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Gandhi, Tagore and a new ethics of argumentation

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Abstract

[Discourse, dialogue and deliberation are important frames for thinking about and creating an ideal intersubjective condition and dignified society at present. Democracy is now being redefined as deliberative democracy and in this agenda of democratic reconstruction, arguing with participants in dialogue both at the intersubjective level and at a wider societal level is a valued activity. But what is the ethics of this process of argumentation? The present article argues that for the sucess of argumentation, mere argumentation is not enough; it must be accompanied by a relationship of love and care. The article presents the contours of such a new ethics of argumentation by carrying out a detailed discussion of the relationship between Gandhi and Tagore and the way they argued with each other. Their argument and counter-argument was not for the sake of winning any egotistic victory but for exploring truth. They argued with each other with love and care and their argumentation combined "cognition, empathy and agape," thus laying the seeds of a new ethics of argumentation. The article also brings this new ethics of argumentation in dialogue with the agenda of moral argumentation offered by Jurgen Habermas, the heart-touching social theorist of our times]

The Mahatma has won the heart of India with his love... He has given us a vision of the *shakti* of *Truth*.*** But the golden rod, which can awaken our country in Truth and Love is not a thing which can be manufactured by the nearest goldsmith. To the weilder of that rod our profound salutation! But if having seen Truth, our belief in it is not confirmed, what is the good of it all? Our mind must acknowledge the Truth of the intellect, just as our heart does the Truth of love.

\- Rabindranath Tagore[1]

Of what should the poet be jealous in me? *** Well, I have never succeeded in writing a single rhyme in my life. The Poet lives in a magnificient world of his own creation--his world of ideas. I am a slave of somebody else's creation-- the spinning wheel. The Poet makes his *gopis* dance to the tune of his flute. I wander after my beloved Sita, the *Charkha* and seek to deliver her from the ten-headed monster from Japan, Manchester, Paris, etc. The Poet is an inventor --he creates, destroys and recreates. I am an explorer and having discovered a thing I must cling to it. *** Thus, there is no competition between us. But I may say in all humility that we complement each the other's activity. If the poet spun half an hour daily his poetry would gain in richness. For it would then represent the poor man's wants and woes in a more forcible manner than now.

\- M.K. Gandhi[2]

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Introduction and Invitation

To love is not to suppress one's dissent for the sake of outward peace but to explore truth in the wonderland of the world holding each other's hand. Truth lies at the mid-point of life, at the mid-point of a conversation. The Eternal Friend of *Bhagbad Gita*, a text which inspired Gandhi and many others during India's struggle for freedom, tells us in the *Viswarupa Darshana Yoga* that God, our eternal friend has His habitation at the midpoint of *bada* and *prabada*--argument and counter-argument. When we read the argument and counter-argument of Gandhi and Tagore, we slowly but surely realize that their argument was not for the sake of winning any egotistic victory but for exploring truth. They argued with each other with love and their argumentation combined "cognition, empathy and agape,"[3] thus laying the seeds of a new ethics of argumentation. Both Tagore and Gandhi were deeply concerned about the present and future of India and they argued with each other with passion for the sake of clarifying an appropriate agenda of action and mode of being for India's *Swaraj* and for a better world.

> Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) and Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948) are known to us as *Gurudev* and Mahatma Gandhi. We owe to both Tagore and Gandhi these evocative and soul-touching names, names which continue to inspire us to strive for greatness in our lives and be worthy of the aspirations of the Poet of *Gitanjali* who had once written to Gandhi a poem offered to God:
>
> Give me the supreme courage of love, this is my prayer, the courage to speak, to do.
>
> ***
>
> Give me the supreme faith of love, this is my prayer, the faith of the life in death, of the victory in defeats, of the power hidden in the frailness of beauty, of the dignity of pain that accepts hurt, but disdains to return it.[4]

It is Tagore who had given the name *Mahatma* to Gandhi way back in 1915 and Gandhi addressed Tagore not only as the *Gurudev* of Shantiniketan but also "The Great Sentinel" of India and the world.

In the second decade of this century, two Indians who had obtained international fame were Tagore and Gandhi. Tagore had received the Nobel Prize in literature in 1913 and Gandhi's *satyagraha* in South Africa had stirred the imagination of people in India and the wider world. Gandhi and Tagore knew each other through their common friend C.F. Andrews before they met at Shantiniketan in 1915. In fact, "At the end of 1913, Andrews and Pearson [another devoted British

follower of Tagore] resolved to visit Gandhi and to advance his cause in South Africa. On the eve of their journey to Durban from Calcutta, they saw Tagore to seek his blessings and two days before their departure a meeting was held at the Town Hall of Calcutta on 5 December 1913 to consider the position of Indians in South Africa. Tagore was one of the organizers, and the letter requesting the Sheriff's permission to hold their meeting bore his signature."[5] But before coming to know about each other through C.F. Andrews, they were not total strangers to each other either. As Sabyasachi Bhattacharya tells us in his recent work, *The Mahatma and the Poet*: "It is on record that in 1901 at the Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress, M.K. Gandhi moved a resolution 'as a petitioner on behalf of the hundred thousand British Indians in South Africa.' On that occasion, he met Rabindranath's elder brother Jyotirindranath and, shortly after that, a translation of one of Gandhi's articles on the Indian settlers in South Africa was published in the journal *Bharathi*, with which the Tagores were associated."[6] Though there is no evidence of personal encounter between the two at this stage, "there is an affinity of spirit" evident in what Tagore wrote of the Indian struggle for freedom as early as 1908:

> Let us not depart from the path of Truth (*Satya*), that which is right.. It is regrettable that the terrors and upheavals of Europe are the only models before us. But the Christian saints who, by the strength of their faith, withstood the oppression of the Roman Emperor triumphed in their death over the Emperor. *** *dharma* can help us surpass oppression.[7]

As we know, Gandhi came to Shantiniketan in March 1915 to meet with Tagore and stayed there for a month. Before his arrival, he had sent the inmates of his Phoenix *ashram* in South Africa to stay at Tagore's *ashram*. Before the arrival of the Phoenix boys and finally Gandhi's, Andrews had written about Gandhi to Tagore: "Mr. Gandhi is not really fighting for this privilege or that; he is fighting for the right to be called not slaves. I cannot yet say I love him. But I reverence and worship him as the most heroic man I have known."[8]

Of these early encounters, we have two memorable rendering. The first is provided by Hugh Tinker, the biographer of Deenabandhu C.F. Andrews–the great soul who was a friend of both Gandhi and Tagore and an indefatigable crusader for the realization of human dignity. Gandhi had sent the inmates of his Ashram to Shantiniketan and had decided to make it his home before he built his own nest in India because he saw that "something was underway in the remote corner of Bengal which shared some trait with his own endeavour and philosophy."[9] But when Gandhi's Phoenix boys arrived in Shantiniketan, it seems they did not "make a not entirely welcome impact upon the dreamy, hedonistic ashram," as the Andrews biographer Hugh Tinker tells us.[10] Gandhi's Pheonix boys did not agree with the ways of Tagore's *ashram* where "the predominantly Bengali students had accepted traditional caste practices in the kitchen and dining hall and had expected to have the menial work done by servants."[11] "These changes were reported to Tagore in his Himalayan retreat. he observed of the newcomers, 'They have discipline where they should have ideals.' Then Tagore read in the *Modern*

Review that under the Phoenix influence the ashram students were giving up sugar and *ghee* in order to contribute to a war-relief fund. He (Tagore) was not pleased: 'Fasting is doing evil in order to do good. But doing hard work will be a real test of their sincerity."[12] For Tinker, "Although Tagore and Gandhi had not yet come together, there was a sign that the Poet would not always find Gandhian ideas acceptable.."[13]

Early in March 1915, Gandhi came to Shantiniketan for his first meeting with Tagore. About this Gandhi biographer Shankar Bose writes: "...Gandhi, the lone, ascetic man of action, went to Shantiniketan to meet Tagore, the poet-philosopher who looked stately in his flowing beard and gown. This meeting between the two men, both so firmly rooted in Indian culture, was a picture in contrast and they discussed many matters including Gandhi's favourite subject of dietics. Gandhi maintained that for making *puris* good grains were converted into poison by frying the same in *ghee* or oil. Tagore, the lover of art and life, said that he had been eating *puris* all his life and they did him no harm."[14]

But *puri* is not the only thing on whose significance Gandhi and Tagore discussed and differed in their relationship of 26 years from 1915 to 1941. Gandhi and Tagore argued on many other things of personal, national and international significance. They had difference of views on responding to the Jalianawalabag massacre, the non-cooperation movement, nationalism and internationalism, the significance of Charkha for the attainment of Swaraj, and on science and faith. But their differences did not come in the way of their deep love, care and reverence for each other. In fact, it is their deep love and care for each other which probably enabled them to disagree with each other with frankness. Tagore was deeply concerned about Gandhi's health and well-being and used to send Andrews time to time to come to take personal care of him. Tagore rushed to Poona to be with Gandhi in September 1932 as Gandhi had undertaken the historic fast unto death against the British communal award which granted separate electorates to the untouchables. Though Tagore spared no word in making his critique of Gandhi clear, Tagore took exception to vilification of Gandhi. In a statement on 6 February 1934, Tagore tells us: "For some time past, I have been noting a spirit of hostility amongst a certain section of my countrymen against the latest activities of Mahatma Gandhi. Mahatmaji is the one person who has done most to raise the people up from the slough of despondency and self-debasement to which they had fallen through the centruries of servitude. To malign a life so truly dedicated as his because of occasional differences of opinion seems to be carrying the public ingratitude to the point of meanness."[15] On his part, Gandhi was also deeply respectful of Tagore and was concerned about his health and well-being. While Gandhi's followers were sometimes becoming impatient with Tagore's criticism of the non-cooperation movement and the spinning whel, Gandhi advised them to listen with critical self-introspection to the warnings of "The Great Sentinel," Gandhi's celebrated name for Tagore during these debates of the 1920s.

Gandhi and Tagore: Converging and Diverging Pathways

After their 1915 meeting at Shantiniketan, Gandhi and Tagore met again in December 1917 at Calcutta when Gandhi had gone to attend the session of the Indian National Congress. There he also watched *Post Office*, a play of Tagore where he himself was an actor. On 12 April 1919, Tagore had written to Gandhi, offering an early critique of Gandhi's method of passive resistance, a critique which was to be more pointed in days and years to come. In this letter Tagore had written to Gandhi: "Power in all its forms is irrational. ** Passive resistance is a force which is not necessarily moral in itself; it can be used against truth as well as for it."[16] Just a day after this epochal letter, the brutality of the British empire was demonstrated in a naked manner in the Jalianawalabag massacre. This terribly shocked both Tagore and Gandhi. Tagore renounced his knighthood. Gandhi hailed this as an inspiring act of identification of the poet with the struggling masses. But after the massacre, Gandhi told the Hunter Commission that the Congress evidence on the massacre would not be produced unless detained Punjabi politicians were released. Tagore, however, was not convinced that Gandhi was right in boycotting the commission.[17] Gandhi had invited Tagore to open the annual Gujarati Literary Conference and Tagore visited Ahmedabad in this connection in the first week of April 1920 and spent a night with Gandhi and his inmates at Sabarmati Ashram. In the following year, Tagore expressed strong reservation about Gandhi's non-cooperation movement. In fact, this was expressed in Tagore's letter to C.F. Andrews and published in Calcutta's *Modern Review* of May 1921. For Tagore, "The idea of non-cooperation is political asceticism."[18] On the issue of children leaving school in the non-cooperation movement, Tagore expresses his reservation: "Our students are bringing their offering of sacrifice to what? Not to a fuller education but to non-education" (ibid). In his article, "The Poet's anxiety," published in *Young India* of June 1 1921, Gandhi tried to allay Tagore's fear that non-cooperation is not a doctrine of separation; "on the contrary, non-cooperation is intended to pave the way to real, honourable and voluntary co- operation based on mutual respect and trust."[19]

This dialogue was proceeding between Gandhi and Tagore when Tagore was outside the country. After his return Gandhi met him in his ancestral home at Jorasanko in Calcutta in September 1921. Gandhi and Tagore held discussions behind closed doors during which only Andrews was present. During this meeting Tagore is reported to have said to Gandhi: "Poems I can spin, Gandhiji! songs and plays I can spin, but of your precious cotton what a mess I would make."[20] During this period Gandhi and Tagore were debating with each other on the non-cooperation movement and a little about the significance of charkha in India's economic regeneration and in the freedom struggle. The debate on charkha was to take full swing only after Gandhi's release from jail. About this, Bhattacharya tells us:

In the period between the arrest of Mahatma Gandhi in March

1922 and his release in February 1924, the Tagore-Gandhi debate was, so to speak, suspended as Tagore did not pursue his line of criticism when Gandhi was incarcerated. Immediatley on Gandhi's release, Tagore sent him a cable: 'we rejoice.' He sent C.F. Andrews to meet Gandhi at Sasson Hospital in Pune where he was recuperating. Gandhi visited Shantiniketan in 1925. About this time, Tagore took up the threads of his earlier debate in a series of articles in *Modern Review* while Gandhi responded through essays in *Young India.*[21]

As we proceed further in recording the cross-cutting pathways in the lives of Gandhi and Tagore, we may note that Gandhi's fasts and *satyagraha* had created many ripples in Shantiniketan. The late G. Ramachandran, the great Gandhian worker and founder of Gandhigram Rural Institute, once chaired a debate on the comparative relevance of Gandhi and Tagore in which students of Shantiniketan had taken part. In this public debate students had overwhelmingly voted for Gandhi and Tagore was very pleased with this For him, this was an evidence of freedom of thought in Shantiniketan which he valued highly and had patiently cultivated. But Tagore biographers Dutta and Robinson provide us many instances where Tagore's reception of Gandhi might not have been always a cordial one. Before we closely read the following account given to us by these two biographers, it must be taken note of that these two writers seem to take a pleasure in putting Gandhi and Tagore in antagonistic terms. Note their following comments: "Although Tagore had deep reservation about modern civilization, machines and cities at bottom he accepted them. Fundamentally Tagore was humble, willing to learn as well as to teach until the day he died; whereas Gandhi, for all his self-analysis, thought he knew better than anyone else in all matters of importance."[22] But when we read Gandhi and hold his hands in his pilgrimage of life we find such an accusation untrue. If Tagore was learning and teaching until the day he died so was Gandhi. The day on which a mad man's bullet took away this great servant of humanity from our midst, Gandhi was learning Bengali alphabets.

Now, let us come to the incident which Dutta and Robinson provide in their biography of Tagore. This involves Elmhirst, the American faculty in Shantiniketan who was in charge of Tagore's Centre for Rural Development, Sriniketan. On 13 April 1922, the third anniversary of Jalianawalabag massacre, Elmhirst had planned a picnic for the inmates of Shantiniketan Ashram. But the captain of the Ashram told him that they cannot have a picnic as some of the boys had gone on fast to commemorate the victims of Jalianawalabag. Elmhirst wrote about this to his girl friend Dorothy Straight in the U.S. on the same day: "No village fires were lit today, no shops were open, Gandhi's festival was observed and, if ever a man who was condemned by his legacy, it is Gandhi. Here are we a supposedly International Institution celebrating hatred, commemorating a thing that divides and appeals to basic passions. But I said nothing, I knew it would be of no use. So I left Goura and went across to the Poet's bungalow and found him with Andrews and Morris. ** He insisted on my sharing tea and then I told him how

sorry I was about the fasting business. He [Tagore] burst out in indignation, saying how ashamed he was that his own students and staff should mutilate his ideas in this way and then, turning to Andrews, he said point blank, 'And Andrews, it is you who are responsible."[23]

The above narration of Elmhirst suggests that Tagore was not always at ease with Gandhi's non-cooperation movement and his strategy of fasting. We shall encounter these differences more markedly when we come to discuss at length Gandhi and Tagore's debates on these issues. But Elmhirst's portrayal of Shantiniketan as an international institution and his implicit understanding that as an international institution it should distance itself from the supposed "hatred" of Gandhi's non-cooperation movement, as we shall see, is in tune with Tagore's criticism of the supposed chauvinistic foundation of Gandhi's non-cooperation movement And Tagore's supposed reprimand of Andrews, as depicted in the above passage, for bringing the "dangerous" ideas of Gandhi to Shantiniketan, if it can be accepted at face value, again point to the unease within Tagore for Gandhi's method and struggle. But the veracity of this may require further probing as Elmhirst and Andrews were not the best of friends and they were stung by jealousy.[24] But the very fact that one could justify the holding of a picnic on a day of national mourning such as the anniversary of Jalianawalabag massacre provides us a glimpse of the mind of some of the "international" followers of Tagore.

To come back to our narrative of the intertwined pathways of Gandhi and Tagore. Gandhi had come again to Shantiniketan after ten years in 1925. Gandhi was then touring Bengal from end to end in support of his *Charkha* movement. About this Tagore biographer G.D. Khanolkar tells us in his *The Lute and the Plough*: "On 29 May [1925] Gandhi came to Shantiniketan and had two days' talks with Tagore, which ended leaving both men exactly where they were, neither feeling able to modify his stand by a jolt. Dwijendrath [Tagore's elder brother] was in full sympathy with Gandhiji, in whose activities he saw the country's brightest hope. He sharply reprimanded Tagore for his resistance to Gandhiji. But Tagore listened in meek silence, checking the reply which he knew would cause offence and irritation."[25] Gandhi's visit to Tagore in Shantiniketan was followed by Tagore's visit to Gandhi at the Sabaramati Ashram in 1931. "Tagore was then in Gujarat to collect funds for Shantiniketan. Gandhi told the poet, then seventy, that as he could sing and dance he was still young. Exactly a year later Gandhi, then in prison, was allowed by the jail authorities to sign an appeal, along with Romain Rolland and Albert Einstein, for a book of appreciation to be presented on Tagore's seventy-first birthday."[26] Next year on 29 September 1932 Gandhi undertook a fast unto death in opposition to the then Prime Minister McDonald's communal award for the untouchables. In the early hours of that day Gandhi wrote to Tagore, seeking his support for this. In fact on many occasions, Gandhi sought Tagore's advice before launching a new course of action. For instance, he had written to Tagore a few hours before the resumption of Civil Disobedience in January 1932: "I try to steal a wink of sleep and I think of you. I want you to give your best to the sacrificial fire that is being lighted." And on the occassion of the historic fast at Poona, both Gandhi's and Tagore's hearts were together. As Gandhi

wrote to Tagore at 3 a.m. on September 20 1932, Tagore's telegram to Gandhi of the previous day assuring him of his heart's support was already on its wings.

But after sending the telegram, Tagore could not rest content. As Gandhi's fast began as planned, many of the inmates of Shantiniketan fasted likewise. As Khanolkar tells us about this historic incident: "From Santiniketan and Sriniketan, even from the villages round about, people assembled in the Prayer Hall, where Tagore explained the importance of Gandhi's sacrifice, and prayed that the almighty would give him strength for the ordeal and bring him safely through. On 22 September 1932, he composed a thoughtful message to his countrymen, begging them not to lose a moment before rooting out untouchability in every shape and form. On reading this message, Gandhiji wired him to come immediatley, if his health permitted "[27] On receiving this wire, Tagore, without a thought for his own health or convenience, was on his way and reached Poona on 26th of September 26 (1932). That day was a day of silence for Gandhi but on seeing Tagore, Gandhi instantaneously said that he was very happy and both embraced each other passionately. Gandhi broke his fast with a glass of juice offered to him by Tagore and on Gandhi's request Tagore sang him his following dear lines from *Gitanjali*:

When the heart is hard and parched up,
come upon me with a shower of mercy.
When grace is lost from life,
come with a burst of song.
When tumultuous work raises its din
on all sides shutting me out from beyond,
come to me, my lord of silence, with thy peace and rest.
When my beggarly heart sits crouched,
shut up in a corner, break open the door,
my king, and come with the ceremony of a king

After reaching Shantiniketan from his meeting with Gandhi, Tagore called together the workers of Vishwabharathi and constituted a special committee for the eradication of untouchability and casteism. "All untouchable boys in Shantiniketan and Sriniketan were given full freedom to live and dine with others, and they were excused all tuition fees."[28] But Tagore was very much concerned again to get Gandhi's letter of 10 November 1932 in which Gandhi had sought his "wholehearted co-operation" for his forthcoming fast. Gandhi had argued that while his last Poona fast might have a "political tinge" about it, his proposed fast for the sake of entry of untouchables to the Guruvayuur temple in Kerala was meant to awaken the conscience of the country for overthrowing the monster of untouchability. But Tagore wrote to Gandhi on 15 November 1932: "What I fear is that following so close upon the tremendous impact made on our consciousness by the recent fast, a repetition of it may psychologically be too much for us properly to evaluate and effecitvely utilise for the uplift of humanity."[29]

But as Gandhi had resolved to undertake this fast on May 9 1933, Tagore wrote to Gandhi: "The logical consequences of your example, if followed, will be an elimination of all noble souls from the world, leaving the morally feeble and down-trodden multitude to sink into the fathomless depth of ignorance and inequity."[30] However, in this criticism of Gandhi's fast lay Tagore's protective love for Gandhi. There was probably also an implicit concern that the fast-weapon might be misused by people as a pressure tactic. In this context, C.F. Andrews also sought to draw Gandhi's attention to the same challenge: "[The fast-weapon] if is not uniquely used for a God-given opportunity will certainly be used by fanatics to force an issue which may be reactionary instead of progressive. ** But you have evidently come to the point of *forcing the issue*-- morally forcing it, and I have to think this out in terms of Christ. I think He *did* force the issue when He set his pace steadfastly to go to Jerusalem."[31]

To come back to the pathways in the lives of Tagore and Gandhi, Sabyasachi Bhattacharya tells us that "Between Tagore's visit to Gandhi Ashram on 18 January 1930 and by the end of 1933, there is virtually no issue dividng the two."[32] But the devasting earthquake that struck Bihar on 15 January 1934 created new ripples in the dialogue between Gandhi and Tagore. Gandhi was then on a tour of South India in his fight against untouchability and he urged his countrymen to "regard earthquake as the nemesis for the sin of untouchability." In the statement that he issued in *Harijan* on 2 February 1934, Gandhi had said: "I share the belief with the whole world, civilized and uncivilized, that calamities such as the Bihar one come to mankind as a chastisement for their sins. I regard untouchability as such a grave sin as to warrant divine chastisement." While Tagore was in total agreement with Gandhi on the evil of untouchability, he expressed surprise that Gandhi should have lent his authority to "this kind of unscientific view of things." But before releasing his statement to the Press, Tagore wrote to Gandhi seeking his clarification whether Gandhi had indeed said what was reported. Gandhi confirmed his stand and then Tagore released a press statement disagreeing with the element of unreason and irrationality in Gandhi's statement. Gandhi's following rejoinder to Tagore was published in Harijan in February 1934:

> The Bard of Shantiniketan is *Gurudev* for me as he is for the inmates of that great institution. But Gurudev and I early discovered certain differences, and it cannot suffer by Gurudev's latest utterance on my linking the Bihar calamity with the sin of untouchabiility. He had a perfect right to utter his protest when he believed I was in error. My profound regard for him would make me listen to him more readily than to any other critic. ** To me earthquake was no caprice of God nor a result of a meeting of mere blind forces. We do not know all the laws of God nor their working.[33]

In this dialogue, what comes out is that Gandhi is not discounting the significance of laws of nature. But Gandhi is drawing our attention to the inscrutability of these laws. It is not helpful to understand this debate between Gandhi and Tagore as just a debate between science and laws of *Karma*. Gandhi says that "we do not know the law or the laws fully, and what appears to us as

catastrophies are so only because we do not know the universal laws sufficiently."[34] Recent developments in the system theoretic view of the universe tell us of the interconnectedness of the world where one thing happening in one part of the world affects the other. For example scientists now tell us how the change of wings on the part of a butterfly in Mexico can create hurricane in Texas.[35] Given these new developments in science, it is probably helpful to take this Tagore-Gandhi debate on science and Karmic laws to a new fronier of probing and reflection. This probing is facilitated by what Amartya Sen writes about Tagore's approach to science:

> ..while Tagore believed that modern science was essential to understanding physical phenomena, his views on epistemology were inherently heterodox. ** To assert that something is true or untrue in the absence of anyone .to observe or perceive its truth, or to form a conception of what it is, appeared to Tagore to be deeply questionable..his strong interest in science was accompanied by critical scrutiny.[36]

As we move further, at this point, it must be noted that not only Tagore and Gandhi were united in their fight against untouchability, they were also united in their fight against communalism. Tagore was deeply pained by the communal riots between Hindus and Muslims. But while Tagore, after a point, thought that the communal problem was intractable Gandhi never gave up hope on this. Being extremely bitter about communal riots, Tagore went so far as to say that "straight forward atheism" was "preferable to this terrible thing, delusion of religiosity .. the satanic bestiality which wears the garb of religion."[37] This was scarcely the kind of language Gandhi would have employed, but "they were both striving for a common cause."[38]

A year after their debate on the Bihar earthquake, Tagore wrote a touching letter to Gandhi sharing with him his immense financial difficulty in running Shantiniketan. In this letter, Tagore poured out his heart to Gandhi: "Over thirty years I have practically given my all to this mission of my life and so long as I was comparatively young and active I faced all my difficulties unaided. And now, however, when I am 75 I feel the burden of my responsibility growing too heavy for me, constant begging excusrions with absurdly meagre results added to the strain of my daily anxieties and have brought my physical conśtitution nearly to an extreme verge of exhaustion. Now I know of no one else but yourself whose words may help my countrymen to realise that it is worth their while to maintain this institution."[39] Gandhi was deeply touched by this letter and he immediately wrote to Gurudev: "Your touching letter was received only on the 11th instant when I was in the midst of meetings. You may depend upon my straining every nerve to find the required money. It is unthinkable that you should have to undertake another begging mission at your age."[40] After this exchange of letters, Gandhi and Tagore met in Delhi in March 1936. Infact, Tagore had come to stage the play *Chitrangada* at the Regal Theatre. Gandhi went along with Kasturba to meet Tagore and told him: "At your age it is not good to travel around like this." The next day Gandhi sent a draft of Rs. 60,000 to Tagore presented by some anonymous donors.

The next five years of interaction between Tagore and Gandhi mainly revolved around the fate of Shantiniketan with the singular exception of the case of Netaji Subash Chandra Bose about whom Tagore had written to Gandhi that he should be given a fair treatment. On 10 February 1937, Tagore nominated Gandhi as a Life Trustee of Shantiniketan. But Gandhi wrote to Tagore that he is not able to accept this invitation because of his "amazing limitations." Gandhi wrote Tagore that being a Trustee implies capacity for financing the Institution "and what I heard two days ago has deepened my reluctance for, I understand that in spite of your promise to me in Delhi you are about to go to Ahmedabad on a begging expedition. I was grieved and I would ask you on bended knees to forego the expedition."[41] Tagore writes to Gandhi at the earliest just after a week: "You have grievously misjudged me on mere suspiciion which is so unlike your great and gracious ways. ** I feel ashamed to assert that it was, never my intention financially to exploit you or your name.."[42]

In the same letter, Tagore takes exception to Gandhi's use of the term "begging expedition," though for Gandhi it is a term that both Gandhi and Tagore had jointly used in Delhi. But what Tagore writes is significant which provides us a glimpse into minds of these two persons:

> Allow me to be frank in return and to tell you that possibly your own temperament prevents you to understand the dignity of the mission which I am glad to call my own, -- a mission that is not merely concerned with the economic problem of India or her sectarian religions, but which comprehends the culture of the huamn mind in its broadest sense. It is a part of a poet's religion to entertain in his life a solemn faith in his own function, to realise that he is specially called to collaborate with his creator in adding to the joy of existence.[43]

Gandhi and Tagore met for the last time in February 1940 at Shantiniketan and during the time of Gandhi's departure, Tagore put a letter of his in the hands of Gandhi with this appeal: "And, now before you take your leave from Shantiniketan, I make my fervent appeal to you, accept this institution under your protection. Vishwabharati is like a vessel which is carrying the cargo of my life's best treasure and I hope it may claim special care from my countrymen for its preservation." Gandhi read Gurudev's letter in the train and wrote him from the train itself: "The touching note that you put into my hands as we parted has gone straight into my heart. You may depend upon my doing all I can in the common endeavour to assure its permanence. I look to you to keep your promise to sleep religiously for about an hour daily during the day. Though I have always regarded Shantiniketan as my second home, this visit brought me nearer to it than ever before."

Mutual Criticism, Mutual Understanding and Articulating a Larger Mission

The above has provided us a brief skech of the cross-cutting pathways of Gandhi and Tagore. Now, let us try to understand the way Gandhi and Tagore tried to understand each other, clarified their differences to each other and in the process presented a larger mission for India and the world.

Their debate raised fundamental philosophical issues as well as immediate questions relating to the Indian freedom struggle such as non-cooperation and the significance of *charkha*.

Tagore was a critic of Gandhi's non-cooperation movement and the central importance accorded to *charkha* in India's freedom struggle and social reconstruction. Before we discuss at length Gandhi and Tagore's difference of perspective on this issue, we shall do well to remember that Tagore was asserting his difference from his experiential perspective of participating in the Swadeshi movement and his long-standing attempts in rural reconstruction, first in his estate and then in his centre of rural development, Sriniketan. While sharing with Gandhi his apprehensions about the significance of boycott of foreign goods and burning of foreign clothes, Tagore brings his experience of the Swadeshi movement. For Tagore, during the Swadeshi movement, it is the rich mill owners of Bombay who benefitted most from the boycott of foreign goods rather than the common people of India.

(a) On Co-operation and Non-cooperation: Tagore and Gandhi

In his letter to C.F. Andrews published in *Modern Review* of May 1921, Tagore presents his reservation about Gandhi's non co-operation movement. For Tagore, the movement of non-cooperation is based on a negative ideal, and akin to the Buddhist ideal of negation rather than the affirmative and life-invirogating agenda of *Brahma-vidya*. For Tagore, "The idea of non-cooperation is political asceticism" which has "at its back a fierce joy of annihilation."[44] Tagore takes exception to students leaving their schools during the non-cooperation movement since for him, they did not have any other alternative. For Tagore, co-operation is the foundation of life and "let India stand for the cooperation of all peoples of the world."[45] Writes Tagore: "I believe in the true meeting of the East and the West. Love is the ultimate truth of soul. We should do all we can not to outrage that truth. The idea of non-cooperation unnecessarily hurts that truth. It is not our heart fire but the fire that burns out our hearth and home."[46] For Tagore, "our present struggle to alienate our heart and mind from those of the West is an attempt at spiritual suicide."[47]

Gandhi thinks through Tagore's criticism in two essays in *Young India* of 1 June 1921.[48] Gandhi respects Tagore's anxiety that "India should deliver no false or feeble message to the world." But Gandhi makes it clear that "non-cooperation in conception is not any of the things" Tagore fears and does not "erect a Chinese wall between India and the West." For Gandhi, "on the contrary, non-cooperation is intended to have the way to real, honourable and voluntary co-operation based on mutual respect and trust. The present struggle is being waged against compulsory cooperation." Furthermore, "The nation's non-cooperation is an invitation to the Government to co-operate with it on its own terms as is every nation's right and every Government's duty. Non-cooperation is intended to give the very meaning of patriotism that the poet is yearning after. An India prostrate at the feet of Europe can give no hope to humanity. An India awakened and free has a message of peace and good will to a groaning world."

On Tagore's objection to the spirit of negation and rejection in the non-coooperation movement, Gandhi submits to Tagore: "rejection is as much an ideal as the acceptance of a thing. It is necessary to reject untruth as it is to accept truth." For Gandhi central to Brahmavidya is "not this"--*neti*.

(b) On Charkha

In his dialogue with Gandhi on the issue of charkha in his celebrated essay, "The Call of Truth," published in Modern Review in 1921, Tagore tells us: "In this morning of the world's awakening, if only our own national striving there is no response to its universal aspiration, that will betoken the poverty of our spirit. I do not say for moment that we should belittle the work immediately to hand. But when the bird is roused by the dawn, all its awakening is not absorbed in its search for food. Its wings respond unweariedly to the call of the sky, its throat pours forth for songs, for joy of the new light."[49] Through this Tagore is urging both the non-cooperation and the Khadi movement to have larger missions for themselves. For Tagore, "We must have a clear idea of the vast thing that the welfare of our country means. To confine our idea of it to the outsiders, or make it too narrow, diminishes our own power of achievement. To give the *Charkha* the first place in our striving for the country's welfare is only a way to make our insulted intelligence recoil in despairing inaction."[50] Gandhi submits for our consideration in his equally inimitable style in his article, "The Great Sentinel," published in *Young India* of 13 October 1921: "True to his poetical instinct the Poet lives for the morrow and would have us do likewise. He presents to our admiring gaze the beautiful picture of the birds early in the morning singing hymns of praise as they soar into the sky. These birds had their days food and soared with rested wings in whose veins new blood have flown during the previous rights. But I have had the pain of watching birds who for want of strength could not be coaxed even into a flutter of their wings. The human bird under Indian sky gets up weaker than when he pretended to retire."[51] For Gandhi, the *charkha* can help these millions to earn from "the sweat of their brow" (ibid) and lead a life of dignity.

In his "Call of Truth" and "The Cult of the Charkha" Tagore raises some further questions vis-a-vis Gandhi's key emphasis on *charkha* in India's freedom struggle. Tagore asks keeping Gandhi in mind: "Why should not our *guru* of today, who would lead us on the paths of Karma not say, 'Let all the forces of the land be brought into action, for then alone shall the country awake.' But his call came to one narrow field alone. To one and all he simply says spin and weave, spin and weave."[52]

Tagore argues that over-emphasis on the spinning wheel can lead to a mindless uniformity. For Tagore, "if man be stunted by big machines then the danger of his being stunted by small machines must not be lost sight of. ** Mind is no less valuable than cotton thread."[53] Tagore argues that in placing the *charkha* at the center of the economic reconstruction of India, Gandhi mixes up economics with morality. Furthermore, the clothes that are being burnt can be given to the poor who do not have anything to wear. Gandhi thinks along with Tagore on these issues in his two essays "The Great

Sentinel" and "The Poet and the Charkha." In his "The Great Sentinel," Gandhi welcomes Tagore's criticsm: "It is a welcome and wholesome reminder to all workers that we must not be impatient, we must not impose authority no matter how great. The poet deserves the thanks of his countrymen for standing for truth." Then Gandhi goes on to submit the following for Tagore's consideration. Gandhi urges Tagore to go deeper and "see for himself whether the *charkha* has been accepted from blind faith or from reasoned necessity."[54] Gandhi further writes: "I have again and again appealed to reason, and let me assure him [Tagore] that if happily the country has come to believe in spinning wheel as the giver of plenty, it has done so after laborious thinking, after great hesitation."[55] For Gandhi, "Hunger is the argument that is driving India to the spinning wheel. The call of the spinning wheel is the noblest of all. Because it is the call of love and love is *Swaraj*. The spinning wheel will 'curb the mind' when the time spent on necessary physical labour can be said to do so. We must think of milions who are today less than animals, who are almost in a dying state."[56] For Gandhi,"A plea for spinning wheel is a plea for recognising the dignity of labour."[57]

Then Gandhi urges Tagore to spin the wheel everyday as a mark of his identification with the poorest of the poor and with the struggle for freedom: "I do indeed ask the Poet and the sage to spin the wheel as a sacrament. When there is war, the poet lays down the lyre, the lawyer his law reports, the school boy his books." On Tagore's objection to the boycott and burning of foreign cloth, Gandhi argues: "It is sinful to eat American wheat and let my neighbour the grain dealer starve for want of custom. Similarly it is sinful for me to wear the latest finery of Regent Street, when I know that if I had but worn the things woven by the neigboring spinners and weavers, that would have clothed me and fed and clothed them. On the knowledge of my sin bursting upon me, I must consign the foreign garments to flames and thus purify myself, and therefore rest content with the rough *khadi* made by my neighbors."[58]

In the same essay Gandhi clarifies further his ideas on non-cooperation. To Tagore's call for international co-operation and his critique of the isolationist dangers of non cooperation movement, Gandhi replies: "Before I think of sharing with the world, I must possess. Our Non-cooperation is neither with the English nor with the West. Our Non-cooperation is with the system the English have established. ** Our Non-cooperation is a retirement within ourselves. Indian nationalism is not exclusive, nor aggressive, nor destructive. ** The mice which helplessly find themselves between the cat's teeth acquire no merit from their enforced sacrifice."[59]

Thinking Further About Tagore-Gandhi Dialogue

In his dialogue on *charkha* with Gandhi, Tagore raises the important question that not only big machines dominate us, small machines also can. All machines, big or small, create repetitiveness and human beings must cultivate their minds to be free from it. As Suresh Sharma comments: "For the 'small machines' could 'stunt' man as much as 'big machines'... In India, that has invariably taken the form of Man being reduced to labour in the likeness of a 'machine.' Gandhi's valorization of manual

labour infuriated Tagore. Against Gandhi's invocation of the 'dignity' of manual labour, Tagore posited, what he felt to be the 'cry' of humanity in all civilizations and in all ages, against the 'indignity' of repetitive mechanical labour."[60] But Gandhi was not against the improvisation of techniques of labour, he was against such tools which would displace human beings against their will. While agreeing with Tagore that either the small or big machine can lead to repetition and annihilation of human creativity, Gandhi at the same time "posited the reach and salience of access to resources and power a machine encodes."[61] "For instance, an 'improved plough' would be good for mankind. But if such a plough were to make it possible for 'one man' to plough 'all the land of India', it would have to be resisted as a danger to human life and Freedom."[62]

In his reflection on the Tagore-Gandhi dialogue on this issue, Amartya Sen takes the position that Gandhi missed Tagore's main criticism of *charkha* that not only it "made little economic sense..it was not the way to make people reflect on anything."[63] For Tagore, as Sen interprets: "it was in education..rather than, on say, 'spinning as a sacrifice'..that the future of India would depend."[64] But was Gandhi unaware of the need for education? Gandhi was keen to have a programme of education which integrates hand and head. Gandhi himself had initiated the programme of basic education which enables people to do things with their hands and not helplessly depend upon state and market for employment.[65] Education had a place in both the visions and schemes of Tagore and Gandhi but their conception of it was different. Apart from the differential emphasis on the manual and the cerebral, Tagore's scheme of education was more aesthetic, while Gandhi's more ethical. In Tagore's educational path, cultivation of oneself as a work of art had a prime place while in Gandhi's, cultivation of one's ethical responsibility to the other. Despite this difference, Sen may need to rethink his contrast between Tagore and Gandhi in terms of one advocating *charkha* and the other education.

Co-operation and non-cooperation, nationalism and internationalism were other key issues that Gandhi and Tagore argued with each other. Here again Sen considers Tagore more international than Gandhi. For Sen, "Mahatma Gandhi's well-known quip in reply to a question, aked in England, on what he thought of western civilization ('it would be a good idea') could not have come from Tagore's lips. He would understand the provocations to which Gandhi was responding..involving cultural conceit as well as imperial tyranny.. But, unlike Gandhi, Tagore could not, even in jest, be dismissive of Western civilization."[66] While Sen's comments put Tagore and Gandhi in perspective on this issue, it still requires further probing into their difference as well as complimentarity on the issue of Swaraj and nationalism. On the issue of Swaraj while for Tagore Swaraj meant merely political independence and attainment of "sovereignal power"[67] at the level of nation and nation-state, for Gandhi it was not reduced to political independence; it emphasizes attainment of self-rule and self-governance and realization of autonomy.[68] But Gandhi sought to overcome the duality between self-rule, self-realization and one's participation in politics. While for Gandhi, politics was crucial for self-realization, Tagore was part of the long Indian tradition that looked at politics as extraneous and even detrimental

to self-development and self-realization.[69] Thus the difference between them on Swaraj was not only a semantic difference,[70] it was part of their larger difference on the link between politics and self-realization. While for Tagore, politics was not essential to Swaraj and self-realization, it was to Gandhi. In fact, Gandhi sought to link politics to what lies beyond politics.[71] While taking part in politics Gandhi was not governed by a will to power to reign and to dominate; he had a self-critical and self-restraining attitude to power and engagement with politics. In this context, Ashis Nandy's following comments help us to understand Tagore and Gandhi:

> Tagore refused to grant primacy to politics even while sometimes participating in politics. Here lay his basic difference with Gandhi, to whom politics was a means of testing the ethics appropriate to our times and was therefore crucial to one's moral life. Eveyone did not have to be an active politician, but everyone, Gandhi felt, had to work within a framework in which politics had a special place. What linked the two, was however their continuing attempts to reaffirm a moral universe within which one's politics and social ideology could be located.[72]

Nandy also urges us to realize that there was a complimentarity between Tagore and Gandhi on the issue of nationalism. For Nandy, "both recognised the need for a 'national' ideology of India as a means of cultural survival and both recognized that, for the same reason, India would either have to make a break with the post-medieval modern concept of nationalism or give the concept a new content. As a result, for Tagore, nationalism itself became gradually illegitimate; for Gandhi, nationalism began to include a critique of nationalism. For both, over time, the Indian freedom movement ceased to be an expression of only nationalist consolidation; it came to acquire a new stature as a symbol of the universal struggle for political justice and cultural dignity."[73]

Understanding this complimentarity between Tagore and Gandhi also requires us to relook at Tagore's novel *Home and the World* which for some critics is a critique of Gandhian politics of nationalism. We may recall here the character of the nationalist leader Sandip in the novel whose emptiness and violence of nationalist politics Tagore criticizes. For George Luckas, Sandip is a caricature of Gandhi.[74] But "Gandhi was hardly a part of the Indian political scene when Sandip was created in 1915-16. Tagore had observed from a distance Gandhi's South African *Satyagraha*, and the two had met in March 1915; this limited experience made him an admirer of Gandhi. His reservations about important aspects of Gandhi's politics and counter-modernism came later. Sandip is, if anything, anti-Gandhi and critique of him is an oblique defence of Gandhian politics before such a politics has taken shape, besides being a bitter criticism of sectarian Hindu nationalism, which at the time was a powerful component of Indian anti-imperialism."[75] In what way we make sense of the dialogue between Tagore and Gandhi? In order to understand this, we have to realize that it was not a debate, nor was it a parade of argument and counter argument. It was a dialogue where there was not only a

repitition and reiteration of one's starting point. There occurs a process of slow transformation in this dialogue. Though at the surface level, it seems, both clung to each other's position, but there did take place a transformation of their initial positions. Gandhi agreed with Tagore that spinning wheel alone cannot solve problem and the need for a national servant to "build up a programme of anti-malaria campaign, improved sanitation, settlement of village disputes, conservation and breeding of cattles and hundreds of other beneficial activities."[76] Tagore's views on and approach to the issue of untouchability did undergo a change in the midst of his relationship with Gandhi.

But on one point the Gandhi-Tagore dialogue remained on a horizontal plane. That was on the question of Tagore spinning

as a mark of his identification with the poorest of the poor. Thomas Pantham has recently challenged us that in order to understand Gandhi and his contemporaries, we must bring a perspective of the other--the otherness of the poor and the otherness of self-realization.[77] While Gandhi and Tagore came closer and in fact helped each other to realize that self-realization requires responsibility to the other, on the issue of the otherness of poverty and the need to overcome this distance through change in one's life-style, Tagore and Gandhi could not come closer. It is probably keeping this in mind that Sabyasachi Bhattacharya argues: "Where the two differed was when Gandhi goes on to say that 'when there is war, the poet lays down the lyre.' Tagore's plea to Gandhi was that at no time should the poet lay down lyre, the scholar his books for the sake of *Swaraj*, its foundation is in the mind, which with its diverse powers and its confidece in these powers, goes on all the time creating *swaraj* for itself."[78]

But despite this, Gandhi had deep respect for Tagore and he strove to include his criticism and view in shaping the mind of the nation. In this context, scholars such as Akber S. Ahmed[79] certainly have much to explain themselves as well as to us when they state that Gandhi's debate with Tagore was an instance of his intolerance of his opponents and their systematic marginalization. When we take part in this epochal debate, "what stands foremost in Gandhi's response is the quiet passion to engage with what he perceived as the critical edge in Tagore's arguments."[80] While the followers of Gandhi thought that in offering his critique of Gandhi's action, Tagore was "encroaching on a sphere beyond his propoer limits,"[81] Gandhi did not share this impatience and enthusiasm of his followers; he rather welcomed Tagores' interventions as a "battle for the mind of the nation, not merely as a series of political excercises and stratagems."[82] Moreover, their mutual criticism of each other embodied a self-criticism. As Sharma helps us understand "Perhaps what is striking and of enduring significance is that their critique of colonial subjugation was at each step also a self-critique...Their insistence that critical gaze must always turn inwards was anchored in a cognitive universe where in there could never be the moment of final battle so dear to the modern revolutionary imagination."[83]

Towards a New Ethics of Argumentation

Discourse, dialogue and deliberation are important frames for thinking about and creating an ideal intersubjective condition and dignified society at present. Arguing with participants in dialogue

both at the intersubjective level and at a wider societal level is a valued activity in this mode of idealization. In recent years Jurgen Habermas[84] has provided an engaging outline of such a scheme of idealization where participants argue with each other and through such argumentation are able to clarify their positions and also gain a critical insight into their own lives as well as to the unjust foundations of their society. But in the Habermasian scheme of argumentation what he calls "discourse ethics" rational deliberation and the act of argumentation themselves are the supreme ideals and privileged activities. Though Habermas talks about the need for combining "an ethics of justice" with "an ethics of love" in the practice of argumentation where both flow from "the highest stage of morality itself"[85] and in his recent work talks about the work of "co-operative search for truth"[86] in discourse, these ideals at present are not embodied in the practice of argumentation itself so much so that participants of the Habermasian discourse can be "moved only by the force of better arguments."[87] Argumentation in the Habermasian discourse ethics remains "performative."[88]. For Habermas, "we must appeal to the intuitive preunderstanding which evey subject competent in speech and action brings into a process of argumentation."[89] But what if the partner in dialogue evades communication? For Habermas, in such cases those who refuse to take part in discourse fall into "self-contradiction."[90] Thus the hope that participants of discouse would not like to fall into the ditch of "self-contradiction" is the only guarantee for an affirmative response and continuance of communication in Habermas. But this hope can be realize and supplemented by the embodiment of love and care in the practice of argumentation and work of discourse.

To be fair to Habermas, Habermas[91] does talk about the need for "agape" and love in the work of discourse, but it remains only at the formal level and is not yet subtantively embodied and realized. But in the dialogue between Gandhi and Tagore we see a concrete embodiment of love and care, an embodiment which enriches the very process and substance of argumentation. Moreover, here arguments do not remain at a disembodied level, they flow into and are replenished from a wider cross-cutting pathways of lives. Tagore and Gandhi just did not argue with each other over the pages of either *Modern Review* and *Young India*, they met with each other and took part in each other's lives in an involved manner When Gandhi undertook fast unto death Tagore came to be with him and when Tagore reached the edge of his life, Gandhi visited him and assured his anxious heart that he would do his best to nurtue his dream institution, Shantiniketan.

In his reflection on Habermas's practical discourse and Gandhi's *satyagraha*, Thomas Pantham writes: "Tolerance, civility, non-violence and the loving care of others including one's opponents have a greater and longer or more enduring role in the Gandhian *satyagraha* than in the Habermasian discourse. Self-suffering, moreover is required of the *satyagrahis* but not of the participants in the Habermasian discouse."[92] In his recent reflections, Habermas speaks of the need to be "sincere"[93] on the parts of the participants of discourse but sincerity "presupposes a bracketing or overcoming of selfishness and ill-will."[94] As Bhikhu Parekh building on the life and insights of Gandhi tells us:

"Selfishness, hatred and ill-will [leads] to emotional and moral rigidity and [blocks] the processes of sympatheic understanding and critical self-reflection indispensable for all rational discussion. *** When the heart [rejects] someone, that is when he [does] not come within one's range of sympathy and form part of one's emotional and moral universe, reason [tends] to reject him too and [does] not take due account of his feelings and interests. Sympathy, love or good-will [is] a necessary precondition of rationality, and only universal love [guarantees] total objectivity."[95]

The dialogue between Gandhi and Tagore embodied love. Moreover, in the dialouge in which Tagore and Gandhi took part, they not only spoke to each other, they listened to each other: their argumentation was characterized by an ethics of listening. Therefore before contradicting Gandhi's statement on the Bihar earthquake, Tagore wanted to make sure that he had heard him right; he wanted to carefully listen to his views before submitting his rebuttal. But in the Habermasian discourse and argumentation, it is speaking which is privileged and there is very little attention paid to the need for listening and to cultivate the art of listening. Discourse in Habermas fails to realize what Paulo Friere identifies as the key challenge before any agenda of deliberative politics and ethics: "..it is in knowing how to listen well that I better prepare myself vis-a-vis the ideas being discussed as a subject capable of presence, of listening 'connectedly' and without prejudice to what the other is saying."[96] But in his "stress on performative competence Habermas consistently privileges speaking over hearing or listening."[97] "Co-operative search for truth" is an important concern in the dialogue between Gandhi and Tagore and also in the Habermasian agenda of discourse ethics. In the Habermasian discourse, truth emerges out of deliberation and argumentation; it is part of argumentation and is devoid of a transcendental anchorage with a power to call the participants to submit themselves to preferred and idealized modes of being, becoming, intersubjectivity and sociality. Habermas "translates what he considers to be a dualism between immanent discourse (inner) and transcendent otherness (outer) into an immanent transcendene within discourse itself."[98] For Habermas, since "the inherent telos of human speech is oriented to reaching an understanding with another about something in the world, all forms of meaningful transcendence must occur on *this* side of the 'rational collective will-formation'."[99] But truth in the Tagore-Gandhi dialogue has a "demand quality"[100] to it; it has a dimension of transcendence which is not reduced to and confined within discourse. "The incomplete grasp of the truth by any tradition or person teaches Gandhi about human fallibility and the need for humility."[101] Moreover, realization of truth in Gandhi and Tagore is part of one's participation in spiritual *sadhana*. In embodying love and care, an ethics of listening and quest for truth where truth emerges at the mid-point of rational argumentation and transcendental call and from one's participation in spiritual *sadhana*, the Gandhi-Tagore dialouge carried out more than half a century ago carried the seeds of a new ethics of argumentation, an ethics which can help transform our vision and practice of deliberation and argumentation at the contemporary juncture.

Endnotes:

1. Rabindra Nath Tagore, "The Call of Truth," quoted in Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, *The Mahatma and the Poet* (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1997), pp. 68-87, p. 79.

2. M.K. Gandhi, "The Poet and the Charkha," *Young India*, Nov. 5, 1925.

3. Jurgen Habermas, Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), p. 182.

4. Quoted in Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, *The Mahatma and the Poet* (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1997), p. 51.

5. Bhattacharya (op. cit., 1997), p. 4.

6. Ibid, p. 3.

7. Tagore quoted in Bhattacharya (op. cit., 1997), p. 3.

8. Quoted in Krishna Dutta & Andrew Robinson, *Rabindranath Tagore: The Myriad-Minded Man* (London: Bloomsberry, 1995), p. 86.

9. Bhattacharya (op. cit., 1997), p. 3.

10. Hugh Tinker, *The Ordeal of Love: C.F. Andrews and India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 99.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.

14. Shankar Bose, *Mahatma Gandhi* (Delhi: , 1991), p. 153.

15. Quoted in Bhattacharya (op. cit., 1997), p. 157.

16. Quoted in Bhattacharya (op. cit., 1997), p. 49.

17. Hugh Tinker, the biographer of C.F. Andrews, writes about this that "Growing exasperation with Gandhian techniques led him to tell C.F. Andrews many months later: `To what futility Gandhi's methods lead we have seen in withdrawal of evidence before Hunter's Commission. It merely had the effect of giving vent to a petulant spirit of vexation and we neglected the only opportunity we had of bringing the most atrocious facts of terrible crime before the world's tribunal." Tinker (op. cit., 1979), p. 175.

18. Quoted in Bhattacharya (op. cit., 1997), p. 57.

19. Quoted in Bhattacharya (op. cit., 1997), p. 65.

20. Quoted in Dutta & Robinson (op. cit., 1995).

21. Bhattacharya (op. cit., 1997), p. 9.

22. Dutta & Robinson (op. cit., 1995), p. 235.

23. Quoted in Dutta & Robinson (op. cit., 1995), p. 343.

24. Dutta & Robinson (op. cit., 1995).

25. G.D. Khanolkar, *The Lute and the Plough: A Life of Rabindranath Tagore* (Bombay: The Book Center Pvt. Ltd, 1963), p. 295.

26. Bose (op. cit., 1991), p. 159.

27. Khanolkar (op. cit., 1963), p. 236.

28. Khanolkar (op. cit., 1963), p. 328.

29. Quoted in Bhattacharya (op. cit., 1997), p. 137.

30. Ibid.

31. Tinker (op. cit., 1979), p. 262.

32. Quoted in Bhattacharya (op. cit., 1997), p. 16.

33. Quoted in Bhattacharya (op. cit., 1997), p. 159.

34. Bhattacharya (op. cit., 1997), p. 60.

35. Cf. *Fritjof Capra, The Web of Life: A New Synthesis of Mind and Matter (London: Harper Collins, 1997).*

36. Amartya Sen, "Tagore and His India, *New York Review of Books*, June 26 1997, p. 59.

37. Quoted in Bhattacharya (op. cit., 1997), p. 16.

38. Ibid.

39. Quoted in Bhattacharya (op. cit., 1997), p. 162.

40. Ibid.

41. Ibid, p. 165.

42. Ibid.

43. Ibid, p. 166.

44. Quoted in Bhattacharya (op. cit., 1997), p. 57.

45. Ibid, p. 61.

46. Ibid, p. 59.

47. Ibid, p. 61.

48. Please see, Bhattacharya (op. cit., 1997), p. 63.

49. Quoted in Bhattacharya (op. cit., 1997), p. 86.

50. Ibid, p. 118.

51. Ibid, p. 91.

52. Ibid, p. 81.

53. Ibid, p. 82.

54. Ibid, p. 88.

55. Ibid.

56. Ibid, p. 89.

57. Ibid.

58. Ibid, p. 90.

59. Ibid, p. 99.

60. Suresh Sharma, "*Swaraj* and the Quest for Freedom: Rabindranath Tagore's Critique of Gandhi's Non-Cooperation," *Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences* 2 (1): 111-122, 1995, p. 115.

61. Ibid, p. 121.

62. Ibid.

63. Sen (op. cit., 1997), p. 58.

64. Ibid, p. 62.

65. Sen himself gives primacy to education as a harbinger of human capability but this education may not be school education. As Jhunjhunwala argues, Sen fails to "distinguish between different types of capabilities, for example, between a capability to read and weave on the loom. The former may require school education, the latter not." Please see Bharat Jhunjhunwala, Welfare State and Globalization: A Critique of Amartya Sen (Jaipur & New Delhi: Rawat Publications, 2000), p. 42.

66. Ibid, p. 60.

67. cf. Sharma (op. cit., 1995).

68. Please see, Ronald J. Terchek, *Gandhi: Struggling for Autonomy* (New Delhi: Vistaart Publications, 2000).

69. For Parel, on this issue of politics and self-realization, there was a major difference between Gandhi and his contemporaries. While Rajchandbhai, a key interlocutor of Gandhi who was influential in changing Gandhi's decision to convert himself to Christianity, had warned Gandhi not to join politics, "Ramana Maharshi believed that Gandhi, though a good man, had sacrificed his chances of making spiritual progress because of his deep involvement in politics." Parel further tells us: "They were not alone in their scepticism about politics. The names of Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo also come up in this context. Though they never explicitly passed judgment on Gandhi's activities, their own position on politics amounts to being an implicit criticism of Gandhi's." See, Anthony J. Parel, p. 14.

70. Cf. Sharma (op.cit., 1995).

71. Parel (op. cit., 1999), p. 17.

72. Ashis Nandy, *The Illegitimacy of Nationalism: Rabindranath Tagore and the Politics of Self* (Delhi: Oxford U. Press, 1994), p. 81.

73. Ibid, p. 3.

74. Cf Nandy (op. cit., 1994).

75. Nandy (op. cit. 1994), p. 19.

76. Bhattacharya (op. cit., 1997).

77. This builds on Professor Pantham's paper on "Gandhi and Nehru" presented at the same Shimla seminar where the present paper was first presented.

78. Quoted in Bhattacharya (op.cit., 1997), p. 23.

79. Akbar S. Ahmed, *Jinnah, Pakistan and Islamic Identity: The Search for Saladin* (London: Routledge, 1997).

80. Sharma (op. cit., 1995), p. 116.

81. Bhattacharya (op. cit., 1997), p. 22.

82. Bhattacharya (op. cit., 1997), p. 22.

83. Sharma (op. cit., 1995), p. 121.

84. Jurgen Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990).

85. Habermas (op. cit., 1990), p. 182.

86. Jurgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions Towards a* Discourse Theory of Law and Democracry (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996).

87. Thomas Pantham, "Habermas' Practical Discourse and Gandhi's *Satyagraha*," in Thomas Pantham and Bhikhu Parekh (eds), *Political Discourse: Explorations in Indian and Western Political Thought" (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1987), p. 308.*

88. Martin J. Matustik, *Postnational Identity: Critical Theory and Existential Philosophy in Habermas, Kierkegaard, and Havel* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1997), p. 29.

89. Ibid.

90. Ibid.

91. Habermas (op. cit., 1990), p. 182.

92. Pantham (op. cit., 1987), p. 309.

93. Habermas (op. cit., 1996), p. 4.

94. Fred R. Dallmayr, *Satyagraha: Gandhi's Truth Revisited, paper presented at the International Congress of Vedanta, University of Madras, 1996, p. 11.*

95. Bhikhu Parekh, *Gandhi's Political Philosophy: A Critical Examination* (London: Macmillan, 1979), p. 144.

96. Paulo Friere, *Pedagogy of Freedom: Ethics, Democracy and Civic Courage* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1998), p. 107.

97. Fred R. Dallmayr, *Life-World, Modernity and Critique* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), p. 24; also, see, Richard Burghart, *The Conditions* of Listening (Delhi: Oxford U. Press, 1996).

98. Matustik (op. cit., 1997), p. 16.

99. Ibid, p. 17.

100. What Dallmayr writes is helpful to make sense of this alternative notion of truth: "While psychologism tends to reduce truth to internal intuition (or a psychic state of mind), discursive epistemology--insisting on initial ignorance or fallibility--perceives truth as emerging through a process of interactive or communicative constitution or construction. What is missed in boht accounts is the "otherness" or demand-quality of truth--the aspect that search for truth, while proceeding in ignorance, is yet impelled by something which exceeds the range of human management or disposition." See, Dallmayr (op. cit., 1996), p. 12.

101. Terchek (op. cit., 2000), p. 36.