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Theme of Terrorism in Rabindranath Tagore's *Four Chapters*

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Letter of Approval

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Abstract

The objective of this study on Tagore's *Four Chapters* is to analyze the writer's elite political standpoint even though he remains opposed to the British rule in India. His elitism comes out as a discursive strategy as he dubs the armed rebellion against the British rule in India as terrorism. Terrorism, in *Four Chapters,* unfolds itself in the wirer's use of underground revolutionary terrorist movement as a setting of the novel to foreground his politics of elitism which is underpinned by its criticism. *Four Chapters* denounces the pre-independence revolutionary terrorist movement, thereby participating in the Britishers' criticism of the armed movement for India's independence as terrorism.

Contents

I. Introduction

This study is an inquiry into Rabindranath Tagore's *Four Chapters* (1934). The purpose of this study is to elucidate how Tagore denounces violent movement for terrorism when revolutionary terrorism was a symbol of courage dedication, sacrifice and heroism. The objective of the study on Tagore's *Four Chapters* is to analyse the writer's political standpoint of elitist even though he remains opposed to the British rule in India. His politics of elitism as a discursive strategy has been used to expose and undercut the British rule that remains largely effaced in India. At the hands of some elitist politicians of Indian writers of pre-independent era, terrorism also turns out to be a weapon of resistance and subversion. Terrorism, in the *Four Chapters,* unfolds itself in the writer's use of underground revolutionary movement as a setting of the novel to foreground this politics of elitist underpinning by the British.

Tagore exposes the revolutionary terrorist movement of Bengal where many young educated people joined in the parties for their independent nation. In the wake of an outcry over the novel in nationalistic circles, Tagore withdrew the preface from later editions and claimed that the novel was essentially a love story. It does seem, however that whatever Tagore may have thought about later, at the time of writing the novel, he was more concerned with the characters than the events. It is through an exploration of the inner world of the characters and especially the loss of self in Atin, the young revolutionary who is caught in the violence through which an ancient civilization responds to the oppressive system built up by an external power, Tagore sought to grapple with the problem of violence. Thus, the characters are simply carriers of certain meanings without being built into complex, many faceted persons.

Four Chapters is a companion study to *Home and the World* though written after an interval of 18 years when revolutionary movement was still continuing in

Bengal as a frightful visitation. The novel punctuates the heavy toll it was taking and the canker, which was soon to eat into its vitals. It has been disclosed in course of official enquires how young girls, highly intelligent and handsome, responded to the call of patriotism and joined revolutionary parties, and were used by leaders to rope in impressionable youths who were unemployed even after completion of university education or were still pursuing their academic career, what was most lamentable was jealousy amongst lovers and consequent betrayal of rivals. Apart from this, there were attempts to collect funds through robbery, which ended in ruthless cruelty and murder. The novel mentions how even women and children were not spared. Indranath, a qualified science graduate of European university, has failed to secure a satisfactory post in the Education Department and had a grudge against the British Government. This leads him to revolutionary activities.

Unlike his earlier novels, *Four Chapters* specially introduces and deals with the problem of violence in politics. In *Four Chapters*, the emphasis on the revolutionary terrorism of the youths is considered far more important than the other political concerns. Without dealing with the superlative account of star-crossed young lovers trapped in the whirlwind of revolution, Tagore simply advocates about the pre-independence revolutionary terrorist movement in Bengal. Introducing Ela and Atin as an adventurous and patriotic couple, he brings ahead the terrorist image of the protagonist. By undertaking a revolutionary terrorist adventure, Ela and Atin prove their courage, dedication, sacrifice and heroism for the sake of the nation. The forth coming chapters will attempt to justify this universal issue of revolutionary terrorism.

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), one of the greatest writers of the twentieth century and indisputably the most towering figure in modern Bengali literature,

achieved world-renowned recognition when he was awarded the Noble Prize for Literatures in 1913 for *Gitanjali*. Two years later he was awarded the Knighthood, but he surrendered it in 1919 as a protest against the Massacre of Amritsar, where the British troops killed some four hundred Indian demonstrators. Tagore's influence over Gandhi and the founders of modern India was enormous, but his reputation in the west as a mystic has perhaps mislead his western readers to ignore his role as reformer and critic of colonialism. This global reputation as a poet, playwright, novelist, thinker, educationist, prophet and an early advocate of Independence for India has been facilitated by the excellent English translation of his work done either by himself or by others. In spite of his mastery of English and his love of Bengali, he did not spurn English or deprecate its widespread use in India.

Rabindranath Tagore, the son of Maharish Devendranath Tagore and Sarada Devi was born in Kolkata in 1861. His father Devendranath Tagore was a religious reformer and scholar. His grandfather Prince Dwarkanath Tagore, was a leading businessman and a man of letters who adapted the Brahmo faith propagated by his friend, the reformer Raja Rammohan Roy. The family was well off and followed normal Bengali traditions but was educated in both English and Indian traditions.

Rabindranath, as the youngest of fourteen culturally sensitive children, grew up in a vibrant artistic atmosphere, where literary magazines were published and music performance and theaters were presented within the cultural group nucleated by the Tagores of Jorasanko in Kolkata. Rabindranath's oldest brother Dwijendranath Tagore, was a philosopher and a poet. Another brother, Satyendranath Tagore, was the first Indian member of *Indian Civil Service*. Yet another brother, Jyotirndranath Tagore, was a talented music composer and playwright. Among his sisters Swarn Kumari Devi earned fame as a novelist in her own right. Jyotinndrant's wife,

Kadambari, about the same age as Rabindranath was a dear friend and a powerful influence on the budding poet. Her suicide in 1884 left him distraught for years and left a profound mark on Tagore's literary life.

In 1878 Rabindranath went to England where he studied in a public school in Brighton, and then at the university college, London. He did not complete his degree however, and left England after just over a year. This exposure to the English culture, however, was later infused into the Bengali musical tradition to create new forms of music.

On 9 December 1883, Rabindranath married Mrinalini Devi, and the couple had two sons and three daughters, several of whom died at young age. By this time he had already come into the literary limelight with several works including a long poem set in the Maithili style pioneered by Vidyapati, which he initially claimed was that of a lost poet called Bhanu Simha. His reputation was further consolidated by work such as *Sandhya Sangit* (1882), which includes the famous poem *Nirjharer Svapabhangn (The Cry of the Waterfall)*.

In 1890, Tagore went to mange the family estates at Shelaidaha, an esturine region in today's Bangladesh, where he lived on a houseboat on the tributary system of the river Padma. Works from this period such as *Sanar Tari* (1994), *Chitra* (1896), and *Katha O Kahini* (1900), further established him as a poet. In addition to that, he was also establishing his reputation as an essayist, playwright, novelist and his short stories, reflecting the village life that he saw around him, earned him considerable praise.

In 1901, Tagore left Shilaidaha and moved to Santiniketan, where he set up an experimental school. He continued writing, with works such as *Naivedya* (1901) and

Kheya (1906) being published in this period unfortunately his wife died in this period, and also a favorite daughter and also a son, leaving him distraught.

By now, he had a large following among Bengali readers. Some translations were also being produced, but were often of mediocre quality. In response to English admirers such as painter William Rothenstein, Tagore started translating some of his poems of free verse. In 1912, he went to England, carrying a sheaf of his translations. At readings there, these translations moved a number of Englishmen, notably the Anglo-Irish poet W.B. Yeats and the Englishman C.F. Andrews. Yeats later wrote the preface to English version of *Gitanjali* and Andrews joined him for long periods in India.

All along, Rabindranath had an artistic eye to his own handwriting, and he embellished the cross outs and word layouts in his manuscripts with simple artistic leitmotifs. At the age of sixty, he started painting, and successful art exhibitions were held in Europe.

He died in Jorasanko house on 7 August 1941, a day that is still mourned in public functions across the Banglo-speaking world.

Although poetry dominates his literary reputation, he also wrote novels, essays, short stories, travelogue and drama. He was also a accomplished musician, and his most enduring legacy to Banglo may be his 200 songs, now known as *Rabindra Sangeet* which are part of the Bengali culture in both West Bengal, India, and in Bangladesh. His poetry and songs, apart from their deep spirituality and devotion, often express a celebration of nature and life. For him, life's multifarious variety is ever a source of pleasure without outward reason. The subject of love is a recurring motif throughout his literature, and he often wrote about patriotism. His

songs have been chosen as national anthems of two nations: "jana gana mana" in India and "aamaar sonar baanglaa" in Bangladesh.

Tagore's novel deals with socio-political, patriotic and nationalistic issues and his vision of the universal brotherhood of man. He was the first Indian to bring an element of psychological realism in his novels. Tagore wrote a number of novels in support of the Indian Independence movement. Two of Tagore's early novels *Bauthakuranir Hat* (*Young Queen's Market*) and *Rajarshi* (*The Saintly King*) follow the tradition of his predecessors, and narrate the incidents associated with two old Hindu royal families. But he soon turns over a new leaf. In *Chokaher Bali* (*Eyesore*), he takes to introspection and studies the perennial attraction of woman for man but avoids striking incidents and episodes. In *Noukadubi* (1906) (*The Wreck*), *Gora* (1910), *Ghara Baire* (1916), *Shesher Kabita* (*Last poem*), *Dui Bone (two sisters)*, *Glimps of Bengal (1921)* the same question is examined in different settings and from different points of view.

In this way, the variety and power of Tagore's novels are unquestioned. He opposes the orthodoxy of Hinduism by his humanistic concern for character and his vivid analysis of contemporary socio-political context. Despite being such a prolific writer who wrote so many novels, Tagore's *Four Chapters* is outstanding from other works in terms of its style, characters, theme, form and meaning. In this novel, Tagore presents his great gesture of protest, but it is also a benediction, born of compassion and love. The indictment of political fanaticism is as pointed and incisive as the glorification of human love is almost apocalyptic the young revolutionary couple, Atin and Ela who ultimately join hand to hand for the battle against the British rule in India.

Elite Politics

The term 'elite' refers to that group or class of persons or a member of such a group or class who enjoy superior intellectual, social or economic status. In other words, group or class of persons who enjoys superior intellectual or social or economic status is called an elite group. Elite is taken form the Latin word- eligere, "to elect". In sociology as in general usage, the elite (the "elect" from French) is a relatively small dominant group within a larger society, which enjoys a privileged status that is upheld by individuals of lower social status within the structure of a group.

An Elite is the result of economic and political forces within a social structure. Upon formation, societies have always had the tendency to stratify due to a combination of politics and ability. The position of an elite at the top of the social strata almost invariably puts it in a position of leadership and often subjects the holders of elite status to pressure to maintain their position as a part of the elite. However, in spite of the pressures borne by its members, the existence of the elite as a social stratum is usually unchanged.

Similarly, the term 'elitism' or the title 'elitist' can be used resentfully by a person who is not a member of an elite, or is a member but resents their position or uses it in a condescending or cynical manner in order to ridicule or criticize practices, which discriminate on the basis of ability or attributes. Often accusing someone of being an 'elitist' is a pejorative remark meant to imply that the person in question does not in fact belong to an elite, but is merely a hanger-on. Elitism can be seen as encouraging the exclusion of large numbers of people from positions of privilege or power. Thus, many anti-elitists seek the social equality of Egalitarianism, Populism, Socialism or Communism. They may also support affirmative action, social security, luxury tax, and increasingly high progressive tax for the wealthiest members and

society. All of these measures seek to reduce the gap of power between the elitist and non-elitist.

In elite theory as developed by Marxist political scientists like Michael Parenti, all sufficiently large social groups will have some kind of elite group within them that actively participates in the groups political dynamics. Elitism usually draws envy and resentment from the lower classes and the counter-elite. There are cases where elites arguably use this resentment of elite to maintain their position.

Likewise, elitism is a belief or attitude that elite--a selected group of persons whose personal abilities, specialized training or other attributes place them at the top of any field--are the people whose views on a matter are to be taken most seriously, or who are alone fit to govern. Elites may also treat other as not being good enough to be their companion. Thus, elitism sees an elite as occupying a social position of authority or privilege in a group, set apart from the majority of people who do not match up with their abilities or attributes. Thus, this selected elite is treated with favoritism. Members of inherited elite are aristocratic and naturally tend towards preserving the status quo.

The development of nationalist consciousness, in accordance with elitist historiography, has been an achievement either of colonialist administrators, policy and culture or of elite Indian personalities or ideas. The elite groups mobilize their politics through an adaptation to parliamentary illustrations. Even the strategy of political mobilization displays the link between British colonialism and bourgeois nationalism. The bourgeois nationalist has adopted the legacies of colonialism. The elite historiography equally claims that Indian nationalism was primarily an elitist venture in which the indigenous elite led the people form subjugation to freedom.

The introduction of what the whole thesis is going to be about Tagore's political standpoint as an elitist to denounce the revolutionary terrorism in *Four Chapters*, historical setting of the novel and the term *terrorism* have been discussed so far. Now, in next paragraph a brief outline of the chapters of the present study will be presented.

The present work has been divided in to five chapters. The first chapter presents an introductory survey of the present study. A synopsis of entire work is figured out in this chapter. The second chapter will conclude the historical background of colonial India. The third chapter of this present study will be concerned on discussing the theoretical modality that is going to be applied in the research. It will explain the concepts of violence, non-violence and terrorism in brief and special emphasis will be on Tagore's elite political standpoint, even though he remains opposed to the British rule in India. Based on theoretical modality outlined in the third chapter, the fourth chapter will be the analyses of the text in considerable length. Some extracts from the text will be quoted as evidences to prove the hypothesis of this study. Under this chapter, the study will focus on the standpoint of elite politics of Tagore to denounce the revolutionary terrorism while he remains opposed to the British rule in India. The fifth chapter will be the conclusion of this research. In other words, based on the textual analysis of the fourth chapter, it will conclude the explanation and arguments and will prove the theme of terrorism in *Four Chapters*.

The present research captures the burning issue of terrorism especially in present era, which is perceived as in the contemporary Indian pre-independence movement. The transnational characteristic of terrorism in one level corresponds to the Indian nationalist movement. It is hoped that the study will be of interest to those

readers who are involved in the burning issue of terrorism as well as scholars involved in contemporary literature and theories.

II. Revolutionary Terrorism against the British Rule in India: A Historical Background to Colonial India

India faced the revolutionary terrorist movement against the British rule in colonial period. The history of the pre-independence of India, which had been taken on the proportions of war, is the history of underground revolutionary movement in (Bengal) colonial India. During and after the revolutionary terrorist movement in different provinces of India arouse the sense of hostility between Indian people and colonial British government. The Indian national movement was undoubtedly one of the biggest mass movements ever seen. It was a movement that galvanized millions of people of all classes and ideologies into political action and brought to its knees a mighty colonial empire. Consequently, along with the British, French, Chinese, Cuban and Vietnamese revolutions, it is of great relevance to those wishing to alter the existing political and social structure.

It has been presented as the tragic but inevitable political movement for nationalism. Moreover, it is a synonym for revolutionary terrorism that was underpinned by the British imperialism. Revolutionary terrorism and revolutionary nationalism politics aiming at national independent were both foreshadowed in Maharastra but taken definite shape in Bengal. The revolutionary terrorism included the assassination of British officials, collection of funds for revolutionary purpose in which Britishers always remained essentially at the receiving end as primary victim. The deeply rooted notion regarding the colonial government was that, they should hate imperialism but not the British people. Indian people have evolved a policy of opposition to imperialism on a worldwide scale and solidarity with anti-colonial movements in other parts of the world.

The British Raj treated the Indian scholars as 'elitist' or 'elite groups' who used it to serve either their own narrow interests or the interests of their prescriptive groups. Thus, the elite groups and their needs and interests provided the origin as well as the driving force of the idea, ideology and movement of nationalism. These groups were sometimes formed around religious or caste identities and sometimes through political connections built around patronage. But, in each case, these groups had a narrow, selfish interest in opposing British rule or each other. Nationalism, then, is seen primarily as a mere ideology that these elite groups used to legitimize their narrow ambitions and to mobilize public support. The national movement was merely an instrument used by the elite groups to mobilize the masses and to satisfy their own interests. Concerning the issue of elite politics, Bipin Chanda in his book *India's Struggle for Independence* mentions that "[. . .] the frustrated educated middle classes [used] nationalism to fight [against] the benevolent Raj" (18).

In other words, the national movement represented the struggle of one Indian elite group against another for British favors. The Indian national movement represents itself as a cloak for the struggle for power between various sections of the Indian elite, and between them and the foreign elite, thus, effectively denying its existence and legitimacy as a movement of the Indian people for the overthrow of imperialism and for the establishment of an independent nation state.

In 1920, Mahatma Gandhi emerged as the hero of the" Non-Cooperation Movement". The image of Mahatma Gandhi and overall success of his methods led many to believe that India achieved freedom without resort to violence. In fact, violent resistance was preached and practiced from the beginning of the national movement till its end and had a significant effect on its course and outcome." [T]he British recognized that the Indian people were no longer willing to be ruled by them

and the Indian part of the colonial apparatus could no longer be trusted to enforce a rule which the people did not want" (Chandra 26). The British recognized that they had lost the battle of hegemony or war of position and decided to retreat rather than make a futile attempt to rule such a vast country by threat of a sword that was already breaking in their hands and their power was slipping through their fingers. The nationalist strategy alternated between phases of massive mass struggle that broke existing laws and phases of intense political agitation within the legal framework. So, Bipin Chandra further criticizes the Indian nationalist as: "The deeply rooted colonial hegemony or the belief system through which the British secured the acquiescence of the Indian people in their rule: that British rule was benevolent or for the good of the Indians and that it was invincible or incapable of being overthrown" (24).

Indian terrorists were among the first in the country to have a clear idea of the need of political independence. Many people were associated with the advanced or extremist using of the Indian National congress, which put forward the ideal of independence in 1906. Organized terrorism started the same year. Peter Heehs, in his collection of essays mentioned the significance of the revolutionary terrorism: "In Bengal, it started in between 1906 and 1910, when the call for independence was articulated and the pattern of revolutionary terrorism established" (2). Maharashtrian nationalists began to raise their voice for Swaraj in the deliberately vague sense of self-rule. Heehs, in this context, further writes in favour of Indian independence and nationalism:

> Bengali extremists openly declared that independence was India's
> primary need, without which national unity and economic and social
> progress could not be achieved. Sometimes they presented arguments
> from economics and history to justify their demand; but its real basis

was a got-level conviction that the British had no right to be ruling

India. Man joined the movement, wrote one revolutionary, 'simply out

of an innate hatred of British rule.' (3)

The nature of such a terrorist movement was the symbol of 'courage', 'dedication', 'sacrifice', and 'heroism'. Similarly, Bengali extremists openly declared that independence was India's primary need. The British had no right to prolong their rule in India. In this way, the youngsters of the Indian communities took part in revolutionary terrorist movement to emancipate their nation from the grab of imperial government. In the same manner Indian politician introduced and promoted "the Swadeshi and Boycott Movement from Bengal to the rest of the country"(Chandra 138). Indian state, on the other hand, "established itself as an intense political agitational work, within the legal framework" (25). By tracing of such horrible episodes of the revolutionary terrorism against the British government, in this context, Daly's report entitled "Note on the Growth of Revolutionary Movement in Bengal" states that, "the idea of national unity and national freedom, and to form visionary schemes for the liberation of India from the foreign yoke" (9). The revolutionary terrorism was glorified as 'heroism', 'Sacrifice' 'courage', and 'dedication' for their nationalism. Nolini Kant Gupta, one of the revolutionaries believed that "terrorist activity improved public morale in two ways: first, it brought a greater courage to the general public, even though it remained doubtful whether it helped relieve the oppression. Secondly it gave people some satisfaction". (qtd. in Heehs 6). The cause of independence as a political missionary moved about from district to start gymnasia, where young men would be brought to learn physical exercise and politics. Daly's Report further clarifies:

The young men and boys formed themselves into picketing parties to interfere with the sale of foreign articles, destroying the goods of persons who persisted in importing and selling foreign goods. Manchester *dhotis* were dragged from shops and burned. Bags of Liverpool salt on their way to the consignees were pulled out of boats and thrown in to the water. It became the fashion for boys to adopt and aggression and almost violent attitude to Europeans they passed in the public streets. (12)

In this regard, terrorism also influenced the political agenda. Bipin Chandra in his book *India's Struggle for Independence* clearly mentions the immergence of violent movement for terrorism to get independence from the other:

The revolutionary youth decided to copy the method of the Irish nationalists and Russian nihilists and populists. That is to say, they decided to organize the assassination of unpopular British officials. Such assassinations would strike terror in to the hearts of the rulers, arouse the patriotic instincts of the people, inspire them and remove the fear of authority from their minds. (143)

The numbers of young people were ready to sacrifice their lives because they believed that their quest for independence could be conquered by violent movement for terrorism. It also shows that the revolutionary terrorism was essentially an outcome of the suppression and dominance of British. "Inevitably, it appealed to the idealism of the youth; it aroused their latent sense of heroism. A steadily increasing number of young men turned to this form of political struggle" (Chandra 144).

It seems reasonable that when they (revolutionaries) either do not see or vehemently deny that the socio-political, cultural and economical development of India required the overthrow of colonialism.

Indian's nationalism occupies a" territorial but subordinate significance in all political developments; anti-British terrorism ends up looking like a heroic but futile display of pyrotechnics" (Heehs 1). The revolutionary terrorism was bolstered not only by the conventionalized patriotic emotional prejudice embedded within the Indian folklore. Such imperialist British rule had played the vital role to check the revolutionary terrorism by creating the "elite groups who used it to serve either their own narrow interests or the interests of their prescriptive groups" (Chandra 18). In the elitist politics too, Indian people were severely desecrated as the subordinate people. The more obvious violence is method out in the representation of the revolutionary terrorism in the nationalist historiography of the modern India. Bipin Chanda further argues as:

> Here again the extremist leadership let the young people down. While it praised their sense of self-sacrifice and courage, it failed to provide a positive outlet for their revolutionary energies and to educate them on the political difference between a revolutions based on the activity of the masses and a revolutionary feeling based on individual action, however heroic. It also failed to oppose the notion that to be a revolutionary meant to be a believer in violent action. (144)

The horror of the nationalist values and conventions remains largely effaced under the disguise of the revolutionary terrorist movement for freedom. Rather the nationalist discourse which valorizes the view from the center and the official archive in the

reconstruction of history accounts "the idea that violent methods alone would free India" (Chandra 247). Revolutionary terrorism again became attractive.

The violent movement of revolutionary terrorism is targeted towards the British officials. Daly's Report boldly mentioned in favour of armed rebellion: "A wild idea spread among not only the youths of the country, but ever most of the oldest men that they had only to combine and take up *lathis*, revolvers and bombs to drive the English out or India in a few years" (15). It shows the "violence perpetrated to the minority group of ruling class by the nationalist culture" (qtd in Enright, 5). However, it is generally defined as the violence as a weapon to be used or discarded a circumstances dictated. In other words, terrorism is essentially" a movement [. . .] [which] has boldly announced the objective–the overthrow of the existing Government by a policy of assassination, leading eventually to armed rebellion" (Tegart xxxii). The scope of terrorist movement as a "political enforcement [. . .] a martyr in the cause of Indian Independence" (Tegart xxxiv). In other word, the revolutionaries were ready to sacrifice their lives for the sake of nationalism.

Terrorizing the officials, English and Indian and the collapse of the whole machinery of oppression is not very far. And again, "[t]his campaign of separate assassinations is the best conceivable method of paralyzing of the bureaucracy and of arousing the people" (Tegart xxxiv). It means that the pose of revolutionary terrorists valorizes the glory of sacrifice, praised the heroism of revolutionary youth and condemned imperialism as well as police repression.

Besides the exploration of terrorism through the means of politico-historical setting, Tagore even employs the deep love affairs between two young couple as a common device of such in *Four Chapters*. However, unlike revolutionary terrorism, it involves characters who participated in the national movement for their independent

state. Armed rebellion locates itself not only in a violent situation but remarkable degree of heroism, sacrifice dedication and courage to overthrow the British government. In this context, Bipin Chandra presents his bold view in the favour of nationalism: "But despite their small numbers and eventual failure, they made a valuable contribution to the growth of nationalism in India" (145). The notion of revolutionary terrorism as an inevitable device to the Indian people to form a new free state is also highlighted in the novel.

The nutshell survey of revolutionary terrorism demonstrates the dynamic and complex nature of terrorism. This study draws its attention towards fictional novel-- the politico-historical discourse by Tagore who has written on the subject of revolutionary terrorism in the *Four Chapters*. The study shows that Tagore's representation of revolutionary terrorism is elitist.

III. Violence, Non-violence and Terrorism: Right or Wrong?

Violence

The unlawful exercise of physical force is violence. It causes a kind of fear, whose purpose is violating, damaging or abusing the victims. It is an extreme form of aggression in the use of force to cause physical harm, death or destruction (physical violence), the cause of sever mental torture-through humiliation, and deprivation. The violence, whether physical or psychological, was brutally perpetrated during the colonial India. However, the violence remains largely effaced in the history textbooks of India. It is at this asymmetrical context of violence, in Hutcheon's words, 'inclusion and exclusion' that this nexus of violence and violent suppression takes on the characters of political elitism in Indian history. The politics of elitism used by the nationalist writers in such an 'occulted context' functions as a critique of dominant ideologies that subvert the long rooted British imperialism through the mystification of the official representation of the revolutionary movement. It results from a number of reasons: Social, economical and political. *Encarta reference* 2000 defines violence as "physical attack", especially from other person, which involves violent or a physical assault. Violence, therefore, is beating on others and killing them. The main cause of violence is the aggression in human beings. The other causes are hatred and destructiveness. Hatred and destructiveness are the impulses, which obscure rational and objective thinking. As a result, it leads towards violent activities. John Dollar argues that aggression is always the frustration. Sigmund Freud and Thomas Hobbes suggest that violence is inherent in human nature.

The violent nature is also found in the animal kingdom but it is more frequent and intense in the human beings. Human beings are more reactive because of their rational power. Erich Fromm, in *Encarta Reference* says that violence is "the most

widespread type of aggressiveness" (4). Every animal exhibits this type of aggressiveness when its vital interests such as life, territory, food and the young are threatened. Human beings also react with aggression in defense of his vital interests. As they are more aware they become more violent.

Human beings are more concerned while choosing certain values, images, persons and institutions. They do not want to give up such values in the society. They also do not bear an attack on such values and systems. It does not matter whether rationally the values they defend make sense, what matters from a psychological standpoint, necessarily they are in the process of psyche equilibrium. Any threat to them has become threat to their vital interest.

However, it is not sure that man involves himself in violence because of his consciousness only. Sometimes, he is brainwashed and motivated by someone. Therefore, they indulge into war and violence. If his leaders try to make him believe that he is or will be threatened and if he lacks critical judgments, he will be reactionary to a real threat. It does not matter whether he is really threatened or not. The degree of violence and terrorism depends heavily on his group leaders and his persuasion and the rebel's lack of critical thinking.

In present context of the world's affairs, fundamental interest of man lies on the socio-political and economical equality and equity, which are taken as the prime concerns of human development. Hence, noone is absolutely right or wrong in conflict as they are fighting for their rights.

Non-violence

Mahatma Gandhi has formulated the term 'non- violence' which contrasts with the violence; and the moral response of non-violence is drawn from his life and work. Gandhi's notion of violence is the denial of the epistemological fact that people saw

truth in fragments when they genuinely disagreed. This however, implies the idea of 'relative truth'. But, it is also very likely that Gandhi was drawing precisely on Jaina ideas of the incomplete grasp of reality, when he formulated this thought.

Gandhi's imperative towards non-violence arouse from his conviction that humanity was indivisible. At the same time, he was equally clear that non-violence was required precisely because of difference between individuals and groups. Non-violence was simply the way of realizing unity with all living beings. The Gandhian notion of positive non-violence is detachable from the metaphysics that is evidently implied (rather than argued for) in his intensely practical conduct of non-violent action. Non-violence cannot be merely physical restraint, but also is directed towards forms of mental and emotional activity. Gandhi's use of non-violence certainly has this interpretative range. Speaking of non violence as 'ahimsa' (strictly, non-injury), he writes: "The principle of 'himsa' (violence) is (defined as follows :) hurt by every evil thought, by undue haste by lying, by hatred by wishing ill to anybody" (qtd. in Chakravarti's "Non Violence and the Other" 5). Non-violence, however, is more than just the absence of violence for the negation ("non") is not merely negative but has the implication that something replaces and fills the absence of violence. In this regard, Ram Prasad Chakravarthi in his journal of the theoretical humanities asserts: "This interpretation of *ahimsa* [non-violence] namely that it is not merely a negative state of harmlessness but a positive state of love of doing good even to the evil-doer [. . .] [L]ove, the active state of ahimsa, requires you to resist the wrong doer [. . .]" (5).

Gandhi's primary understanding of positive non-violence is of love, as we have just seen. The counter discursive path of non-violence is neither passive nor aggressive: nor of course, passive aggressive. It is dynamic, engaged and demanding. Crucially, it is sustained by the imperative of engagement with the other which creates

an alternative to violent encounter. Essentially, the creative paradox of positive non-violence manifested in search for affinity, is its resistance to violence. For Chakravarthi, violence is 'bad' or morally wrong while non-violence is 'good' or morally right. Chakravarthi coins the term 'affinity' to describe, 'the non-violent mode of engagement with otherness [. . .] the philosophy of the Indian religion of Jainism" (10). It comes out of a philosophical view that he termed 'multiplism'. It is motivated by a metaphysics that seeks to find the balance between granting the integrity of the other and attempting to negotiate beyond the otherness. The search for affinity is undertaken because of the moral value attached to non-violence. However, violence is required for the attainment of some more powerful and pervasive end, like equality or justice.

Gandhi's notion of universal truth is problematic in terms of his own theory of non-violence: "[M]ultiplism's preference for non-violent modes of proceeding through a world of experienced diversity. Both overcoming and excluding the other require violence while merely being contented with the give-ness of otherness is to forgo violence" (Chakravarti 10). Multiplism wishes to convert non-violence into a positive act of engagement with alterity, into a search for affinity. Non-violence is required to attain an ultimate coming to terms with reality because that reality itself is such as to become available only through epistemic non-violence. Ram Prasad Chakravarthi in his journal of the theatrical humanities "*Non-Violence and the Other"* states:

> To quote Gandhi, Violence hides Truth and if you try to find Truth by violence you will betray horrible ignorance in the search for truth and therefore non-violence without any exception whatsoever, he has come to realize, is the essence of life. In such a context, the soteriologic specificity of Jainsim must be [. . .] a metaphysics of multiplism that is

> drawn from Jainsim but which is also consistent with the Gandhian
>
> notion of non-violent engagement. (11)

This point further clarifies that multiplism is the metaphysics of and for non-violence. Othering is violence; othering refers to a sense of a transcendental reality in which the other is disprivileged for being non-ultimate.

The terrorist attack of 11 September 2001 was an enormous setback for the cause of non-violence. They provided a stimulus and ostensible justification for a spiral of violence in which non-violence alternatives become marginalized. Non-violence offers numerous ways to oppose and prevent terrorism, but such responses are totally at odds with the way government leaders conceive the world. There is no reason why the attacks should undermine non-violent approaches in the slightest. After all proponents of non-violence unanimously condemned the attacks, just as they have consistently promoted non-violent methods of struggle as an alternative to violence. The problem is that non-violent methods of challenging violence and oppression have little visibility or credibility within government or mainstream media, where the only credible response to terrorism is seen as military attack, surveillance and repression.

At the core of non-violent action is political Jiu-jitsu. If non-violent activists circulate a petition, join a rally, go on strike or hold a vigil and are countered by violence, such as injuring or killings observers are likely to give increased support for the activists. Violence used against non-violent protesters is widely seen as unjust and rebounds against those who use violence. Through political jiu-jitsu activists can use the violence of their opponents to build support and undermine their opponent's power.

Even a little violence on the side of the activists greatly weakens political jiu-jitsu. That is why, police often use infiltrators to provoke violence by protestors, thereby legitimizing police violence, even when there is a great inequality in the two sides' capacity for and use of violence. During "the intifada of 1987-1993, Palestinians who threw stone against Israeli guns and tanks reduced the perception of a qualitative difference between the two sides" (Martin 6). So what happens is that violence legitimates counter violence. The 11 September attacks have legitimated massive counter violence, most obviously in Afghanistan but also in the form of surveillance and repression of social activists everywhere. The US government leaders have rhetorically linked terrorism and dissent, helping to legitimate attacks on civil liberties, including ways of undermining and countering nonviolent protest. In such a context, Martin further argues, "The 11 September attacks reveal in stark form how counterproductive violence is for promoting justice and equality" (6). They have provided the ideal pre-text for massive expansion in apparatuses for 'state security' including spying, detention, disruption and torture. By the same token, the US government's military actions will provide greater support for terrorists' approaches. What results is a type of 'violence race' analogous to military races.

Terrorism

The beginning of terrorist violence closely followed the spread of early civilization. From ancient time to the present, rebel groups, and governments have used cruelty and force to eliminate enemies to spread fear and panic, and to achieve political, religious and other ideological goals. The term terrorism has many meanings for policy-makers or public. There is no agreed definition of terrorism. The subject of terrorism has connotations of danger about it. The term has actually become an insult. Defining a person or groups or nations as terrorist implies a moral judgment, which

has led to the greatest problem of definition. Many have used terrorism and claimed to be fighting in the name of freedom. The debate on the definition of terrorism has been whether the groups are themselves freedom fighters or terrorists. The weak argue that the strong always condemn them as terrorist and they also condemn the state they are fighting as terrorists in their suppression of the innocent.

The Columbia Encyclopedia defines terrorism as "the threat or use of violence, often against the civilian population, to achieve political ends" (2718). The US State Department's definition about terrorism is "premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by sub national group or clandestine agents usually intended to influence an audience" (213). Likewise, the British Government formulates the definition of terrorism as "the use of violence for political ends including any use of violence for the purpose of putting the public or any reaction of the public in fear" (177). Similarly, the *Oxford Dictionary* defines terrorism as "the use of violence for political aims or to force a government to act, especially because of the fear it causes among the people" (1233).

Wealth and Poole, in their *Dictionary of Criminology,* define terrorism as "a mode of violence involving the systematic use or threatened use of murder, injury and destruction to immediate or shock to target group wider than the immediate victims or to create a climate of terror" (1052). The original use of the term terrorist in English can be traced back to French Revolution. Edmund Bruke defined the term 'terrorist', in 1795, commenting on the Regime of terror of Maximilien Robes Pierre and the committee of Public Safety in France (qtd. in Gearson 14).

The history of terrorism has appeared in many guises. Terrorism involves activities such as assassinations, bombings, random killings, hijacking airplanes, kidnapping individuals, releasing harmful chemical and biological substances, or take

other violent or threatening actions. It is used for political, not military purposes and by groups too weak to mount open assaults. Terrorism reaches back to ancient Greece and has occurred throughout history. In the 20th century acts of terrorism have been associated with the Italian Red Birgade, the Irish Republican Army, the Weathermen Intifada, and Peru's Shining Path. It is a modern tool of the alienated and its psychological impact on the extensive coverage by the media. Governments find terrorism difficult to prevent international agreements to tighten borders or return terrorists for trial may offer some difference.

Terrorists typically have political, religious or other ideological goals-that is, goals having to do with beliefs and ideas. They hope to achieve that goal through violence and the creation of fear. Many terrorists represent revolutionary movements seeking a change in government or liberation from a governing power. Some of them hope to attract attention and support for particular political philosophies or religious beliefs. Others have unclear goals or simply oppose all forms of authority. Terrorism is commonly defined as the use of violence by non-state groups and so-called 'rouge state' against civilians for political purposes. This is a very selective, indeed in coherent, usage. Dictionaries define terrorism more generally, for example as, "an organized system of intimidation, especially for political ends" or "'the systematic use of terror especially as a means of "coercion "or "domination or coercion by intimidation". Terrorism is most usefully defined for empirical research purposes as "the deliberate targeting of more or less randomly selected victims whose deaths and injuries are expected to weaken the opponent's will to persist in political conflict" (Turk 273). Terrorist acts are political, rarely involving psychopathology or material deprivation.

Indeed, the evidence is mounting that terrorism is associated with relative affluence and social advantage rather than poverty, lack of education or other indicators of deprivation. Research by the authors and by others in the Middle East is consistent in finding no causally significant association between social advantage and support for terrorist acts or involvement in organized terrorism. The great majority of Palestinians were found to approve of violence against Israelis and clear majority of Israeli Jew support violence against Palestinian and other opposition groups. On both sides enthusiasm for terrorist acts is unrelated to poverty and probably greatest among the more educated. In this context, Krueger and Maleckova argue that "terrorism is better understood not as a direct or indirect response of poverty but as a response to feeling of dignity and frustration developed in repressive political environments" (qtd in Turk 274). Individuals may commit terrorist act, but terrorism is usually the work of organized networks or groups. Many groups operate within a single nation or region. Others have branches and operations in many countries. Because terrorists generally cannot match the strength of conventional military forces, they often rely on *guerrilla warfare*. Guerrilla warfare involves attacks by roving bands of fighters who torment the enemy with ambushes, bombings, sudden raids, and other hit-and-run tactics. The fighters blend in with ordinary citizens, strike suddenly, and try to avoid capture.

In addition to death and destruction caused by the attacks, terrorists seek to create panic and fear throughout the general population. They may try to cripple the economy by destroying bridges, dams, telephone networks, or other essential structures or services. Many terrorists hope that people who observe the attacks will lose their sense of security and their confidences in the existing government or political system.

People learn to accept terrorism as a political option when their experiences lead them to see truth in message that defending their way and kind cannot be accomplished by non-violent means. In this sense, Caleb Carr in his book, *The Lesson of Terror* traces "terrorism [which] create[s] an atmosphere of fear and instability that would weaken the loyalty of the average citizen to his or her government" (148). Turk, in his *Sociology of Terrorism* further clarifies that "terrorism is the product of a blending of demographic, economic and political determinants" (277). Religiously motivated terrorists see themselves as 'holy warriors in a cosmic war' between good and evil. Their enemies include not only those actively trying to counter them, such as security forces and rival sects, but also everyone trying to live normally without involvement in the struggle.

The history of terrorism has appeared in many guises. Today's society faces not a single form of terrorism but multiple forms of terrorism. Now the terrorism has become transnational in its characteristics. Terrorism is no means militants' only strategy. It has become individual working in very small groups due to the theoretical as well as technological impact of 21st century. Over the last two or three decades, individuals have consciously or unconsciously involved in global network of communication. The significant changes have taken place in advance means of transportation and communication, which has made cultural interaction possible, and the people are affected by the global flow of information. The worldwide change in theoretical as well as the technological advancement has brought change in perception and mood.

During the 1950s and 1960s, the world has seen much dissatisfaction. Because of these consequences, they have formed many organizations in order to boost political establishment. At the same time, various anti-establishment organizations

have been formed. And they have exploited these international agreements concerning the legitimacy of terrorism. In short, international terrorist groups have increased significantly in the present context. In this situation, noone can determine with confidence where, when, why or against whom their next target may be launched.

The terrorism has become worldwide. There is the absence of significant international restraint in their activities. It may be one cause that many terrorist groups facilitate their operational capability. Neither the UN nor an individual state is able to restraint this new nature of terrorist activities and attacks. Hence, terrorism is the problem not only of an individual or a state but rather it has become the worldwide problem.

The nature of terrorism has shifted in number of ways in present time. In the past, terrorism was taken only as a military strategy. It has changed according to geo-politico-religious and ethnological context. It has sometimes been a tool for revolutionaries and nationalists. So, it was an instrument of state power exercised by a revolutionary state. That is to say, terrorism in the past was organized, deliberate and systematic form, as have civil wars, revolutionary wars, wars of national liberation and so on. Terrorists were either nationalist or anarchist or extremists of the left and the right.

In this context, Arundhati Roy in her book, *An Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire* comments, "[G]overnment's policy to tightening their control over the protestors are being labeled 'terrorists' and being dealt with as such" (40). While concerning the issue of terrorism and counter terrorism, in response to September 11 attacks in New York and Washington, President George W. Bush called, "the enemies of the United States enemies of freedom" (52). Americans are asking why do they hate us? [. . .] they hate our freedoms, our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech,

and our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other" (52). The underlying logic of terrorist attacks, as well as 'retaliatory' was against governments that 'support terrorism', is the same: both punish citizens for the action of their governments.

Thus, there is no clear-cut definition of what the real terrorism is and who the real terrorist is. For example, Bush accused Bin Laden as a 'Satan' and the most 'Worst terrorist' leader as well as 'anti-civilized person' in the world, whereas Laden and his campaign claims that Bush and his alliances are the terrorists for their ethno-political, religiosity. The standard of labelling one as a terrorist is very vague and unclear. For this context, Arundhati Roy criticized the American government policy and blamed it in her notable book *An Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire* as: "if you are not a Bushie, you are a Taliban. If you don't love us, you hate us. If you are not with us you are with the terrorists" (18). Therefore, it is very difficult to claim who the terrorist is In response to George W. Bush's speech after September 11 attacks, Bin Laden asserts it as a "holy war" (Jihad) against the enemies and those who lose their lives in the suicide attack declared as a 'warrior' or 'martyr' in the name of their nationality, religion and ethno-cultural heritage.

Terrorism in the present situation is quite different. It is random, indiscriminate and asystematic. It is more individual or is in very small group. An individual may possess the technical competence to manufacture the weapons; s/he needs for terrorist purpose. When the terrorists work alone or are in very small groups, it becomes more difficult to detect who the enemy is. Rabindranath Tagore deals with the theme of terrorism in his last but controversial novel *Four Chapters* in favor of independence of India.

Revolutionary Terrorism Vs Non-Revolutionary Terrorism: Right or Wrong?

The use of 'revolutionary terrorism' and 'political violence' by Rabindranath Tagore in the novel is to combat against the British colonialism to achieve noble goal for Freedom State. Thus, the novelists involve in war of nationalism by writing political based war novel. But their representation of the moment of terror or grief in work of art and literature is not equal. It is through the strategic discourse of elite political writers such as Tagore observes the brutality and irrationality of British who suppressed and repressed the Indians. Hence, elite politics refers to the non-violent mode of resistance by the elite groups of politician. Tagore has used the elite politics to denounce the violent movement for revolutionary terrorism in his writings. Tagore intertwines violence with wider range of historical and socio-cultural context. This study, therefore, argues that politics of elitist happens because of such a 'revolutionary terrorism' as a political weapon to overthrow the British government from India. In such a context, this point further clarifies that politics of elitism is used by the Indian politicians especially by the dominant authority, which generates non-violence to liberate their country. Another radical trans-ideological function of 'revolutionary terrorism' is to use for the broad variety of nationalism not for the religious, ethnological and cultural sake. It is used as a powerful tool or even as a weapon to fight against a dominant authority by demystifying or subverting the repression.

'Non-violent' method of resistance is less effective to draw the attention of government in their demands. Therefore, 'violence' or 'terrorism' became the powerful weapon to attract the media coverage for their intended goals. In this regard, 'revolutionary terrorism' became the only one option to get their political aim and the terrorists tried to apply in the practical life. Indeed, revolutionary terrorism intensifies or reduces all socio-political ills. In so far as violence is concerned, elitism deflects it

by foregrounding it–a topic which the thesis addresses with reference to the British Raj in India.

  The 'revolutionary terrorism' has certain motives and ideas in any forms of literary discourse. Such political violence is set out to explore the socio-political and psychological aspects of terrorism. Tagore's elitism makes him denounce the revolutionary terrorism in *Four Chapters*.

IV. Theme of Terrorism in Tagore's *Four Chapters*

Tagore's Elite Politics, Violence and Non-violence in *Four Chapters*

The short but controversial novel *Four Chapters* by Rabindranath Tagore uses elite politics to denounce the violent movement for terrorism when revolutionary terrorism was a symbol of 'courage', 'dedication', 'sacrifice' and 'heroism' (preface). Tagore while denouncing terrorism has used elite politics as a political weapon to fight against British imperialism as a non-violent mode of resistance for their 'independence' and 'nationalism'. The use of elite politics in the context of violent movement for terrorism in the novel gives it a political edge wherein the elitist politics denounces the revolutionary terrorist movement. So, the politics of elitist has been made a "favored tool of minority groups of Indian nationalist as a means of critiquing the establishment by re-evaluating the British Imperialism during the India's struggle for independence in 1857-1947" (Bipin Chandra 18-19).

Tagore, in *Four Chapters,* while using the politics of elitist to denounce the terrorism, further clarifies from the following lines:

> Yes, the duty of pulling at the car of Juggernauts. Our supreme consuller decreed that our whole duty was to take hold of a thick rope and keep pulling with closed eyes. Thousands of boys caught hold of the ropes. Some were crushed under the wheels, others crippled for life [. . .] But the broken bones did not become whole, and the cripples were swept out of the way on to the dust heaps. Independent thinking was knocked on the head from the very start and the boys came strutting up, ready and proud to be moulded into puppets [. . .] Verily this dance of Sakti (Power)! [. . .] But, whenever the Master slackens his pull, thousands of the puppet-boys fall out of the dance. (46-47)

In the above quotation, Tagore precisely denounces the ideology of violent movement for terrorism when the revolutionary terrorism was in the verge of extinction for their 'nationalism' and 'freedom-state.' Tagore's political strategy of elitist politics associates with the non-violent mode of resistance to kick out the British government from India. In this ways, non-violence in the novel is likened to the level of 'elitist'. Such a British imperialist notion of locating the "educated Indian nationalist as an elite politician to support their government and reducing the anti-agitation movement in India" (Chandra 20-21). Thus, elite politician acted as the catalyst to the British government to rule in the India.

Tagore, foregrounds the ideology of non-violent mode of resistance in the novel by connecting the ideas of Gandhi as follows: "The more we go on, the more does our purpose cease to be purpose and becomes mere intoxication. These splendid boys are being sacrificed at the alter of some blind, monstrous idol. It's breaking my heart! "(7).

In this way, Tagore's elitist politics further reinforces the non-violent method of revolution to overthrow the British government. Unlike his political strategy of non-violent means of resistance, there may exist radical extremist movement to break down the British imperialism through the violent revolutionary movement. Tagore himself criticising Gandhi in the novel asserts the violence. The revolutionary terrorism lying hidden in the texture of the quote is that:

> I've no use either for ascetics who mortify their bodies with sackcloth and ashes or for self-immolators who reduce to ashes their natural passions. We want fire worshippers but if any of these kindle the fire with in them, they have to be got rid of [. . .] and that cannot be

achieved with those whose fire has gone out, or those who cannot

control their own flame. (13)

The explicit violence in the above quotation undercuts and criticizes the Gandhian

notion of 'non-violence' and intensifies the cruelty of 'revolutionary terrorist'

movement to achieve the 'independence nation'. The violence has been directed at the

secular individuals "the politics of bomb to attack the most targeted places and

persons" (Chandra 142). Violence, thus, has been used as a powerful tool for the

Indian nationalist freedom fighter to achieve the political aim. The reason of such a

sacrificial violence is in this way exposed: "To oppose overwhelming strength by

brute force can be brutalized in the end one's very soul" (76). In this regard Tagore

intensifies the sacrificial political violence turned towards regenerating the socio-

political order in the India. The 'overwhelming strength' denotes the British, whereas

'brute force' refers to the revolutionary freedom fighters of the Indian nationalists. The

enormous courage to sacrifice their own life for the call of 'patriotism' and

'nationalism' is valorized by Tagore as the underlying meaning of the extract. This

intention of excess sense of nationalism, patriotism, and independence is further

highlighted in the following lines: "[. . .] [T]he life of the country can be saved by

killing its soul, is the monstrously false doctrine that nationalists all over the world are

bellowing forth stridently" (77).

In the above quote, Tagore exposes the inherent sense of nationalism to

establish the independent state from the grip of colonial government. By evoking the

sense of patriotism and nationalism in the Indian youth, he is also intellectually

supporting the violence too. Thus the use of violence and non-violence in the novel by

Tagore gets its inevitably political edge since he exploits it to excavate the above

discussed intended goals such as "independence", "freedom" and "nationalism" through the stand points of elite politics.

Tagore in the novel very tactfully "introduces and deals with the problem of violence in politics" (Das and Nandy 182). The major stylistic poly in this novel is the "development of the characters rather than the event structures and it is through the inner struggle of the characters that Tagore's own critique of terrorist violence is built" (183). The preface to *Four Chapters* clearly states that the inspiration for the novel was the life and work of Brahmbandhav Upadhyay (1861-1907), a catholic theologian and vedantist scholar, editor, social worker and a nationalist revolutionary who had been one of the pioneers in the use of terror as a political weapon. Tagore, "according to the preface was attracted to Upadhyay who had been one of the first critics to recognized the great literary power of Tagore" (183).

In the wake of an outcry over the novel in nationalist circles, "Tagore withdrew the preface from later editions and claimed that the novel was essentially a love story" (183). It does seem, however, that whatever Tagore may have thought about it later, at the time of writing the novel, he was more concerned with the characters than the events. In this sense, Tagore's standpoint as an 'elitist' and artistic blending of politics with love is vividly sketched from the above described events. His use of politics is associated with 'violence', whereas love is associated with 'non-violence'. The references to Gandhi and his female characters Ela represent, the messengers of 'non-violence' while Indranath and his fellow rebel Atin represent the violence instigator in the novel.

Tagore's Denunciation of Revolutionary Terrorism in *Four Chapters*

Four Chapters is a writer's search for a language and form that will bear or carry across, as in 'translate', the burden of his own times. The realization of selfhood

in the vortex of violence and the aspirations of freedom for the people oppressed from within and without their country. Tagore was aware of the potentiality of volatile context of *Four Chapters,* his last and thirteenth novel was written when he was seventy- two. Many questions arise when the readers go through the novel.

Who is a real patriot? Is liberation to be achieved by rhetorical slogans, ascetic militarism, conformity and ruthless external discipline? How can one be true to one's self in the making of a nation?

Four Chapters suggests that, while critical of the cult of 'nationalism' and 'unthinking sacrifice', Tagore's demand of the 'youth of India' was quite sympathetic to 'nationalism' in so far as it was congruent with both 'internationalism' and the 'ethos of Indian civilization'. The entire setting of the novel in the Indian territory especially focuses the socio-political situation of Bengal. The opening sentence of the novel clarifies Tagore's choice of Indian soil as "the scene is a Calcutta tea-shop" (1). His technique of chosen setting as well as characters from the own native folklore is praiseworthy. The characters like 'Kania Gupta', 'Indranath', 'Uma', 'Atin', 'Ela', 'Batu', and so on are the typical Indian names and persons in the novel; it reflects the actual taste of Indian ethos. The phrase used by Tagore in the novel like 'Darjeeling Tea', 'Rai Bahadur', provokes the sense of mocking tone to the British colonialism. In such a way, he has denounced the revolutionary terrorism to some extent. Similarly Tagore has used the typical Indian dictions like 'Khadi', 'Sari', 'Muga', 'Sakti', 'Seora', 'Puja dalan', 'Tussar Sari', 'Karma' 'Maya' and so on refer the strong sense of 'nationalism', 'patriotism' and 'independence.' Through such Indian diction used by Tagore in the novel, protests against the British colonialism in the intellectual manner and denounces the so-called revolutionary terrorism from his political stand-point as an elite politician. Unlike such polite resistance, he has revealed the dual encounters

between East and West and politics and ethics in the novel though it is also set in the context of the nationalist movement. He has connected the oriental myth to challenge the western variety of domination. "The advice given by Sri Krishna to Arjuna, in the *Gita* to fight, did not mean that he was to be cruel, but simply to be undeterred by softer sentiments in carrying out his high purpose" (18).

Here, Tagore's political consciousness to battle against British imperialism from the field of literature to overcome its rooted hegemony even in literature is shattered by his technique of resistance. By using such non-violent way of opposing British Government in India is his favorite option to take part in the 'nationalist movement'. Tagore's denunciation of terrorism and terrorist is further clear from the following extract:

> Thousand of boys caught hold of the rope. Some were crushed under the wheels, others crippled for life [. . .] But the broken bones did not become whole, and the cripples were swept out of the way on to the dust heaps. Independent thinking was knocked on the head from the very start and the boys came strutting up, ready and proud to be moulded into puppets. (47)

This quotation clarifies how Tagore opposes the terrorist activities and makes clear his stand point as an elitist politician and always favored the non-violent mode of participation in the nationalist movement. Therefore, Tagore, in *Four Chapters,* uses the politics of elitist to reinforce the absurdity of the revolutionary terrorist movement. In the novel, the revolutionary terrorism is practiced enormously by the different actors like, Indranath a revolutionary leader, whereas Atin and Ela are the fellow rebels in his party. However, through such characters, Tagore exposes his psychic reaction and agitation upon the British Government. Such type of artistic

exposure through the characters also further denounces the terrorism while he has secured his position as an elite. Because of Tagore's attempt to disguise himself as a revolutionary, he has created the characters like Indranath and Atin. Indranath appears to be more extremist than other revolutionaries. He is convinced of his own political impartiality. He says, "to believe that it's the Elixir of life you are after" (25).

Indranath's mission is focused on creating revolution in the mind of young recruit. In this sense, he is very much nationalistic and inspires the young revolutionary to sacrifice the life for sake of their nation. The internal setting of the revolutionary group also influences the youth of India by showing, "the furniture was an old table and some benches and a map of India on the wall" (8). It also signifies the remarkable degree of 'national consciousness' 'patriotism' and 'independence' are the essential factors for the Indian people. Another striking feature of their underground movement's, "chief purpose of the teashop was the feeding for the organization" (20). It becomes the shelter and gathering spot where they plotted and targeted against the Britishers. But their teamwork falls apart as they have different attitude.

Atin's distrust of Indranath's political motives leads him to take matters into his own hands. Atin rushes to love affairs with his own female counterpart Ela, to present his strong sense of humanity and worldly life. Ela refuses to marry him because of her vow to remain a celibate in the service of nation. As she assures him that "she had already sworn to devote herself to her country" (36). But Atin seems much excited and sensitive and tries to persuade her that, "life is too short, and etiquette too long" (33). Atin's growing affection towards Ela and pledge for conjugal life with her rather than the revolutionary purpose is further vividly sketched from the following lines: "There lies the mirage of a bridal chamber on which our union was to be. I've come to invite you to it. Your work may be disturbed" (34).

In the above quotation, Atin's intense desire to marry with Ela and humble request for the marriage is clearly depicted. But in contrary that she replies, "I'll light the lamp" which implies that she makes aware Atin about and after the marriage life while they are both participating in such party. But Atin tries to suggest her to live in reality not for the mere ideology, i.e. fake ideology of revolution. In this regard he remarks, "Light can only show reality. I want to take you along the unlighted road to the yet-unrealized" (34). Atin's attempt to win Ela's heart is very difficult. The writer, therefore, by using the romance (love affairs) of two young revolutionaries in political agenda is the (discursive strategy) powerful weapon to denounce the revolutionary terrorism. In other words, the denunciation of terrorism through the love between the fellow rebels and take parts in the nationalist movement by Tagore to assert his political standpoint as an elitist.

Tagore's another striking aspect of denouncing terrorism is clear through the dialogic form of plot structure. The entire novel proceeds its event through the dialogue between different characters and handled the essence of his role to the nationalist movement. For instance, "You here Ela? Remarked Indranath. 'You forbade the boys to come to my house', replied Ela, 'so they asked me to a tea here" (4).

The pieces of above quoted dialogues are the glimpse of entire novel's format. It implies that the underlying meaning of Tagore's denunciation of terrorism lies in the form of dialogue. Through dialogue, there is the interaction between different issues like 'nationalism', 'patriotism' 'freedom' and 'independence'. It will be beneficial for reducing the gap between oppressors and oppressed i.e. British Government and Indian nationalist.

Tagore's choice of characters, events and setting are all equally dominant to develop the entire novel as powerful as revolutionary terrorism is. His artistic presentation of young lover's outcry for their conjugal life in the penultimate chapter again asserts his powerful devotion to non-violent mode of revolution. Ela's reaction towards Atin while the revolutionary leader Indranath also there "brings Atin back to me ! She cried" (80). But her desire to marry with him is shattered by Atin's decision at the last hour of the novel. In this regard, Ela reminds him that by saying "don't you remember, that was the day, Mr. Atindra become Ontu for me?" (94). Ela's dreams to get married with Atin changes into vain and she has only one option, that is, remours of her own previous decision to make love with him. By such thought provocating sense of love and tragedy, Tagore intensifies his uses of elite politics and denounces the revolutionary terrorism through love instead of violence and counter-violence.

Thus, the rhetorical strategy of presenting novel fully denounces terrorism, whereas the attempts to locate his own position as an elitist politician always favours in the side of non-violent mode of revolution.

Indranath's Representation as a Revolutionary Terrorist

The central question in *Four Chapters* concerns with the use of 'revolutionary terrorism' and its perception for establishing the independent state from the British imperialism. Especially it focuses the call of 'patriotism' and 'nationalism' the young Indian people join in the revolutionary terrorist movement. The central character of the novel, Indranath, represents as a revolutionary leader. Indranath, a qualified science graduate of European university had failed to secure a satisfactory post in the Education Department, and had a grudge against the British Government. This led him to revolutionary activities. In this regard, Tagore writes about him:

The bitter realization at length downed on Indranath that in his own country, it was hopeless for him to dream of rising to the height of his powers, although he felt sure that elsewhere he could have won recognition and honour. Here he stood condemned to turn the mill of routine teaching to the end of his working days, after which a meagre pension would carry him on somehow to the end of life itself. (3)

Indranath established a school where Ela, the female protagonist was appointed; as the principal. There was a restaurant, close by, run by one of his men and frequented by students which was a recruiting by Ela when after a successful university career, he was drawn in to the party: "In some fissure in the depths of this school of his, there lodged a seed of secret purpose, which spread its underground ramifications, across prison yards, far and wide through the country" (3).

The above quote clarifies that the intended goal of school is to recruit the young revolutionary to battle against the British rule in India. To make the terrorism even sharper the writer creates the young energetic, and educated people like Indranath, Ela and Atin in the text. Ela works under the revolutionary terrorist party of Indranath. Ela's role is to play the catalytic agent to the group, to attract the 'boys' by her beauty, and to inspire them to deeds of sacrifice. Under such or upbringing terrorist movement, the revolutionary terrorist leader - Indranath locates Ela's role in the following ways: "You women are the mother sex, you have said, and if you can save these helpless misguided boys by taking their punishment on yourselves, such sacrifice, even unto death, would be worth while" (5).

The revolutionary terrorist movement implicit in the above quotation undercuts the ideology of elite politics to denounce its implication in the name of 'patriotism' and 'nationalism'. Indranath gives positive response towards," those like

himself, who come from the country" (7). It is because of the British domination that Indranath in his revolutionary terrorist party inspired the young boys to take part in the struggle. The rebellious voices of the repressed Indian people represented by Indranath challenge the colonial government:

> Such revulsion of spirit is common on the eve of great battle. The *Mahabharata* tells us how the peerless warrior, Arjuna himself was thus afflicted at the outset of the Kurukshetra war [. . .] I nearly fainted with horror when as a medical student I had to dissect my first corpse. This kind of revulsion is itself revolting in the struggle of power, the cult of cruelty comes first, to be followed at last, it may be, by that of mercy (7).

The reference of oriental myth *Mahabharata* in the above quote further asserts the Indranath's standpoint as a revolutionary terrorist and its significance is highlighted in the novel. In other words, he is trying to persuade his fellow rebellions to be active in the party. The writer's politics of elitist here undercuts the depiction of Indranath's personality as a terrorist:

> To say that Indranath was handsome would be to leave much unsaid. From him radiated a tense, inflexible attraction. It was if there was a thunderbolt in the depths of his being of which the rumblings could not be heard, but only the cruel flashes sometimes seen [. . .] Harsh words were not difficult for him to speak, but he spoke them with a smile. Anger never raised his voice, but only changed the quality of his laugh.

Indranath stands in the novel as a 'revolutionary hero'. His revolutionary attitude to observe the British government is radical and full of agitation. For this, he comments British Government as follows: "Some believed that his intelligence was unusual

others that his power was supernatural; so that some had limitless veneration for him, others an unaccountable dread. Students all over the country looked on him as an uncrowned king" (10).

Therefore, the context of the revolutionary terrorist movement for independence in the novel highlights how the Indian people have been suppressed and repressed. They are highly influenced by the revolutionary terrorist ideology and dedicate themselves as, "they are not for society, but for their country alone" (15). The enormous overflow of 'patriotism' and 'nationalism' in the Indian youth's mind is further intensified the "immature revel in calling their country as a mother" (16). The events of the novel develop in the form of dialogue between Ela and Indranath in a cafe. Through the dialogue, it is established that Indranath takes pride in using his followers as an instruments for furthering the cause against the British. He is trying to inspire and instigate his fellow rebels connecting with the Mahabharata's events: "The advice given by Sri Krishna to Arjuna, in the *Gita*, to fight did not mean that he was to be cruel, but simply to be undeterred by softer sentiments in carrying out his purpose"(18).

Here, he repeatedly uses the "language of sacrifice" and compares himself to Krishna, the charioteer of Arjuna in the *Mahabharat* who advised Arjuna to kill his kinsmen in the service of *Ksatra Dharma*. Indranath's mission is focused in creating terrorism: "He must hide his boys under some kind of trashy work or other" (23). He criticizes his followers those who are light hearted and frightful as "one who fears fire cannot use fire" (24). It is the reason why Indranath always thinks about the armed rebellion to overthrow the British imperialism. Tagore's denunciation of terrorism and his politics of elitism undercuts Indranath's method of revolutionary terrorism to establish an independent state:

It's not possible for me to hold on to any blind belief, Kania. I have

long given up thinking in terms of victory and defeat. As a leader in a

grand interprise I'm here because it becomes me; either victory or

defect will be equally great. They tried to make me petty by closing the

doors on every side. I'm great, even if that entails disaster at every step.

(25-26)

The dialogic form of conversation between him and his fellow rebel Kania

takes place as:

"Are you so impersonal that you never feel anger?

Anger against whom?

Against the British" (28).

This conversation further clarifies the hatred and utmost agitation towards the British

government from the side of Indian revolutionary nationalist. The state of

contradiction in Indranath's position is illustrated by Tagore himself in the novel:

As I lift my pickaxe to hit a stone that blocks my way without getting

into a passion over it. It's not the question whether the British are good

or bad. Their rule is one of foreign exploitation, killing our very souls

within us. I only show human intelligence by trying to get rid of this

unnatural situation. (29)

The underground terrorist movement flourished in Bengal under the leadership

of Indranath, for that purpose "he must admit, he did not know before what force and

charm there is in the Bangali language. Secrets there were, to be sure, but they did not

touch the British Government" (58). The revolutionary terrorist movement led by

Indranath and his fellow rebel suspects about its succession to achieve the intended

goals. In this sense, Atin, one of the chief advisors states, "I don't know all about what

he is doing" (59). It shows how Indranath does his secret activities against British rule in India. Indranath's determination to establish the independent state and freedom to the innocent Indian people through the violent movement for terrorism is dominantly employed in the novel. Atin thinks: "It's his belief that when Indranath wishes to get rid of any one of his own traitors he gets him buried in the police refuse heap. That may be a betrayal, but not a crime" (59).

In the above quotation, the suspect of police brutality for the accusation of terrorist and their leader's responsibility is also highlighted. The British government tries to oppress such activities through the grass-root level but fails to achieve the satisfactory goal in the expected level. Therefore, the revolutionary terrorism in the novel turns to be political as it is directed at the subversion of the long-rooted British domination over their nation.

Failure of Revolutionary Terrorism in *Four Chapters*

Rabindranath Tagore's *Four Chapters* raises a cloud of protest. Not apparently but undoubtedly it deals with the extremist or underground revolutionary activities, which never appealed to Tagore. His denunciation of terrorism and political standpoint as an elitist politics he has mentioned that "our boys are going to ruin the country by their untimely attempts to rouse it" (4). He has opposed the revolutionary terrorist attack in the name of sacrifice and heroism to liberate their nation. As in *Home and the World*, but in darker colours, Tagore shows the dangers of the 'underground.' He calls it the path of nightmare. For this, he is trying to make the Indian revolutionary youth aware that "the risk of being themselves lay open to the fate of political suspects" (5). After that most critics, not to forget the young political detenus, many of whom were great admirers of Tagore were shocked. Tagore himself had to join the issues. The realizations didn't dispel the suspicion that he had not

played fair. For Tagore his notion of elite politics is one of the main reasons for the denunciation of revolutionary terrorism for their 'nationalism' and 'independence.' But the author's intention is revealed partly through the unconvincing leader Indranath, a failed scientist, trained aboard, he is by no means a patriot. For him, the underground is not so hard but an experiment. He is not seeking success, but only to his own greatness.

In *Four Chapters* the indictment of political fanaticism is pointed as the glorification of human love is almost apocalyptic the young revolutionaries who had combat against the British Raj in India. The story opens in Kania's teashop at Calcutta where Ela, aged 26, meets Indranath, the leader of revolutionary group. Ela's role is obviously recruited so that she may be able to attract young men like Atin to the revolutionary group. In this sense, Indranath remarks Ela "Your sex is the embodiment of power. You have proved this. Give strength, give men strength" (8).

The second chapter establishes through dialogue the growing attraction between Ela and Atin. "What is this madness come over you these days?" (34), tells us about the love affair between them. The frame is again spatial; Ela's bedroom being the place where the reader gets a glimpse of Ela's acknowledgement of her love for Atin, but also her refusal to marry him. She has vowed to remain a celibate. In this regard, Ela clarifies from the following line, "I had no choice, Ontu. I had already sworn to devote myself to my country not to keep anything for myself alone. My betrothal was to my country" (36-37).

Atin and Ela discuss about the hopelessness of their situation. The whirlwind of terrorism in the novel, therefore targets to hit hard at the young couple's heart and they cannot escape from such vicious circle:

> There is no end of this, Ontu! It tortures me day and night [. . .] Heart
>
> linked to heart, and yet the unbearable pangs of widowhood-may fate
>
> never inflict this suffering on any other women! I had been from my
>
> childhood spellbound within conventional barriers, but at the very first
>
> sight of you my heart said, let all barriers be broken. (37)

They are together, yet there is a barrier between them; they strain to come close, to break the bars of the cage, - but they find they are quite powerless:" oh why ever did Ela take the terrible 'vow'? Why did Atin loving her as he did choose the 'crooked way' that can now only lead to his death?" (31)

In the third chapter, Atin is surprised in his place of retreat (the *puja dalam* of a haunted house), first by Kanai, and presently by Ela, who has come in defiance of Indranath's orders. Atin and Ela realize the bitter truth that revolution is a corrupting and rotting process. The most high-minded boys begin losing their manhood once they are caught in the coils of the revolution:

> It was the inspiration of history working within him that had made
>
> Atin, like Dante, throw himself into the vortex of political revolt [. . .]
>
> From the mire of masked robberies and murder into which the
>
> movement [. . .] with his God-given destroyed, Atin could now see no
>
> prospect of fruition before him, but rather the certain vanquishment of
>
> his self. Defeat has its value, but not the defeat of soul that brings in its
>
> train ghastly doings undergrounds; unmeaning, unending [. . .] (61-62)

The power and the glory of the 'revolution' lure the youthful idealists, but what they find is only defeat and shame, a god who has failed them and who is perhaps really the devil. Atin tells Ela bluntly:

> The patriotism of those who have no faith in that which is above
> patriotism, is like the crocodile's back used as a ferry to cross the river.
> Meanness, unfaithfulness, mutual distrust, secret machination, plotting
> for leadership– sooner or later, these drags them into the mud at the
> bottom. That the life of the country can be saved by killings its soul, is
> the monstrously false doctrine that nationalists all over the world are
> bellowing forth stridently. My heart groans to give it effective
> contradiction. (76-77)

Now, a question arises: Can he turn back now? He is realist enough to know that the way of love and life and freedom is barred for ever to him: "[T]he arrow can miss the mark, but it cannot return to the quiver" (78), There is no way out for them, except to reap without wailing the fruits of their past *Karma*. A whistle blows, and he abruptly leaves Ela. Indranath now comes in and sternly rebukes her and orders her to go back to her own house.

The fourth or the final chapter again shifts to Ela's house where Atin and Ela are in her room. The birds are finally trapped at last, and all their fury of longing is in vain. Atin appositely quotes four lines from Ibsen's *Brand* and declines to play at self-deception:

> "Upwards
> Towards the Peaks,
> Towards the Stars,
> Towards the vast Silence" (87).

He is great enough at least to face the truth:

> I've slain my soul, the biggest sin of all. Not a single evil have I been
> able to uproot from our country-I've only up- rooted myself. For that

> sin I'm condemned not to take you even when you are giving yourself.
>
> Accept your hand? With this hand: All stains will be washed away by
>
> the waters of Lethe, on whose brink we now stand. (92-93)

Batu's sinister shadow crosses their path once again, and they know that they are a doomed pair. Like Atin, Ela too doesn't flinch: "Let me die awake in your arms. Let our last kiss be eternal [. . .] "(105). The thin sound of the whistle tells them that the sand has run out indeed.

The shorter work, *Four Chapters* by Rabindranath Tagore is touched with distinction and packed with prophetic riches of meaning. In his Prefatory Note, Tagore remarked later, "[T]he only theme of the book is the love of Ela and Atindra [. . .]. On the one hand, there is the inner feeling, on the other, the conflict with outward circumstances. It is the combination of these two factors that gives the complete picture its individuality" (97). This is obvious that *Four Chapters* is a love story with a political background. *Four Chapters* was Tagore's great gesture of protest, but it is also a benediction, born of compassion and love. Thus, the denunciation of revolutionary terrorism by Tagore is dominant in the plot structure of the novel.

V. Conclusion

The short but controversial political novel, that the researcher has analyzed, deals with the true patriotic nationalist but uses elitist politics as a tool to denounce the revolutionary terrorism in *Four Chapters*. The novel, as a fictional work, is a subtle representation of violence and revolutionary terrorism of pre-independence situation of India. Although the novel is set particularly in socio-political and historical background of India, but at the same time it represents a violent armed revolution for India's freedom, which the novel denounces as terrorism. Tagore's denunciation of revolutionary terrorism brings to the fore his elitist politics, which remains highly critical of violence, even if it is aimed at achieving a noble goal.

As stated earlier, the purpose of the present study is to focus on how the novel addresses terrorism as a curse for mankind. By favoring to denounce revolutionary terrorism, Tagore seems irresponsible as his politics of elitism unwittingly participates in the British rhetoric of terrorism used to write off the violent campaign for India's freedom. The denunciation of terrorism by Tagore and his political standpoint as an elitist even though he remains opposed to the British rule in India. His politics of elitism as a discursive strategy has been used to trace and undercut the British imperialism that remains largely effaced in India. The novel clearly posits the counter-violent concept of resistance to identifying the issues of 'nationalism', 'patriotism,' and 'independence' is to enhance their lost government. The novel successfully rejects the western invasion that assumes their hegemony to dictate other' socio-political and economically back-warded countries in the name of democracy and so called human rights agenda. Unlike the endings of historical novels, we never knows of Indranath and Atin's future. Tagore shows the revolutionary hero as the

symbolic representation of himself in the revolutionary movement for India's Freedom. His strong desire is to drive away the British ruler from the Indian territory.

It is a novel on the issue of terrorism in the sense that the novel can be read as a novel having his message of non-violence by relating it with Tagore's denunciation of terrorism and his belief on non-violence as the proper mode of resistance against colonialism. Tagore, in general, intended to overcome the British Raj and transcended its socio-political situation of India. Thus, the novel contains terrorism as its major theme. In other word, the novel reflects Tagore's view that use of revolutionary terrorism to overthrow the British Government from India is a futile attempt. For this, we have examined the novel as a political controversy that ruptures the human values and love thereby transcending its politico-historical location and as such it makes the novel is about the terrorism. His choices of setting, characters, events and even the underlying meaning of entire novel should be considered as a theme of terrorism in *Four Chapters*. So, the novel is about terrorism in broad context. It might be the terrorism of entire contemporary colonial countries like South Asian, Latin American and African countries have faced the same kind of subordination from the colonial government. The Indian war of Independence criticized by the Britishers' as terrorism has become just a weapon to deny the imperialist domination.

In this way, Terrorism in *Four Chapters* unfolds itself in the writer's use of violent revolutionary movement as a setting of the novel to foreground his politics of elitism underpinned by the British ruler. As an elite politician, Tagore does not directly support the armed rebellion for independence when revolutionary terrorism was a symbol of courage, dedication, sacrifice and heroism.

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