

## Literature on Novels of Rabindranath Tagore

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### Abstract:

Rabindranath Tagore was born on 7 May, 1861. At some time towards the end of the seventeenth century, his forefathers had migrated from their native lands to Govindpur, one of the three villages which later came to constitute Calcutta. In the course of time, the family came to acquire property and considerable business interests through the pursuit of commercial and banking activities. They had particularly benefited from the growing power of the British East India Company. Rabindranath's grandfather, Dwarkanath Tagore, lived lavishly and broke the Hindu religious ban of those times by travelling to Europe, just like his contemporary, Rammohan Roy, the nineteenth century social and religious reformer. Roy started a religious reform movement in 1828 that came to be known as the Brahma Samaj Movement.<sup>2</sup> Rabindranath's grandfather supported Roy in his attempts at reforming Hindu society. Dwarkanath's son, Devendranath Tagore, also became a staunch supporter of the Brahma Samaj Movement. In order to encourage its spread, in 1863 he established a meditation centre and guest house on some land about 100 miles from Calcutta at a place called 'Santiniketan', the Abode of Peace. Although deeply steeped in Hindu and Islamic traditions, Tagore's family contributed large sums of money for the introduction of Western education, including colleges for the study of science and medicine. This peculiar situation explains the combination of tradition and experiment that came to characterize Rabindranath Tagore's attitude to life.<sup>3</sup>

**Keywords:** Literature, Humanism, Rabindernath Tagore, Novels.

### Introduction:

Review of Literature Rabindranath Tagore is such a kind of personality, who is considered as a blazing resource of the research work. During the searching of the existing literature, it had been observed that there are uncountable research works on Rabindranath Tagore in numerous dimensions; these studies primarily emphasized the Personality of the poet, the poet as a human being, poet as a novelist etc. Moreover, many research works focus upon the impact of different political and socio-cultural issues on his creative works; which is reflected through the different characteristic features of his novels. Along with this, there are plenty of research works which emphasized to find out the aesthetic as well as the philosophical interpretations of his creative works. In particular, some psychological interpretations of the poet's psyche and his works are also found mostly from Freudian perspective. It is evident that other than Freudian analytical angle there was no such types of literatures exist where the interpretations primarily focus on the Eriksonian perspective.

The Bangla novel in its proper sense, came into existence by the middle of the nineteenth century. It was initiated by Pearychand Mitra (1814 - 1883) who invariably used the pen name Tekchand Thakur. His first and the most representative novel *Alaler Ghorer Dulal* may be considered as the first specimen of original novel in Bangla. It narrates the tragic career of the elder son of an elderly man, who had made money but lacked proper education and good sense.<sup>1</sup>

In such a crude and a simple way was drama performed during the age of the Vedic Aryans. Later, different episodes from The Ramayana [Ram Leela], The Mahabharata and The Bhagvadgita were chosen and dramatized in front of the people. This kind of performance is still very popular in India especially during the time of Dussehra, when the episode of the killing of Ravana is enacted in different parts of country (Dr. Sharma, 2010).

The most celebrated dramatists of the ancient era are Ashwaghosh, Bhasa, Shudraka, Kalidas, Harsha, Bhavabhuti, Visha-khadatta, Bhattacharayana, Murari and Rajeshkhora, who enriched Indian theatre with their words like MadhyaMavyaayoda, Urubhangam, Karnabharan, Mrichhatikam, Abhigyan Shakuntalam, Malankagnimitram, Uttar Ramacharitam, Mudrarak, Shasa, Bhagavadajukam, Mattavilasa etc. The supreme achievement of Indian Drama

undoubtedly lies in Kalidasa who is often called the Shakespeare of India. The Sanskrit drama flourished in its glory till the 12th century in India when the Mohammedan intrusion shifted the Sanskrit stage. But till the 15th century, plays of Sanskrit tradition were performed on stage in Tamilnadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra, Utter Pradesh and Gujarat but thereafter, Indian dramatic activity almost ceased due to foreign invasions on India. The beginnings of Loknatya (People' Theatre) are noticed in every state of India from the 17th century onwards.

We see in Bengal "Yatrakirtaniya" "Paol" and "Gaan" in Madhya Pradesh "Mach" in Kashmir "bhandya thar" and in Gujarat the forms were "Bhavai" and "Ramleela" in Northern India. There were "Nautanki, Bhand, Ramleela and Rasleela" in Maharashtra "Tamasha" in Rajasthan "Raas" and "Jhoomer" in Punjab "Bhangra" and "Song" while in Assam it was "Ahiyanat" and "Ankinatya" in Bihar it was "Videshiya" and "Chhari" in West Bengal and Bihar (Dr. Sharma, 2010).

Similarly, Tagore's abstruse philosophy underwrites his well-known brand of "feminism." Tagore sees evolution as a process of refinement, of ascent from the material through the animal towards the spiritual – there is some influence coming from Bergson in shaping his thought in this regard – and thinks that just as homo sapiens has superseded bigger and physically stronger species, within this species a similar supercession will place women ahead of men. Since power-Foucauldian power – has so far been wielded chiefly by man, he blames them for "building up vast and monstrous organizations" – such as the nation, as he has defined it – but now, "woman can bring her fresh mind and all her power of sympathy to this new task of spiritual civilization." Whether this is to come about or not, I was reminded of his general prophecy that women "will have their place, and those bigger creatures [men] will have to give way" (The English Writings, Vol. 2, 416), by a BBC TV documentary comparing the careers of boys (Kaiser Haq, 2010).

This article investigates Rabindranath Tagore's perspectives on women as seen through his short stories. While his poems primarily describe beauty, nature and his search for what is beyond mundane life, his short stories deal with the lives of ordinary people. Women's struggles and sufferings are particularly highlighted. This article argues that while on one hand Tagore reveals the unequal social structure that oppresses women, on another, he creates courageous women who challenge tradition. His short story "Laboratory," written a few months before his death, expresses his latest views on women and gives shape to the "new woman," whom he perceives as arriving in India in the near future. In so doing, Tagore urges women to find an identity of their own, and realize that wifehood and motherhood are but fractions of their who emancipation of women in the nineteenth century Bengal. Tagore's position was not akin to that of an extremist (Bharati Roy, 2010).

This paper explores Tagore's engagement with the wave of emancipation of women in the nineteenth century Bengal. Tagore's position was not akin to that of an extremist. Rather, he opted for a mid-way while representing female voices in his works. This paper focuses on three of Tagore's female protagonists - Mrinmayi, Uma and Mrinal - from The Conclusion (Samapti), Exercise-Book (Khata) and The Wife's Letter (Streer Patra) to show how their repeated individual scripting are mercilessly thwarted by social interventions (Roy Madhumati, 2010).

The novels of Tagore have not been paid due attention as his poetry has been but his novels are remarkable from every point of view. His claim in Bengali fiction is most predominant and now in free India they are being read and revived with great gusto. Had Rabindranath Tagore written nothing but novels, he would still be the most predominant figures in the literary history of Bengal and English literature (P. Satyanarayana, 2013).

Tagore always considers women as social agents to transform society. The women in his poems challenge the male dominated society. "Woman is imaged as a human being in the process of full humanization and man finds in this image the creative principle of growth" 9. According to Tagore, the human world is also the woman's world. He had in mind the sufferings of the young brides in the joint families of Bengal. Tagore never wanted women to

waste their talents, time and energy in the endless tedium of cooking and washing. Woman should extend their radiance beyond the boundaries of the family. He had a great concern for the women employed in cheap labour (Joseph Thomas, 2013).

Much has been said about the way Tagore views his women in his poems, essays, novels and drama. Yet it is the dance dramas of Tagore, a genre quite unique in his time and milieu, which portray the radical nature of Tagore's conception of women and the maturation of their selfhood. The dance dramas illustrate Tagore's bold and perceptive experimentation with various literary forms and techniques and the radical nature of his ideological orientation. Among the dancedramas of Tagore, Chandalika has a special place as it foregrounds the theme of female desire in an untouchable girl, a tabooed subject in his times, indeed even now in Bengali writings. This paper tries to show how Tagore uses the nuances of the dance form to showcase the intersections of caste, class and gender as well as the evolution of selfhood in Prakriti, the Chandal girl (Sutapa Chaudhary, 2010).

Rabindranath Tagore's plays like Chitra, Karana and Kunti and Gandhari's Praye are being inspired from Mahabharat. In Chitra, transformation of Arjun comes from physical to spiritual life. Chitrangadha has got the supernatural power with that she gets the attraction of Arjun. And then, when the beauty of Chitra decrease, Arjun negates Chitra. Later Arjun comes back to the sense. In Karna and Kunti, both the characters are thinking for their salvage at the last hour of the war from its wreckage. In Gandhari's prayer, Gandhari knows the truth of Duryodhana's bad things, whereas his father Dritarashtra supported him. Gandhari knew that the Duryodhana will be doomed for his bad thing (Nagraja, 2012).

Rabindranath Tagore is the well known philosopher, educationist, musician, story writer, humanist, novelist, social reformer, patriot, who wrote the national anthem of the nation. Though he is a genius in many fields of intellect, his dramatic genre is not fully explored. The study undertaken is an honest and humble attempt to discover him as a well versed playwright. The playwright himself translated from the Bengali originals. Such are the following plays Sanyasi or The Ascetic, Malini, Sacrifice, The King and The Queen, Kacha and Devyani, The Mother's Prayer, Karna and Kunti, Ama and Vinayaka, Somaka and Ritiika, Chitra, Autumn Festival, The Waterfall or Muktadhara, Natir Puja and Chandalika. Tagore's plays are theme oriented and symbolical. His themes are different and the treatment is unique and well suited to the them (Pathan M.D., 2012).

He was very much concerned with women's education. His educational institutions have almost always been co-educational and the number of female students is conspicuously large at Santiniketan. He wanted women and men to be offered similar theoretical courses with separate practical courses for women, since their roles in life differed from those of men (Jha ,N.,1994).

Rabindranath Tagore has described the journey of his women characters from ignorance to knowledge. Self-consciousness in all the characters play vital role in their development. As far as Chitra had no consciousness as woman, she was just the princess of the land. When she sees Arjuna, she realizes for the first time her womanhood (Pathan M.D., 2011).

Rabindranath Tagore is an exceptional stature in the history of Indian drama in English. He was a man of the classics of Indian drama and was, at the same time, alive to the European dramatic tradition. His career as a dramatist may be divided into three periods, namely—pre-Gitanjali period, Gitanjali period and post-Gitanjali period. During the pre-Gitanjali period he wrote Sacrifice, King and Queen, Malini, and Balmiki-Pratibha. During the Gitanjali period appeared Autumn Festival, The Castle of Conservatism, The King of the Dark Chamber and The Post Office. During the post-Gitanjali period he wrote The Cycle of Spring, The Free Current Tent and The Red Oleanders. The range and variety of his drama is astounding. Many of his themes are borrowed from Indian mythology, Buddhist legends and other classical resources without any creative reticence or scruple (Yadav Shalini, 2012). Tagore's characters are never artificial creatures. They are ordinary men and women, and children and babies whom he met in

his life in the estate. Till that time ordinary men and women had no entry in Bengali literature. There were none before or after him, who portrayed these categories of characters with so much insight and sympathy. His stories show a wide canvas of reality through which one can have a glimpse of the widest sections of society like peasants, petty officials, poor workers, intelligentsia living in city and villages, impoverished landlords. Brahmin priests, petty traders and so on. Through these characters Tagore shows life as it flows in the Bengali society. The characters have their own personalities. At the same time they are typical of the 19th century Bengal. The tragic conditions of women in all roles of life, wife, mother, daughter, sister are drawn through a number of characters in his stories. The spineless intelligentsia of Bengal during Tagore's days makes central characters in some of his stories. The narrator in many of his stories is a shallow, jaunty, self-regarding person, who is changed (Rai Anita, 2012).

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