

Tagore and some Nobel laureates



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three years later in 1916. Yeats commented on *Gitanjali*: 'we are not moved because of its strangeness, but because we have met our own image'.

Charles Darwin's granddaughter Frances Cornford, on meeting Tagore in Cambridge in July 1912 told Rothenstein: 'I can now imagine a powerful and gentle Christ, which I never could before'.

Paul Nash, the great war artist, said, "I would read *Gitanjali* as I would read the Bible for comfort and for strength."

Yeats, Pound, Bridges, Sturge Moore, Rhys and Saint-John Perse were all moved by the work and touched by the man.

Rudyard Kipling won the Nobel prize in 1907, six years before Tagore. There is 'nothing in print, nothing in any one's recollections of what Kipling thought and said' of Tagore.

As early as 1917 there were several Russian translations of *Gitanjali* from English. One of them was edited by Ivan Bunin, the first Russian Nobel laureate in literature. Besides Ivan Bunin, Romain Rolland (France), Hermann Hesse (Germany), Andre Jide (France), Halldor Laxness (Iceland), Boris Pasternak (Russia), Saint-John Perse (France), Yasunari Kawabata (Japan), Pablo Neruda (Chile), and Octavio Paz (Mexico) are some non-English-speaking Nobel laureates in literature who had a published interest in Tagore.

In the early 1920s after twenty-two books his Spanish translator Jimenez gave a go to Tagore. He was rather sensitive to some suggestions that Tagore had influenced his poetry. However, in later life, while walking one day on a beach in Puerto Rico, his self-exiled home, Jimenez was reported to have bent down and took up the

foam from a wave. "These are Tagore's ashes," he said. "Why could they not have come here from the Ganges flowing along the waters of the world? For it was my hand that helped to give our Spanish form to the rhythm of the immense heart."

There is a marked ambivalence amongst some of the subsequent Nobel laureates who translated Tagore -- Andre Gide, Juan Romo'n Jimenez and Boris Pasternak.

The same work of Tagore had different reactions on different persons. For Yeats, Tagore's autobiography *My Reminiscences* was 'most valuable and rich' -- an opinion he held on till his death. While reading that book Gide noted in his

rather elusive, manner which led one to feel that straightforward exchange or communication was something from which he would shy away. His intensity was impaired by his self-absorption. Naturally, his mystic views were by way of dicta and it was not possible to reason about them.

In 1931 Russell wrote of Tagore: Of what he has done for Europe and America in the way of softening of prejudices and the removal of misconceptions I can speak, and I know that on this account he is worthy of the highest honour.' But he also said: 'I regret I cannot agree with him. His talk about the infinite is vague nonsense. The sort of language that is admired by many

While speaking in 1969 Kawabata quoted from Tagore the following remark: "It is the responsibility which every nation is to reveal itself before the world... [Japan] has given rise to civilization which is perfect in its form, and has evolved a sense of sight which clearly sees truth in beauty and beauty is truth."

Kawabata said, "We may rejoice, and yet at the same time be saddened, by the thought that [our] very ancient *The Tale of the Genji* fulfils the 'responsibility of a nation' to which Tagore referred, much more brilliantly than any of us can do today, and will be very much likely to continue to do in the future."

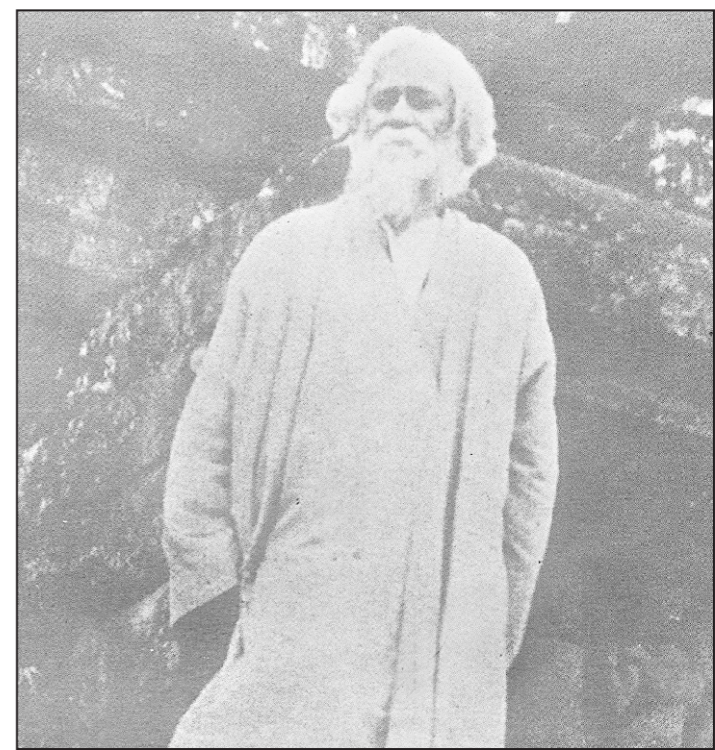
Let me conclude by a brief refer-

conceptions about the nature of the universe -- the world as the unity dependent on humanity... and the world as reality independent of the human factor... Tagore: This world is a human world -- the scientific view of it is also that of the scientific man. Therefore, the world apart from us does not exist; it is a relative world, depending for its reality upon our consciousness.

Einstein: Truth, or beauty, is not independent of man.

Tagore: No. Einstein: If there were no human beings any more, the Apollo Belvedere no longer would be beautiful? Tagore: No.

Einstein: I agree with regard to this conception of beauty, but not



Tomorrow, 22 Shraban, is Tagore's anniversary of death.

Tagore tried, without agreeing or disagreeing, to strike a position of compromise between East and West. "And yet, there is always going on the process of reconciliation between them, the individual taste conforming to the universal standard."

journal: 'But that Indian Orient is not made for me.'

Tagore's western reputation as a writer had taken a down-turn in the thirties of the last century. In 1937 Graham Greene wrote about Tagore, "I cannot believe that anyone but Mr. Yeats can still take his poems very seriously".

George Bernard Shaw regarded Tagore with both respect and ridicule. He named an off-stage character in a playlet, a poet, 'Stupendranath Beggor'. But when Tagore died it was Shaw who asked Sir Kenneth Clark, then director of the National Gallery, to hang portraits of Tagore.

Bertrand Russell said of Tagore: "I confess that his mystic air did not attract me and I recall wishing he could be more direct. He had a soft,

Indians unfortunately does not, in fact, mean anything at all".

In 1968 Yasunari Kawabata became the second Asian to win the Nobel prize for literature. Immediately after the award, while lecturing on 'The existence and discovery of beauty', he said of Tagore. "I remember even now the features and appearance of this sage-like poet, with his long, bushy hair, long moustache and beard, standing tall in loose-flowing Indian garments, and with deep, piercing eyes. His white hair flowed softly down both sides of his forehead; the tufts of hair under the temples also were like two beards, linking up with the hair on his cheeks, continued into his beard, so that gave an impression, to the boy that I was then, of some ancient Oriental wizard."

ence to Einstein who got the prize for physics in 1921. The poet and the scientist developed a personal relationship through their correspondence even before they met in Germany in 1930. On 22 December, 1929 Tagore wrote in a postcard to Einstein: "My salutation is to him who knows me imperfect and loves me."

Dimitri Marianoff, a relative of Einstein, described the poet as the poet with the head of the thinker, and the scientist as the thinker with the head of a poet." He said, "Neither sought to press his opinion. They simply exchanged ideas. But it seemed to an observer as though two planets were engaged in a chat." This is an excerpt from the published account: Einstein: There are two different

with regard to truth. Einstein asserted, "I cannot prove, but I believe in the Pythagorean argument, that the truth is independent of human beings".

Tagore: In any case, if there be any truth unrelated to humanity, then for us it is absolutely non-existing.

Einstein: Then I am more religious than you are.

It has been suggested by Krishna Dutta and Andrew Robinson that Einstein's basic view of sub-atomic nature has been abandoned by most quantum physicists, who have adopted a position that bears considerable resemblances to the one taken by Tagore. In 1992, the Brian David Josephson, who got Nobel prize for his work on super-

conductivity, remarked that 'Tagore is, I think, saying that truth is a subtler concept than Einstein realises'.

Both Tagore and Einstein agreed that the beauty of a price of music is beyond analysis: "It is so difficult to analyse the effect of Eastern and Western music on our minds. ... Our own music touches me more deeply by its fundamental lyrical appeal. European music is epic in character; it has a broad background and is gothic in its structure". Einstein responded, "We want to know whether our music is as conventional or fundamental human feeling, whether to feel consonance and dissonance is natural or is it a convention which we accept".

He continued: "The same uncer-

tainty will always be there about everything fundamental in our experience, in our reaction to art, whether in Europe or Asia. Even the red flower I see before me on your table may not be the same to you and me."

Tagore tried, without agreeing or disagreeing, to strike a position of compromise between East and West. "And yet, there is always going on the process of reconciliation between them, the individual taste conforming to the universal standard."

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Will the developing countries ever get access to cheap life saving medicines?

RON CHEPESIUK

PEOPLE of industrialised countries complain that the prices of lifesaving drugs are outrageous. Yet little do they comprehend that the costs must seem like to people in Bangladesh and other poor countries in South Asia, the lack of affordable drugs can be a life and death issue and many people die everyday as a result.

The sad fact is that poor countries could have ready access to cheap and affordable drugs to treat diseases like AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, which kill millions annually. But thank to the WTO, the U.S. government, and the powerful transnational pharmaceutical lobby, this access has been severely restricted. The bottom line is this: In this age of globalisation, the trade interests of the drug companies are more important than the health and welfare of people in the developing world.

This is still the reality even after President George Bush's much publicised visit to Africa and the announcement that the U.S. would make \$15 billion available to fund a programme to fight the scourge of AIDS in Africa. AIDS activists welcomed the commitment, but they charge that the U.S. efforts to use the WTO in the multinational drug corporations' interests was delaying much needed access to AIDS

medicines.

It hasn't helped Bush's credibility that he appointed Randall Tobias, former chair of the drug multinational Eli Lilly to run the AIDS programme. "His connections with the pharmaceutical industry have led to concerns about whether Tobias is committed to providing access to low-cost generic AIDS drugs, or whether he will purchase patented versions, so protecting the interests of U.S. drug companies," noted The Lancet, the leading British Medical Journal.

To understand the issue of cheap generic drugs versus the patented kind and what it means for poor countries, we have to look at some recent history. This past February at an important WTO meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, 145 delegates gave up on their latest attempt to decide how and when the world's poor would get access to affordable drugs. The Bush administration used its veto to block any loosening of the lucrative patent rights the pharmaceutical industry currently enjoys. Once again the medical and health needs of poor countries were put on the back burner. As one frustrated Kenyan trade minister in attendance explained the decision: "while you people are having this complicated debate, many people are dying."

And the crisis gets worse by the minute. Consider these statistics: In 34 poor countries average life

Given what's at stake for developing countries struggling to deal with critical public health problems and the WTO's well earned reputation for protecting the interest of the rich nations at the expense of the poor, there is a good bet that the number of protesters will swell and the international organisation most reviled by those who oppose globalisation will once again be under siege.

expectancy has dropped mainly because of the AIDS pandemic. In 21 countries more children are now dying before age five. In Zimbabwe people born today will be lucky to reach age 33. In Botswana AIDS affects one in three people.

But as the clock ticks, Uncle Sam and the transnational pharmaceutical lobby are stone walling action on the issue. No less a conservative publication than the Wall Street Journal reported shortly before the meeting that the Republicans were able to take control of Congress in the 2002 mid term elections, thanks, in part, to the pharmaceutical lobby's \$50 million in campaign contributions. Soon after, Congress began weakening the laws on global patent rights that were designed to make cheap drugs available to poor countries.

The U.S. pharmaceutical industry lobby has a big stake in the WTO discussions because they are the primary beneficiaries of intellectual property rights. Last year, U.S. based drug companies made \$36.5 billion dollars in patent rights and royalties, which amounts to more than half the world's total.

The pharmaceutical lobby contends that protecting patents is vital to creating an incentive for drug companies to spend money on research and development. Critics dismiss that argument, charging that the pharmaceuticals really just care about their profit margin. Furthermore, WTO policy limits the trade of generic drugs, which are much cheaper than the brand names, and this has severely handicapped poor countries in their ability to deal with many public

health crises.

The pharmaceuticals have played hard ball with poor countries that dare challenge their power. Thirty-nine of them, with the support of the Bush administration, filed a law suit against South Africa. The crime? South Africa dared to suggest that the pharmaceutical multinationals should make cheap generic drugs available to its AIDS sufferers. The pharmaceuticals, however, withdrew the suit because of intense pressure spearheaded by

a coalition of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) led by Oxfam, Third World Network, Doctors Without Borders and Consumer International.

Nearly fifty developing countries then banded together to work for a resolution that would enforce a moratorium in member states taking legal action within the WTO on cases involving public health and TRIPS (the WTO's Council on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights). Meanwhile,

another law suit by the U.S. against Brazil has gone before the WTO and is being settled within the WTO Dispute Settlement Body.

Kenya is one country that has actually begun to make substantial progress in decreasing the cost of drugs for HIV/AIDS and other major public health problems, such as pneumonia, malaria, diarrhea and tuberculosis. This was due to the DOHA Declaration on Trips and Public Health, which gave countries the authority to issue compulsory

licensing to companies so they can manufacture generic drugs. Countries that couldn't make drugs themselves were permitted to implement a system that allowed them to import them from abroad.

Once again, the multinational pharmaceuticals, under the WTO's umbrella, went to work. At last February's meeting, a proposal was presented to limit the use of compulsory licensing by developing countries to national emergencies. Groups that supported Kenya's access to affordable drugs charged that the proposal would likely double the price of some essential medicines.

"Here in Kenya we have made great progress in decreasing the cost of drugs for many diseases, not just for HIV/AIDS, but for many other public health problems like pneumonia and diarrhea diseases that kill thousands of Kenyans each year," Dr. Chris Stephen Ouma, a spokesman for Action/AIDS Kenya, told journalists in Nairobi. "The cost of some life saving drugs has been decreased by as much as half, but if the current proposal goes through at the WTO, all these gains will be lost."

Under the proposal, a public health problem would have to get out of control before the country could seek a solution to it. "Wealthy countries do not have to declare a national emergency to make use of the TRIPS safeguards, so why should Kenya and other developing countries have to do so?" asked Oduor Ong'wen, the head of EcoNews Africa. "Would African countries have to declare tuberculosis a national emergency in order to get affordable drugs?"

Nothing happened at Geneva, but the WTO remains worried that the continuing deadlock could disrupt negotiations in other important areas. Carlos Perez del Castillo, chairman of the WTO General Council, says the lack of any sort of agreement on the cheap medicine and the farm trade issues will spoil the WTO conference in Cancun this September. Time is

running out, but he believes a solution to the issue of low cost drugs must be found "more for symbolic reasons than for trade reasons" and that it "is absolutely necessary". The fear is that, if nothing happens, a rupture will occur between the WTO's rich and poor members that will affect the organisation's future.

This past June U.S. Trade Representative Robert Zoellick reported that great slides have been made toward brokering an understanding between Western pharmaceutical firms and developing nations. He said that 22 U.S. and European companies had contacted him to tell him that they want to resolve the issue before the crossroads Cancun meeting this September. But how committed are they and is there enough time?

Many leaders in the business sector have expressed concern that the pharmaceutical lobby's stone-walling could cause at the Cancun meeting a repeat of the strong demonstrations that brought WTO deliberations to a standstill in Seattle and disrupted the international organisation's best laid plans.

There are signs that the world could see a revival of the protests that hounded the WTO in the past. That happened at the build up meeting to Cancun held in Doha, Qatar, last September. Thirty-five protesters were arrested, and the police had to put up a tight security net around the conference. The WTO has good reason to worry. Given what's at stake for developing countries struggling to deal with critical public health problems and the WTO's well earned reputation for protecting the interest of the rich nations at the expense of the poor, there is a good bet that the number of protesters will swell and the international organisation most reviled by those who oppose globalisation will once again be under siege.

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Dr. Rubaiul Murshed

All health information to keep you up to date

Is diabetes hereditary?

Diabetes is a clinical syndrome characterised by hyperglycaemia, due to absolute or relative deficiency of Insulin. There are two types -- primary or idiopathic diabetes. Type-1 or Insuline Dependent Diabetes Mellitus (IDDM) and type-II or Non-Insuline Diabetes Mellitus. Type-II may be non-obese and obese.

Type-I usually occurs in the thin and young. The cause remains unknown and is usually multifactorial involving genetic predisposition (HLA-DR3; HLA-DR4) and possibly viral infection (Coxsacke B4, EMC virus, Mengo virus).

The type-II diabetes is the most common kind of diabetes. It usually occurs after the age of 45-50 years. Type two diabetes (also called maturity onset) may be triggered by lifestyle factors like a lack of exercise and an unhealthy diet, which lead to obesity. There is also evidence that it may run in families too. It usually develops later in life, but with current lifestyle changes, we are starting to see more of it in younger adults and children. Children and young adults who are overweight and inactive are particularly at risk.

The good news is that there are steps you can take to reduce your chances of developing diabetes type two. The first thing is to make sure you are including as much activity in your day as possible. Simply walking for 30 minutes or more each day helps. Take the opportunity to move whenever possible. Walk up the stairs instead of taking the lift. Walk to the shops, get off the bus one stop away from your destination. It all adds up.

Healthy eating is also important. Keeping your weight within a normal range lowers your risk of diabetes. Knowing your blood glucose level (BGL) is also valuable. Just as it's advisable to get regular cholesterol level checks, it's also wise to get your BGL done too. If there is a family history of diabetes, it's important to talk to the doctor about the whole situation. She or he can advise you on the right steps you can take to stay healthy. Diabetes Australia can be contacted.

Did you know?

When your doctor prescribes medicine for you, be sure to finish the prescription. If you stop talking the medication as soon as you feel better, you may just get sick again.

Next: Deep vein thrombosis

MD ALI AKBAR MOLLIK

IN the recent years many reinforced concrete (RC) buildings are being constructed by columns and flat plates without beams. This type of construction practice is alarmingly increasing day by day raising their vulnerability to earthquake. The architects, structural designers and building owners have a tendency to eliminate conventional beams for good look and convenience in placing the brick walls as one wishes although the elimination of the beams result in increase of slab dimensions and amount of rebar in it. They are rather making the structure vulnerable to earthquake while caring utility but not the seismic design for although Bangladesh is an earthquake prone country (Chittagong is a reminder).

It also seems that one follows the other in construction of such buildings without any consideration for engineering judgement. Therefore a lot of flat plate structures are now everywhere in Dhaka although

seismicity is a concern in the country. It is time authorities in the capital city seriously rethink about the design and construction practice of such flat plate buildings.

Flat plate construction practice is usually adopted for platform of train, bus etc or car parking lot. Also beams are not desired because storey heights are kept lower in case of multistory car parking buildings. One of the typical examples of flat plate structure is the two-storey car parking building opened to the public recently at the north-east corner of Zia International Airport. The structure is the combination of RC thick flat plates and stout circular columns.

There is no hard and fast rule that

flat plate technology may be applied only in case of platform and car parking lot. Nobody can say that the technology must not be used in case of conventional building -- commercial or residential. But the designer must obey some rules from seismic point of view especially in the design of columns and flat plates. The strength of columns must be substantially higher than the flat plates. If the designer sincerely follows it, he/she must find that the flat plate technology is not feasible proper in case of conventional buildings. At present adoption of the design and construction practice of flat plate RC building is going on without following such design criteria.

For example, a 6-storey residen-

tial building is constructed on a Rajuk plot. This is rectangular in size and designed and constructed by flat plate technology. The centre to centre distance of two columns in longitudinal direction is 16 feet (4.9-m) and the thickness of the flat plate is seven inch (180-mm). Since the building is stronger in the longitudinal direction and weaker in the lateral direction, the columns in lateral direction must be considered when the building is to be analysed in the seismic point of view.

During shaking by earthquake in the lateral direction, one column will be laterally forced by 70 per cent of flat plate width that has been predicted from laboratory research work. But even if it is assumed

conservatively that 50 per cent of flat plate width would act on the column then the effective width of the flat plate becomes eight feet or 96 inch. Therefore an imaginary beam of section 96x7 inches will act during seismic activity. If the strength of the 96x7 inches imaginary beam is greater or approximately equal to the strength of the column section at that level of storey, the building will very likely collapse during earthquake due to higher shear force acting on the column by the flat plate. The building is a similar one like strong-beam weak-column frame building, which is undesirable in seismically active zone. In such a zone weak-beam strong-column frame building is

desirable so that plastic hinge may be formed at the ends of the beams not over the height of columns at storey levels.

If the building is a high-rise one (9-storey or more), the usual practice is that smaller dimensions in columns are supplied with the increase of the story numbers but the thickness of flat plates are similar at any level of story height. Therefore, in the case of high-rise building the upper stories become vulnerable to earthquake than the lower stories.

Building owners who invest millions of taka should consult structural designer with sound knowledge in seismic design. Proper design and construction should be carried out first hand especially in case of RC buildings. If structural defect is identified after the completion of the building, it would be much expensive if proper measures, say, retrofitting is to be taken to eliminate such defects.

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