

Critiquing 21st Century Creative Violence: Tagore's Concord (*Milan*) and Harmony (*Samanjaysya*) Imagining "One World"

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Abstract

Modern science, acclaiming the success of the creative human brain as 'progressive changes' in the 21st century continues to prosper through prominent images of scientism, ingestion, cartelized capitalism, chemistry and rocket technology to name a few. Introspecting the 21st century from the given nexus, we are quite likely to conclude that it has remained a century when the human destructiveness has reached its creative pinnacle. 'Creative progression' disguised under the garb of SARS COVID-19 is currently ransacking mankind, resulting in mass genocide, destruction of cultures and worldviews. The creative human self now remains predisposed with the activation of low-grade mental illness, depression, anxiety and trauma. Tagore's 'creative self' with a magisterial rebuke had always protested the prevalent dominant theories of violence and counter-violence down the time line. His philosophical vision intertwined with the humane self of 'being' instead of 'becoming' counterpoises this 'creative enigma' of scientific and material human progression even to this day. Standing on the threshold of the 21st century we earnestly look forward to reminiscence Tagore's vision of Concord (*milan*) nurturing the "living bonds in a society" and brewing Harmony (*samanjaysya*) as the "wholeness and wholesomeness of human ideals" to provide a remedy for re-thinking the possibilities of "One World" (*my italics*) defined in terms of 'becoming' instead of 'humane -being'.

Keywords: creative violence, mechanization, concord, harmony, *one world*

Introduction

Our living society, which should have dance in its steps, music in its voice, beauty in its limbs, which should have its metaphor in stars and flowers, maintaining its harmony with God's creation, becomes under the tyranny of prolific greed, like an over-laden market-cart jolting and creaking on the road that leads from things to the Nothing, tearing ugly ruts across the green life till it breaks down the burden of its vulgarity, on the wayside, reaching nowhere.

The Golden Age of Science set out to solidify an objective reality now obscures its form, molding it into infinite possibilities. Prominent images of scientific progression, chemical warfare and rocket technology fills the creative cosmos of modern scientific zeal. The ultimate symbols of the twenty-first century achievements are not the space probes or computers, but essentially the gas chambers and the Hiroshima disaster. The slaughter in the two World Wars, the various holocausts- starting with the Armenian and the Jewish ones and ending with the Cambodian and Rwandan, the Stalinist terror, the ruthless terrorist attacks and their reckless mission of the *Jihad*, the carpet bombings and the fire bombings in the various wars all constitute a creative impressive performance. This awesome destructiveness has killed off not only individuals, but communities, cultural ideologies and world views. It has affected us, our young generation and perhaps even our imagination.

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Violence today has found its meandering way of lodging itself in the less accessible parts of our consciousness, influencing us without being any wiser. The disastrous effects of violence have started to infect the cultures of societies eager to mimic the style of the so-called 'elite' class wealthy, all-powerful and having their 'normal' pathologies going with successes echoing their high levels of creative violence. The increasing violence rate in both the rural and urban Indian cities have remained spectacular in the recent years, reflecting not merely the deep feelings of inferiority, masculinity striving and parity seeking, but also a certain nihilism and vague, almost free-floating genocidal rage. As an effect, 'creative violence' has deemed out to be the natural consequence for the destruction of communities, cultures and worldviews giving rise to psychological trauma, mental illness, death and depression.

Science has become an instrument of humanitarian complexes; where it is now used to design instruments to damage the entire nature. The blessings now have become the curse, the responsible factor for natural destruction. A subject which is designed to explain natural phenomena with the light of logic, now has become the subject which can deny natural facts and events in a wondering manner. The style of human race is to ignore the actual facts where they must be guilty and blaming others to hide their own guilt. Human race remains the responsible factor for all the environmental pollution and destructions. The 21st century global world is facing the deadly monster named CoVid-19. More than hundred years, since the outbreak of the Influenza pandemic of 1918, the world now seems to face this pandemic to a larger extent. The outbreak of SARS-CoV-2 infection spreading to every continent is affecting worldwide population, forcing mankind with solitary confinement, compelling to live with this deadly pathogen for times unaccounted for.

Body

The widening and the unabated scale of brutal violence albeit with our face- to -face confrontation with it in the age of *homo psychologicus* have redefined our concept of 'creative imagination'. One of the essential by-products of the massive destruction of the human beings and cultures in this century has been the ruthless slaughter of social norms, cultural values, artistic and disciplinary conventions identified with certain cultural groups. Our passionate affair with the dispassionate, professional technicized mass genocide has shaped our concepts of creativity and creative freedom. The colossal destructiveness inflicted on our fellow human beings has made us weary of the new unbridled creativity. The scale of destruction in this century has created an environment of inner exile, debarring new conventions and traditions to crystallize in the world of creativity. The ruthless death and disaster have thwarted human progress with a sense of insecurity. We have no time to distinguish between the norms and conventions, the loss of which we should celebrate and the norms and conventions that must be resurrected in new guises for us to transcend the intellectual fretters of the century. The remarkable paradoxes of creative freedom rejuvenate the expansion of individual creativity in our times bonding hand in hand with the continuing bondage of communities, cultures, and peoples within, the same society.

Rabindranath Tagore's creative self showcased a magisterial protest against the dominant theories of violence and counterviolence. He believed that the 'new violence' framed in the garb of moral, rational and optimistic theories of progress was in reality an indictment committed to the latent theory of devastation and deprivation. He asserted that resistance to violence should have to take self consciously a position against scientific-secular rationalism. According to Tagore, technological nihilism grapples everything including 'humankind' which stands revealed as the raw materials for achieving the goal of greater power and security. The arrogant human anthropocentrism has not only diminished mankind, but has also wreaked havoc on nature. Time

and again history remained a proof to the atrocious human interference with nature. Nature has always reverted back the rewards in more destructive and irreversible ways, the deadly Covid 19 being the most precarious one. The dominance of modern scientism alienating mankind from nature inspires the former to the latter as "an object of technology" or as a standing reserve to be explored and harnessed to reap the benefits of human progress.

Modern civilization has worked out the collision between Primitivism and Scientism. Whereas primitive man animated the earth, wind and water, scientism narrates the lengthy process of de-animation. In the post-industrial society, destructiveness is symbolized by lethal weaponry only to locate at the heart of nature the mystical concept of a 'living and conscious being' from which "all blessings flow and to which gravity recalls this dispensation in a benevolent cycle of rewards." The sentient Earth alone continues containing the unfathomable mysteries of the eternal life processes. The revalorizing of primordial earth and the natural process remains an anathema to the technological bureaucrats. Filled with the contempt for casual flux and imperfections of nature refusing submission to the natural processes in the name of absolute and man-imposed control, modern civilization work towards establishing a surrogate order, an entirely artificial system that deems nature obsolete, meandering its unnatural permanence in the stasis of death. The widespread cultural, social and ecological crises are symptoms of modern humanity bathed in an autocratic obsession for control. The present concept of 'multiculturalism' and the slogan 'The World is a Village' is now cleverly employed as handy political weapon to hoodwink the minorities or to superstitiously invite the other countries to an unholy war against terror-attack. This remains not an invitation to be the member of the village, but to conscript one as a part of the unholy war. The instrumental-rational project makes man only a meagre part of the complex modern concept of civilization and mechanical progress. Charles Taylor defining the term 'buffered and porous' asserts that modern humanity 'bounded and buffered' is enshrined with an anthropocentric identity which denies vision and sensitivity to the limitless expanse beyond this 'ordered human life'. Thus 'where knowledge is free' and 'where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way in the deary desert sand of dead habit' the 'buffered self is demolished to allow the porous self to enter and flower. Emmanuel Levinas, the most celebrated philosopher of the contemporary while discussing the issue of the 'buffered and the porous self' states that the foundation of the true self calls forth the obligation to respond to the ethics of goodness, charity mercy and beauty.

The man whose acquaintance with the world does not lead deeper than science will never

understand what it is that the man with the spiritual union finds in these natural phenomena.

Tagore was a believer in an interactive, dialogic world, given to a deep sense of sympathy, generosity and mutuality, in which nations should not be parochial, xenophobic and centripetal, nor guided by mere selfishness and self-aggrandizement. On the contrary the multilayered world should be poised towards a morally and politically enlightened community of nations through the espousal of a centrifugal outlook, multilateral imagination, principal of universality and reciprocal recognitions. In context to the aforesaid, Tagore stands a precursor to many of the modern critics and philosophers of post/trans-globalism such as Frantz Fanon, Edward Said and Noam Chomsky. Much like the intellectual fore-runners Tagore believed, to quote the words of Chomsky that "another world is possible'[by] seeking to create constructive alternatives of thought, actions and institutions," and by bringing "a measure of peace and justice and hope to the world". Tagore , however did not simply decry 'modern technology' as 'the devil's work', rather envisioned the role of science and technology. While rejecting its supremacy, he claims that "science has also presented

a form of the truth (though notably, not the *whole* truth) and could serve its own useful purpose.” Indeed, one may even see in technology “a splendid achievement, no doubt and a wonderful manifestation of man’s masterfulness, which knows no obstacle and has for its object the harmony of adjustments:

For us the highest truth of this world is not knowing it and making use of it, but realizing our
own selves in it through expansion of sympathy, not alienating us from it, and dominating it,
but comprehending and uniting it with ourselves in perfect union.

Critics remain often apologetic when discussing Tagore, as though it is for some inherent weakness he is neglected now. Tagore’s lack of a proper understanding of the world, or his overly mystical tone suggests his absolute blindness to the realities of life. But such apologies are unnecessary and Tagore is never in ‘need of defense’ as Yeats has rightfully remarked. Tagore epitomized the totality of life, for the physical as well as the spiritual; for the real and the ideal; and for those values of truth, compassion and justice that the world will reckon its own by choosing to break the current hypnotic allure of money and materialism and rising from the dungeon of deceptive illusions. It is our firm belief, that in the given crisis where nations are remaining fiercely locked in a devil-dance of destruction, perpetuating cycles of retribution and retaliation, and hollow hysteria between fanatics of nations and fanatics of religion, Tagore’s theology based on peace, harmony and the spiritual unity of humankind has become more relevant than ever. Tagore’s healing message and the restoration of his blissful imagination, imbibed with his teachings of simplicity, self-restraint and *ahimsa* or non-cooperation is earnestly required by the world at this moment of widespread agitation and unrest. Remembering Tagore’s advice in the 1915 lecture, “Nationalism in the West”, delivered as the West was engrossed in the savage bloodbath of World War I, helps to instill some sense as our planet grapples afresh with global ramifications of recent disastrous events that opened the doors to a new pandemonium:

Be more good, more just, more true in your relation to man, control your greed, make your life
wholesome in its simplicity and let your consciousness of the divine in humanity be more perfect
in its expression.

According to the modern psychoanalysts in order to compensate for the feelings of anger and hatred we nurture within us and the moral anxieties these feelings trigger, ‘imagination’ enacts the essential role of restitution. The damages arising from the Golden Age of Science have stifled and fettered our imagination to a large extent. Bureaucratized, dispassionate, calculated violence has produced quasi-bureaucratic and calculated analytic ventures. Creativity has remained a form of atonement, borne in our innate destructiveness and in our fear of guilt about the impacts of the destructiveness. It often joins hand with the continuing bondage of communities, cultures and peoples within the same society, with diminishing capacity of the individual’s creative freedom. However, if one seriously interprets the traditional idea of creativity, without rejecting the idea of the individual agency in creativity altogether, one need not automatically arrive at a standard art-as-a-mirror-to-society or knowledge-as-disguised-self-interest-model. One can rightly propose that the greatest literary visionaries and cultural artifacts as much as great scientific discoveries seem to speak on behalf of their times by re-interpreting past times and the world-views to meet

the requirements of the present. They negotiate the present by reaffirming it and also probably more importantly by critiquing it. At this pinch of discourse, the individual creator becomes a vehicle of culture and of the anguish of an era. Imagination enacts through images it borrows from life memories and sensory experiences, reshaping and transforming the raw materials into new visions to provide meaning to experiences and understanding to knowledge. The creative instinct of the human mind reflects a conspicuous symmetry. Whereas our cognitive senses remain challenged by our exposure to large-scale violence, our emotional and our intuitive selves remain benumbed as a consequence. Tagore often meditated that "concord" (*milan*) and harmony (*samanjasya*) presents a way of life that can harmoniously (and non-coercively) hold together diverse cultures, traditions, and identities in terms of a cohesive vision of human community. Tagore opposed modern civilization for its lack of completeness; it's fragmented and fragmenting issues; its undue bias towards the physical, the intellectual and the practical; its predilection for the material rather than the moral progress of humankind; its celebration of bloodless policies and canned constructed ideas, in lieu of a fearless striving for truth, creativity and imagination. Modern civilization, Tagore believes, is built on the law of necessity rather than the law of truth; the law of might instead of the law of right; and of self-interest and success, rather than perfection in humanity. In "Civilization and Progress" he explains:

Civilization cannot merely be a growing totality of happenings that by chance have assumed a

particular shape and tendency which we consider to be excellent. It must be the expression of

some guiding moral force which we have evolved in our society for the object of attaining

perfection.....A civilization becomes healthy and strong as long it contains in its centre some

creative ideal that binds its members in a rhythm of relationship. It is a relationship which is

beautiful and not merely utilitarian. When the creative ideal which is *dharma* gives place to

some overmastering passion, then this civilization bursts into conflagration.

In other words, for its absence of a moral centre, this civilization is, to Tagore a civilization of *adharma* where "man prospers, gains what appears desirable, conquers enemies, but perishes at the root." Such civilization shoots out only to cater to the baser instincts of the individual and has nothing to do with the innate spiritual power that ennobles us and brings us together as one family living in the reality and unity of one ineffable God. Thus, progress envisioned in terms of modern civilization is nothing but a milestone on the human spirit, ushering de-humanization, de-spiritualization, deformity and doom inflicting "a fatal wound to the social system, through which the whole body [of Humanity] would eventually bleed to death."

This discussion leads us to recognize the need for redefining progress and civilization. In today's world of destructive development, the concept of a 'whole human being' is rarely considered. People today are labelled as 'human resources', 'the poor', 'the marginalized' and 'the disadvantaged.' All such deficit and compartmentalized descriptors focus on people's acquisition of economic and material wealth or their innate potential for such wealth production as the prime

factor in human life. Abstractions like ‘survival for the fittest’, ‘might is right’ and ‘basic needs’ or strategies for ‘economic growth’, ‘income generation’ and ‘increased production’ germinate from such a protocol mindset, furthering the misconception that materialistic wealth and prosperity begets human happiness. Tagore himself openly criticized the mass who all forget that “a greater intensive effort to production” only supplements a “greater exhaustion of materials and humanity.” It aspires solely and selfishly to a life of material fulfillment and bodily comfort. Instead of goodness, it champions greed; instead of self-sacrifice, self-aggrandizement; instead of giving, possessing; instead of spiritual human unity, collective worldliness; instead of moral freedom, material bondage; instead of magnanimity, vindictiveness; instead of *being, becoming*. Today, the world previewed under the mechanical incentives of profit and loss give rise to this present culture of mere production and consumption, buying and selling, pomp and pageantry, with no peace, understanding and amity in sight for the human race. Modern civilization remains totally indignant of the moral and the spiritual side of life, of beauty and truth, of love and sympathy, of “the music of soul” and the great rhythm of ‘symphony’ that lies “at the heart of nature.” Emphasizing the rapid multiplying materials in this parasitic model of production, life today fails to comply with the Tagorean ideology which bespeaks that “only fullness of life makes one happy, not [the] fullness of purse.”

Tagore’s vision of a ‘complete human being’ emphasize the need for recognizing the values of the human soul, the human urge to be free to create and the individual’s connections to the whole humanity and the web of life. He remained an avid advocate of inter-civilizational alliance; his vision promoting synthesis, symbiosis and creation and thoroughly condemning the modern civilization immersed in commercialism and “moral cannibalism”. Tagore was essentially a religious thinker who always upheld the primacy of the human soul. Like the German philosopher Hegel believing in an underlying spiritual reality unifying man and nature, spirit and matter, time and eternity. ‘Nature’ symbolizes not just an ensemble of natural reality, but a profound source for man and nature unison. Nature, to him remained the incarnation of the Divine, that abounds not only in the abundance of joy in life but proclaimed the permeating of the human and the Divine. The Upanishadic faith in the living God, a “deep abiding creative force”, as Tagore describes it- is the same creative force that permeates the whole world of the living objects including the human beings. It runs through all of Tagore’s creative literary works and forms the cornerstone of his vision of universal human unity. In “International Relations”, a lecture delivered in Japan, in 1923, Tagore further reaffirms that:

The Kingdom of Heaven is here on this earth. It is there, where we realize our best relations with

Our fellow-beings, where there is no mutual suspicion and misunderstanding- there is the

Kingdom of Heaven, in the spirit of comradeship and love.

Here the spirit is to acknowledge the whole world as one’s family as conceived in the Vedic discourse ‘*vasudhaiva kutumbakam*- I am the citizen of the world.’

Conclusion

Modern human progress is thwarted by the evil manipulation of nature, humans, non-humans and the Others. The Covid -19 pandemic upsurge heralding death, disaster and existential crisis remains the steering force today to drive mankind to his ultimate doom. Tagore’s wish recalling us to “the power of union with nature” in the modern world interrelates to the searching for an ecologically wise and harmonious being, the identification of the finite part within the

infinite whole to find the enlargement and meaning of one's own being. It involves an egalitarian orientation among humans toward all identifiable entities or forms in the ecosphere. Rabindranath's endeavor to conceive and practice harmonious co-existence of man and nature represents a proactive example of the cognitive struggles involved in normative and universal ethical dimension. Realizing that ecological imbalance and self-acclaimed lordship of mankind "ruptures balance and harmony" (*bhār sāmanjasyer abhāv*), the worldwide inter-continental aids extended to 'each and the other' ratify the Tagorean '*imaginig one world*' where even in the modern age the "problems of a people are a part and a parcel of the whole mankind." (*swajātir samasyā samasta mānusher samasyār antargata*). In this view, the means to re-establish harmony in this unequal world lies in social practices and ideas conducting "freedom" (*mukti*) rather than enforcing "power" (*shakti*) and "coercive discipline" (*shasan*). Tagore argued that progressive trends of practice and thought should not be present in any one particular culture alone. Rather by travelling across different cultural "seas of knowledge (jnān)" we would be able to enkindle in ourselves "arguments (*yukti tarka o sandeher udbhav*)" about our own cultures and also learn from all the "voyagers in the path of progress" (*unnatipather yatri*) who emerge in different locations and times. Viewing Tagore centrally, it is worth clarifying Martha Nussbaum's endorsement of the principles of cosmopolitanism referring to the set of moral principles that frame an individual's primary allegiance to the 'community of the world.' Recalling the philosophical views of the Greek thinker Diogenes and the Stoic tradition, she envisions cosmopolitanism as a way of identifying oneself as *kosmou politês* or a "world citizen". According to this conception, the identity of a human being is constructed through affiliations with two basic communities—the local community of birth and experience and the collective community of human aspirations. While the "community of birth and experience" is important to locate an individual within specific socio-cultural and historical contexts, the "community of human aspiration" foregrounds the individual's moral obligation towards collective human existence. Therefore, a fully realized interaction between these two communities leads to the vision of cosmopolitanism. However, Nussbaum here strongly emphasizes that this vision of cosmopolitanism does not in any way refer to an abolition of local identities and cultures. On the contrary, she states that it is only through the local that the universal or the cosmopolitan is feasible. Likewise, the Tagorean ideal (*gabhiraratma adarsha*) bespeaks of being "interconnected" (*yukta*) with and "realizing" (*upalabdhi*) oneself within a collectivity and the world at large. Interconnectedness, in Tagore's view, is an altogether a more 'positive' thing and requires harmony in one's relation with others and indeed the world as a whole. He saw this ideal accumulating "continuously and successfully (*dhārābāhikbhav*)" across the divides of time and space and progressing towards the harmony of people and society."

Thus, if we are truly interested in altering the course of destructive development interpreted in terms of human creativity, Tagore can be premised as 'the new universal' to counteract the hegemonic violence of inclusiveness and individualism of creative violence. His call to the humanity to keep alight the "own lamp of mind as it is the part of the illumination of the world" evocatively remains not a preconceived actuality or a universal standard, but a receding goal, a category constantly in the process of making. His vision of *one world* (my italics) remains not an established code of universal principles, rather an open -ended proposition subject to creative transmission between cultures at a world-historical junction when 'real geographical boundaries' transform into 'imaginary lines of union' celebrating 'freedom of mind, not slavery of taste.... independence of thought and action.'

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