest self-development, should also be affirmed of nations; for to Rabindranath, personality is found in peoples as well as in individuals. "The peoples are living beings having their distinct personalities."¹ They have their own soul and genius which should be allowed to express itself and develop freely and fully. We should recognise personality wherever it is, in weaker nations or stronger ones. Failure to recognise this led to the War. The States are in a diseased or disorganised condition, and wars are the external symptoms of this disease. Plato argues rightly that wars break

out when the States become internally diseased. The more they are distracted within, the more they come into conflict without. The present disease of the European States is their subjection to the mechanical idea, and they show their sickness of soul by oppressing subject races and small nationalities, creating resentments and encouraging oppressions. They show it by their ambition and vanity, self-glory and love of land. An ideal state will be against war. It will have for its goal, not the nation, but the people of the Eastern world. In his lectures on "Nationalism" Rabindranath draws a distinction between "nation" and "people," and considers that nation is the modern Western type, and people the ancient Eastern ideal. A nation, as it is now interpreted in the West, has become a terrible machine, killing all others, using all science for its end, and ultimately making a whole people lose their higher ideals, and serve only in the interests of the State. Rabindranath defines a nation as "an organised gregariousness of gluttony." It is a machine dead and soulless, making the human units who form parts of it lose their life and soul, and become lifeless units of a dead machine.
But a people is a living soul. It is spiritual and alive. The peoples of the East do not organise themselves for power but for perfection. They do not hate and kill, suspect and envy, but live and adore, love and worship. The individuals of a nation do things like a machine, while those of a people have the elasticity of life and flexibility of soul. Eastern nations are still peoples, though they are slowly losing that character, captured by the glamour of the West. "Japan too was a people. But the West in the voice of her thundering cannon had said at the door of Japan, Let there be a nation, and there was a nation. And now that it has come into existence, why do you not feel in your heart of hearts a pure feeling of gladness and say that it is good? The same vices which seem so natural and innocuous in its own life make it surprised and angry at their unpleasantness when seen in other nations. Therefore when you see the Japanese nation, created in your own image, launched in its career of national boastfulness, you shake your head and say it is not good."1 "We realise in our sober moments that it is not good to

develop the national spirit, and yet we have no respect for the no-nations of the world."  
Europe never cared for Japan when she was a people. But now she is ever anxious to please her and treat her with all consideration. "Japan had all her wealth of humanity, her harmony of heroism and beauty, her depth of self-control and richness of self-expression; yet the Western nations felt no respect for her till she proved that the bloodhounds of Satan are not only bred in the kennels of Europe, but can also be domesticated in Japan, and fed with man's miseries."  
If Europe can reach the Eastern ideal of a people she will have a future more glorious than her past.

IV

Rabindranath is not without hope for the future of Europe. He knows that from time to time have risen in Europe "noble minds who have ever stood up for the rights of man, irrespective of colour and creed, who have braved calumny and insult from their own

2 Nationalism, p. 83.
THE PHILOSOPHY OF

people in fighting for humanity's cause and raising their voices against the mad orgies of militarism. These are there to prove that the fountain-head of the water of everlasting life has not run dry in Europe, and from thence she will have her rebirth time after time."¹ Optimist that he is, Rabindranath believes that war is not only destructive but also creative, and hopes that the present war convulsions will usher in a new era, setting free the human spirit which has been striving for voice and utterance all these years. This bath of blood will wipe off all dross and impurity; and this martyrdom will be the path which will lead Europe back to the heaven of love. Men passing through this hell will learn to love heaven better. Suffering by making egoisms vanish and purifying desires will fuse the different individuals into one soul. The little idol self will be broken. The breath of heaven will blow and will shatter it to bits. Small egoisms will be caught up in the splendour of sacrifice; man will have his rebirth. An abiding faith in spirit will be the net result of this War. Faith born in a great crisis is a

¹ Nationalism, p. 66.
fresh discovery. In the thunder of guns and clash of armies, in the shrieks of hatred and the groans of death, in the cries of woe and the wailings of despair, the poet hears the clear, though terrible voice of God, chastising the followers of a material civilisation and pointing out to them that when logically followed out, that civilisation would make it hard to live the life of a human being on this planet. It is hoped that those who have seen the face of death, when they return, will disinfect the nations of all poison of materialism.

Shall the value of the martyrs' blood and mothers' tears be utterly lost in the dust of the earth, not buying Heaven with their price?

And when Man bursts his mortal bounds, is not the Boundless revealed that moment?¹

The chance for Europe after the War lies in her adoption of the ideals of the East, namely spiritual love, beauty, and freedom, which are not diminished by sharing.

I sat alone in a corner of my house, thinking it too narrow for any guest, but now when its door is flung open by an unbidden joy I find there is room for thee and for all the world.²

¹ *Fruit-Gathering*, LXXXIV. ² *Ibid.* LXXVI.
India, which may be taken as a typical representative of the East, never went out on an adventure of commerce and conquest. It was her proud privilege to be the fountain source of the ideals of beauty, truth, and love, and wholesome living. The West if it seeks salvation should take to these Eastern ideals of spirit.

Yes, the rays of thy light and joy are lying latent in the East to liberate the soul of the world.¹

The change of heart necessary for the reconstruction of the world on a spiritual basis is possible in the present crisis, when all are disgusted with the cruelties of war. It is possible that human nature may now purge itself of all its cunning and cupidity, sloth and selfishness. The tribal Gods of practice already slain in philosophy and theology will be slain in life and politics. The queer spectacle of the Church running after the State and justifying everything the State proposes to do, will become a thing of the past. The one God of religion and philosophy, instead of being a theme of academic discussion, will become the living faith of mankind. Chris-

tianity is the enemy of selfish nationalism and imperialism, as all true religion is. Its greatest contribution to the growth of freedom is its insistence on the incalculable value of human personality. When the conscience of the world, hypnotised by its own past, was revelling in its slavery and forgot the sacred mystery of human nature, Christianity appeared on the scene, emphatically declaring the worth of the individual. Christianity believed in democracy, not merely that men should be equal but nations. Democracy insists on the rights of all nations to equal freedom, as every nation has a right to be itself. So Christianity sternly rebuked the policy of expansion. “Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's land. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's sea, nor his forts, nor his ports, nor his shops, nor his ships, nor anything that is his.” The world is wide enough for all nations to live peaceably together, if only they give up their ideas of racial pride and animosity. The Universe is to be viewed as a single family where the different nations are the members, each contributing its quota to the welfare of the whole. All peoples will then have
a place in the sun. In Rabindranath's image:

"As the mission of the rose lies in the unfoldment of the petals which implies distinctness, so the rose of humanity is perfect only when the diverse races and the nations have evolved their perfected distinct characteristics but all attached to the stem of humanity by the bond of love." Nations should preserve their identity, for each nation has a right to its expression as a part of the whole. He does not think that this preservation of the national soul of each unit would work against the brotherhood of man. A dead level of mechanical monotony and dull uniformity which would reduce all nations and races to one type is undesirable, and should be replaced by a spiritual whole of varied aspects and beauty. Each type of culture must bring its own contribution to the world. A vague cosmopolitanism is of no good. "We shall realise that only through the development of racial individuality can we truly attain to universality, and only in the light of the spirit of universality can we perfect individualty."¹ Rabindranath advocates the ideal of unity and harmony, and not uniformity

¹ My Interpretation of Indian History.
and identity, for the latter aim, if achieved, would rob life of all charm and incident and enthrone a dull monotony of ideas and aims. Besides, the ideal of melting all races into one mould is against the nature of things and cannot be achieved. Rabindranath puts forward a plea for mankind by advocating the ideal of a family of nations to which every member will bring his unique gift. This ideal international unity and national independence will break down the barriers of nations and make for sweet harmony. Then will civilisations be inspired by the ideas of the wholeness of the world and its oneness. Then shall we know that there is no such thing as the over-lordship of the universe. There is no pre-eminence of any one nation in everything. If one nation is the first politically, another will be so religiously, a third in art, and so on. All are equally great and equally necessary for the music of life and the harmony of the universe. The beauty of this variegated world requires the free and independent existence of all nations. All nations are sacred to themselves and to each other, because they are sacred to the whole. Each contributes to the wealth of the
universe and derives from it. There is no need for one nation to fight the others out of existence. Only this gift of freedom and independence to all the nations of the world can put a stop to the long-standing feuds of races and nations. The lost faith in the brotherhood of nations would be recovered. Instead of being the poet's dream, it would become a living force. Then will the world be transformed into an Empire of the free, or an International Commonwealth based on disinterested and self-sacrificing nationalism. As morality, in individual relations, means the subordination of the individual inclinations to the law of duty, so international morality means the subordination of the selfish advantages of nations to the claims of humanity and the world at large. Selfishness is sin whether in individuals or in nations. It is immoral to think that moral principles have no place in politics. They are for outside use as much as for home consumption. The State represents the general will of the community. Truth and honour are as sacred to it as to individuals. The State is not an end in itself. It is not higher than the moral law. When this
Build God's throne daily upon the ample bareness of your poverty.
And know what is huge is not great and pride is not everlasting.  

VI

Rabindranath is a nationalist, but not of the wrong type. While he loves his country, he does not hate others. His patriotism is quite compatible with universal love. While national independence is a phase of social evolution to be necessarily passed through, it is ultimately one to be transcended in the conception of a world-whole. As each nation embodies some peculiar elements of value necessary for the full expression of Man, the love of a nation as embodying a part of the essence is not incompatible with the love of mankind as a whole. When Rabindranath wants India to build a great future it is not on the national basis. He wants India to attain freedom that she might make her contribution to the world's welfare, that she might be in a position to fulfil her destiny and carry her message through the world. When Rabindranath loves India, it is the love of a soul,

1 The Sunset of the Century.
of a spiritual principle and not that of land or commerce. He does not want India to struggle for the sake of her national resources, for preserving the integrity of her forests, saving her mines from destruction and keeping the physical wealth of the great country for the use of her posterity. To him this is a low ideal. No doubt it is a great waste from the Indian point of view that India's material resources are exploited by other countries. But this—a few millions more or less—is not a great thing. When the professional politician complains that foreign rule is bad because wealth emigrates, taxation increases, industries diminish, and hundreds of thousands of people perish in famines, it does not appeal to him as forcibly as considerations of soul and culture. The soul of the Indian nation, its ideal, its thought, its conscience, is at stake, the soul with all its aspirations towards the just and the true, with all that constitutes the human being. His point is that national culture dwindles, soul is subdued, and everything that makes a nation great, faith, purpose, and character, is inevitably melting away. It is the yoke of the mind, the disease of the soul
that he points his finger at. We are steadily losing the ancient culture of India, "the culture that enjoins man to look for his true wealth and power in his inner soul, the culture that gives self-possession in the face of loss and danger, self-sacrifice without counting the cost or hoping for gain, defiance of death, acceptance of countless social obligations that we owe to men as social beings."¹ This, according to him, is a measure of our loss and the extent of our ruin. Spiritual powers and resources of India are being wasted; the diviner human powers of feeling and imagination which reach to the inmost depth of being are neither touched nor developed. In the process of secularisation of life, immense potential resources of spiritual wealth are being lost. The way to grow is by keeping the spiritual achievements of the race in the past before the eyes of the present, by preserving the priceless treasures of mind and soul and by incorporating the great spiritual inheritance in the lives of India's present and future citizens. We need to find ways to make available our choicest racial possessions and bring them to bear upon the

¹ Nationalism, p. 53.
lives of the many. It is the spiritual ideal of India that will lend freedom to the human spirit, and break the bonds of narrow and cramping environment. We must war against the rising tendency for the soul to be swallowed up by mere things, that we might get back the mystic sense of communion with the divine.

Thou hast given us to live,
Let us uphold this honour with all our strength and will;
For Thy glory rests upon the glory that we are.
Therefore in Thy name we oppose the power that would plant its banner upon our soul.¹

India should have freedom to express her soul with its longing for holiness, its joy of adoration, its fierce spiritual questioning, and its flaming passion for righteousness. Political freedom is not an end in itself. It is a means to the higher freedom of soul. India should be allowed to solve her problems according to her national genius. It is not because India guards under her soil the bones of our fathers, but because she stands for an eternal principle—that life is a spiritual aspiration, matter the handiwork of spirit, and all universe one in spirit. This ought to inspire and govern all

¹ *India's Prayer.*
efforts. To the people of India India's immortal soul has stood between the human race and its sinful and savage instincts. But under the impulse of the West, Indians are exchanging their spiritual wealth for the latest scraps of knowledge. They are losing their high standards of courage and courtesy, fair play and holiness, dreamed and achieved in the past. Belief in life immortal, belief in holiness, austerity, and the resolute turning away from all shams and mere outward appearances to the souls of things, and belief in the vision which saw that body was naught and spirit all, are dying away. So Rabindranath asks us to win freedom in the name of the spirit and fight for the lost provinces of the soul. "The wakeful ageless God of India calls to-day on our soul—the soul that is measureless, the soul that is undefeated, the soul that is destined to immortality, and yet the soul which lies to-day in the dust, humbled by external authority, in the fetters of blind observances. With blow upon blow, pang upon pang, does He call upon it 'Atmanam Viddhi,' know thyself." ¹ All the world over the spirit of

¹ Modern Review, September 1917, p. 339.
freedom is awake. But where is India? Can she alone remain immune from its contagion? Can she alone remain unshaken by a passion which is so universal in its power over men? Rise, India! Break up the spell of old tradition, cut off the meshes of despotism and return to the ancient though despised ideals of spirit and liberty.

The day is come
But where is India?
Strike thy blow at her self-suspicion and despair.
Save her from the dread of her pursuing shadow, O Lord, ever awake.¹

Rabindranath does not want India to worship efficiency and machinery and build her fabric on fear and discipline, but wishes her to practise the love that gives but does not grasp, and build on the stable foundations of freedom and goodwill. Regaining faith in her own soul, and the "soul whose revelation is the world," India shall guard herself against automatism, keep life free and creative, and proceed from creation to creation in an unending flow.

¹ "The Day is come," Modern Review, September 17, p. 231.
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