Third Chapter

Women in Love in the Epics and in Tagore
Love is an everlasting theme in literature. Where there are males and females, there is love. Where there is literature, there is love. There is no human being without love and there is no literature without love. But in different cultures and different ages love is restricted by society and by conventions. So love in different literatures is differently described. In the epic age in India, child-marriage was prevailing. Very few Indian young women could grow physically and mentally mature enough to know the real love between sexes. They got married before they were aware of what love was. At maximum they only felt something pleasing at hearts. Also traditional concepts, religious customs and caste system greatly controlled young men and young women from having their free love. Women were much more limited than men in love. So we see love stories most between female non-seculars and male ones, between female non-seculars and male seculars. Because these non-secular females were out of traditional and religious limitations. They were free to love male sex whether the males were celestials or seculars. But the love of non-secular women described in the epics mirrored the ideal love of human beings. If, there indeed was love between human partners, it was like what a Chinese saying tells: “love comes after marriage”. But such cases were few because if there was no love before marriage, there was hardly any real love after marriage. While in Tagorean time, the things became much improved, although traditional and religious concepts still existed and although many young women got married when they were children, love between young men and young women was much freer than the epic age. Also as it is mentioned in other chapters that, not like Valmiki and Vyasa in their epics that focused its eyes mainly on royal women, Tagore in his works portrayed heroines from all the classes and backgrounds. These accounted for the fact that Tagore told us much more love stories in almost all the social aspects of his time. From this point, Tagore helped us to know clearly the entire society of his time in love.

3.1. Women in Love in the Epics

3.1.1. Nymphs, Rakasas, Apsaras and Celestials who pursued free love and chased their desired men

In the epics, especially in the *Mahabharata*, those whose love was described
most were nymphs, raksas, apsaras and celestial bears. In the epic age, love of secular women was greatly limited. So love of non-secular characters was depicted to reflect the wish of the secular people. And mostly, the love of non-secular female characters was the love between them and secular males.

3.1.1.1.Urvasi Urvasi was a celestial maid. Indra deputed his charioteer Matali to bring Arjuna to Devaloka, and at Devaloka he learned more about archery and music. The apsara women forgot themselves when they saw the exceptionally handsome Arjuna. Urvaṣi, mad with love, sent her messenger Sitrasena to Indra. Being told about Urvasi’s love Arjuna closed both his ears with hands, and reminded the messenger of Urvasi’s maternal position with reference to him. An engraved Urvasi cursed and turned Arjuna into a eunuch. Indra consoled Arjuna by assuring him that Urvasi’s curse would turn out to be of great benefit to him.

Urvasi had heard about the fame of Pururavas, a king of great renown and had felt tender love for him. She reached the earth. She went to the palace of Pururavas and saw him. Because of the perfection of their figures, both loved mutually. The king asked her to become his wife. She agreed. But she laid down three conditions. 1. She had with herself her two lambs which she brought up as her sons. The king must take care of them. No harm should be done to them. 2. She took only ghee. On no account should he compel her to eat any other food. 3. He was not to come near her in nudity except at the time of coitus. The king agreed to all these conditions. From that day onwards Urvasi lived in the palace as his wife. They lived happily for a long time. Urvasi became conspicuous by her absence in the realm of the gods. She was the most expert actress in the heavens. Indra missed her. So a search was made and they found out that she was in the palace of Pururavas. Indra asked the Gandharvas to bring that celestial woman to heaven somehow. Visvavasu and Gandharvas reached the palace of king Pururavas and waited for an opportunity. One midnight they stole the lambs and took them away through the sky. At that time the king was with Urvasi in the harem. Urvasi heard the cry of the lambs and she was flurried. She reviled at the king who was not capable of taking care of her two lambs. Hearing harsh words the king took his bow and arrow and following the cry of the lambs he was about to chase the thieves. Taking this opportunity, the Gandharvas caused a lightning to flash in the harem. In the light of the lightning Urvasi saw the king
standing nude. The Gandharvas having achieved their task had left the lambs and departed before the king had got out of the room. The king caught hold of the lambs and returned to the harem, within a short while. But Urvasi had gone out of the palace and was on her way. The king was full of grief. He wandered all over the country in search of Urvasi. At last he reached Kuruksetra and saw Urvasi there. He bowed low before her and implored her to return. But Urvasi replied thus, “Women are like wolves. Don’t have alliance with them. O King! You should not put faith in women and thieves.” Saying this, Urvasi vanished. The king became very sad when Urvasi was about to depart from him at Kuruksetra. Seeing this grief Urvasi told him: “O King! if you want so much to live with me, you have to worship the Gandharvas. They will be pleased and give me to you. Don’t be sorry. Now I am pregnant. Come to this place at the end of the year. We can spend that night together. Then we’ll get another son also that night.” Pleased with what Urvasi said, the king returned to his palace. On completion of a year, Pururavas went to Kuruksetra and spent a night with Urvasi. Urvasi gave him a very beautiful child and then she vanished. The king sat there and praised the Gandharvas, who gave the king an Agnisthali (a fire pot). Because of his derangement, thinking it to be Urvasi the king took the sthali (pot) and wandered about in the forest. At last placing the pot in the forest, the king returned to his palace.

3.1.1.2. Gunakesi

Gunakesi was daughter of Matali, the charioteer of Indra. She was more beautiful and well-behaved than many other girls. Matali went about in search of a suitable husband for her in all the three worlds. At last he met Narada going to Kubera. He told Narada about this and Narada took Matali to Patalaloka to search for a suitable bridegroom. Then they found a serpent boy named Sumukha (good-looking) worthy of his name who was the grandson of Aryaka and son of Cikura born of the family of Airavata. But Sumukha was in danger at that time. Garuda had taken a vow that he would eat Sumukha the next month. Aryaka told Narada about this. Narada took Sumukha to the court of Indra. Mahavisnu was also present there. When Narada told the story there Indra blessed Sumukha and granted him long life. This made Garuda angry and he went to the court of Indra and rebuked Indra. Mahavisnu who was present there then did not like the act of Garuda and he called the latter to his side and asked him whether he could bear the
weight of one of his arms. With arrogance Garuda said ‘yes’ and then Visnu placed one of his arms on his shoulder. Garuda found the weight unbearable and begged pardon. The marriage of Sumukha with Gunakesi was conducted. Although she knew that Sumukha was to be eaten by Garuda, Guankesi was determined to marry him. She told Sumukha, “Whether you are immortal or blessed with a long life or a short one, whatever you might be, it is you indeed who are the beloved of Gunakesi. Your faith shall not be fruitless. Should death come to snatch you away, even if the opportunity to proffer the wedding garland does not arise, Gunakesi would still cast around your neck the garland of her love-born arms. I am not the amrita, or am I the giver of life, but I can turn your death into the nectar. Should the city of gods deprive you, should the king of gods not give you amrita, still do not sorrow, you Naga youth. Matali’s daughter Gunakesi will not deprive you. If you should truly go out like a short-lived tongue of flame, then before you die out, feel on your breast the anguished, infatuated breath of your beloved, the daughter of Matali.” Thrilled with surprise Sumuka said, “What manner of love is this, lady?” She answered, “this is very simple, straightforward rule of love, son of Cikura. Gunakesi has loved you, not your life’s eternity. Your heart is a hundred times more desirable and precious to me than your life span. O Naga prince, I am a lover. To me it is that momentary touch of your breast that will be eternal, son of Cikura, if in your heart there is even a drop of love for me.”

3.1.1.3. Surpanaka Surpanaka was a lustful and vicious Raksassi. She was the sister of Ravana. She, in her search for a suitable husband, happened to reach and settle down at the southern border of Dandakaranya. It was at this stage that she came to know of Rama and his party. She disguised as a Lalita and entered Rama’s asrama. The sight of Rama made her a victim to carnal passion. She submitted her desire to him, but he turned down her prayer. In jest he recommended Laksmana to Surpanaka who had been ensnared in the noose of love, “Gentle one, I am already wedded. This young brother of mine is good-looking and is of an excellent character. This powerful one is named Laksmna. He has not tasted the pleasure of a wife’s company and is desirous of having a

Subodh Ghosh, Love Stories from the Mahabharata, p.28.
spouse.” The Raksasi intoxicated with lust at once courted Laksmana who rejected her immediately. The disappointed Surpanaka left the asrama at once. But she appeared again in front of Sita. Feeling that so long as Sita was alive, Rama would not be prepared to court her, Surpanaka rushed furiously at Sita. Laksmana who was watching the whole thing, suddenly rushed to the spot and pushed her out of the asram. He cut off her ears, nose and breasts. Surpanaka, bleeding profusely from her mutilation, hastened to her brother Ravana to inform him of the calamity. She instigated Ravana to abduct Sita to have her as his wife. For the beauty of Sita, Ravana kidnapped Sita.

Almost all the non-secular women in the epics were initiative in love.

3.1.1.4. Devayani Devayani was Sukracharya’s daughter. Kaca, son of Brhaspati became Sukracarya’s disciple to learn the Mrtasanjivani Vidya, the science to ward off death forever. Devayani fell madly in love with Kaca. But after his studies under her father were over Kaca returned to the Devaloka without marrying Devayani, who cursed that Kaca’s learning should prove useless. And Kaca cursed her in turn that nobody from the Devaloka should marry her.

3.1.1.5. Hidimba Hidimba was a Raksasa. When Kunti and the Pandavas escaped from the lacquer palace to the forests, she was attracted towards Bhima and she prayed for return of his love, which Bhima refused. Then Hidimba approached Kunti and requested her to ask Bhima to marry her. The Pandavas agreed to the proposal on condition that Bhima and Hidimba should enjoy their honeymoon in the forests and on mountains but Bhima should return to them at dusk every day. She gladly accepted and they had a son Ghatotkaca. Here Hidimba had her desire fulfilled whereas Devayani failed.

3.1.1.6. Srutavati Srutavati, who was Bharadvaja’s daughter, performed a very severe penance to get Indra as her husband. To test her character, Indra assumed the shape of Asistha and went to Srutavati. She received the guest with due reverence. Pleased with her treatment, the guest handed over five raw fruits and asked her to cook for him. Srutavati gladly agreed. She proceeded to cook the fruits but even after burning all the fuel she had, the fruits were not properly cooked. So she began to use her limbs one by

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240 Valmiki, Ramayana, p. 38, Section 18, A ranyakandm.
one as fuel and burned them up. Indra was deeply impressed by her self-sacrifice and married her.

3.1.1.7. **Pramadvara** Pramadvara was the wife of Ruru who sacrificed half of his life for the sake of his love. Pramadvara was the daughter of the nymph Menaka born of the Gandharva Visvavasu. As soon as the child was born Menaka threw the child into forest and left for Devaloka. Shulakesa, a sage who was engaged in penance in that forest in a hermitage, heard the cry of the child and came out of his *asrama*. On seeing a child lying unclaimed and uncared for, he took the child to his *asrama* and named her Pramadvara and brought her up. She grew into a charming maiden and one day prince Ruru returning from hunting saw her and fell in love with her instantly. The sage was pleased to give her in marriage to the king and so fixed the marriage date. The day previous to her marriage they trampled over a poisonous snake while walking in the forest with her companion and immediately she fell dead soon after the serpent bit her. Ruru’s grief was uncontrollable. He wept bitterly aloud, “If I have from my very birth with great devotion taken vows, let Pramadvara rise up alive.” Then a *devaduta* (messenger from god) appeared before him and said that all his wails were of no avail since it was only in the order of things one whose *ayus* (life span) was over should die. Ruru then enquired him of a way of escape from this inevitable calamity and then the devaduta told him that if Ruru was prepared to surrender half of his *ayus* in favor of Pramadvara she would come back to life. Ruru agreed and they went to Dharmaraja (god of death) and told him of his wish. Dharmaraja brought back Pramadvara to life. And she stood before Ruru as if just woken up from sleep. Their marriage was duly conducted.

1.1.1.8. **Sakuntala--- A model of love**

We have another female model of love--- the nymph Sakuntala. She was a mixture of tragedy and comedy. She was the foster-daughter of sage Kanva, a daughter born to Visvamitra from the *Aspara* Menaka. Visvamitra was engaged in the intense *tapas* on the banks of the Malini in the Himalayas. Indra deputed Menaka to break the Maharsi’s *tapas*. She enticed him away from his *tapas* and got pregnant by him. But she forsook the child on the banks of the Malini and returned to the Devaloka. Birds gathered round the

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241 Sulodh Ghosh, *Love Stories from the Mahabharata*, p.188.
forsaken child and started petting the child and then Kanva came that way. He saw the child and took it with him to the _asrama_. The child was named Sakuntala. Sakuntala, now grown up as a beauty, was alone in the _asrama_ when king Dusyanta, out in the forest on a hunting expedition, came there. In the absence of her foster-father Kanva, Sakuntala welcomed the king. They fell in love with each other and the king married her according to the _Gandharva_ way of marriage and lived with her for a few days. Sakuntala became pregnant. The king returned to his palace. Kanva returned to the _asrama_ and he was pleased that what had been destined to take place had happened. In due course of time, Sakuntala delivered a boy, who was named Sarvadamana. When the child grew up, Kanva sent his mother along with him to Dusyanta's palace. The king did not recognize them, but a celestial voice convinced him that the child was his own son. The king welcomed his wife and son and Sakuntala lived in the palace as his honored wife. Also, we have Sakuntala's love story written by Kalidasa which is more moving. It is said that when Dusyanta left for palace, he promised Sakuntala that he would soon return to her. He gave her his signet ring. Sad over the separation from Dusyanta and immersed in thought about him, Sakuntala was sitting there in the _asrama_ when Durvasas came there. She did not see the Maharsi nor welcome him respectively. He got angry at this and cursed her that she be forgotten by him about whom she was so intensely thinking. Sakuntala did not hear the curse either but her companions who heard it begged pardon of the _muni_ on behalf of Sakuntala and prayed for absolution from the curse. Then he said that if Sakuntala showed the king any sign about their relationship the king would remember her. Her companion did not tell Sakuntala about the above incidents. Days and months passed by, yet Dusyanta did not come and Kanva sent Sakuntala, who was prominent, to the palace. On their way to the palace, Sakuntala and her companions bathed in the Somavaratirtha, and nobody noticed Sakuntala losing her finger ring in the river. They reached the king's palace. None noticed them. Dusyanta did not remember having even seen her. The signet ring was missing. After leaving Sakuntala at the palace her companions returned to the _asrama_. Menaka, whose heart melt at the apathetic wailings of Sakuntala led her to Kasyapa's _asrama_, left her there and returned to the _Devaloka_. The signet ring lost by Sakuntala was swallowed by a fish, which was netted by a fisherman, who went about the streets to sell the ring extracted from inside the fish.
Servants of the king took the fisherman captive. At the sight of the ring thoughts about the past d awned on the king and he remembered all about Sakuntala. His days became sad pondering over his separation from Sakuntala. Sakuntala delivered a boy at the asrama of Kasyapa. The child was named Sarvadamana and he grew up as a courageous boy. On his return from the Devasura war, Dusyanta entered Kasyapa’s asrama where he saw Sarvadamana counting the teeth of a lion he had captured. Having heard the details about him from the boy, the king went inside the asrama and saw Kasyapa and Sakuntala. He returned Sakuntala and the boy to the palace. It was this boy, Sarvadamana, who afterwards became Bharata, the famous emperor of India.

3.1.1.9. Svaha Svaha was daughter of Daksha. She loved Agni and tried to block the way of Agni when he was crossing over a stream. But Agni did not agree. She told him that there would be danger if he refused. When Agni was doing yajna for seven rishis, he felt some enchantment of the abode of the seven rishis. She assumed the disguise of a rishi’s wife every night in the privacy of the forest to date Agni. When she was deceiving Agni in disguise of the last rishi’s wife, Agni recognized her. In great shame, pregnant with Agni’s child, she left. Later Agni remembered her but she could not be called back.

3.1.1.10. Parvati,—the most typical in love initiative

Maybe Parvati (the incarnation of Sati) was most typical in initiative love. Parvati (Uma, Kali) was the daughter of a Parvata. The natural inclination to get the favor of Siva led her to start a severe penance. She, accompanied by two of her girl companions, went to the shores of a river deep inside the forest and started practicing austerities. In the summer she would sit in the midst of Panchagni (five fires) and in the monsoons she would sit in water doing penance. The penance lasted for a thousand years. Siva who was roaming about in search of Sati went once to the palace of Himavan. Siva agreed to stay there for some time at the persistent request of Himavan. During his stay there Siva understood that one of the daughters of his host was doing penance meditating on Sankara. Curious to know more about her, Siva one day went to the asrama of Parvati. Parvati saw Siva and she stood up bowing before him. Siva was pleased with her. But before Parvati could have another look at Siva, he vanished. Parvati was disappointed and continued her penance again. Years went by and one day there came into her asrama a Vatu (a Brahmin brahmacari). Parvati and her companions stood up and worshipped the
Vatu who looked bright with ashes on his body and wearing rudraksa and aksamala (berry of a tree and rosary made of it) and carrying in his hand a danda (stick) and a kamandaku (water pot). After formal introduction the Vatu asked Parvati the purpose of her penance and Parvati told him all about it. Then the Vatu asked her in tones of surprise why such a beautiful girl like her born to be the wife of a king, should go after a crudely dressed aged man like Siva who went on the back of a bullock always. Parvati resented the statement of the Vatu and got angry with him. Then Siva appeared before her in his real form and married Parvati in the presence of devis and maharisits.

3.1.2. Enticement—A desire but not love

In the Mahabharata, there are some stories about how nymphs, asparas and celestial maidens enticed sages to destroy their penance. This does not seem a love but a desire only.

Menaka was a nymph of extraordinary beauty. Taking instructions from Indra, Menaka used to entice many sages and destroy their power of penance. Once Menaka became pregnant by a Gandharva named Visvavasu. On the day she delivered her baby she left the new born on the banks of a river and went to Svarga. A sage named Sthulakesa, who was doing penance nearby took the babe and brought it up. When Visvamitra was performing penance in the forests, Menaka, under the instruction from Indra, went and enticed him and broke penance. A girl was born to Menaka and became later the celebrated Sakuntala. Once again when Visvamitra was performing penance in Puskaratirtha, Menaka approached him and again Visvamitra fell in love with her and they lived together for ten years. Then one day Visvamitra realized his folly and leaving her went again to the forest for penance. Then she enticed the sage Mankana. When once Durvasa visited Devaloka, it was Menaka who presented him with a flower garland. This incident led to the churning of the milky ocean. Menaka attended the Janmotsava of Arjuna and gave a music performance in the court of Indra in honor of Arjuna. She was greatly attracted by Arjuna.

3.1.3. Indrani—A celestial maid who warded off enticement

Indra’s wife was a good wife loyal to his husband and warded off all the enticements of other men. An asura called Surapadma once coveted Indrani. He deputed his men to fetch Saci (Indrani) one way or other to him, went to and stayed in the Chyali temple in
Konkanadesa, and afterwards Indra went to Mount Kailasa after asking Sasta to guard Indrani. During Indra's absence Ajmukhi, the sister of Surapadma met Indrani and induced her to become Surapadma's wife. Indrani refused. Ultimately Indra returned and took Indrani back to the Devaloka.

Indra killed Vrittrasura, an enemy of the gods. As Indra had resorted the treachery for killing the enemy, he incurred the sin of 'Brahmanhatya'. Once Indra went to the Marasasaras, without the knowledge of anybody and hid himself in the petal of a lotus. The gods and especially Sacidevi (Indrani) were much alarmed at the disappearance of Devendra (Indra). Heaven was without a king. Bad omens began to appear. Indra, who had hidden in the lotus in the shape of a water-snake was not at all visible as the petals had closed over him. It was at this critical moment that king Nahusa completed a hundred horse-sacrifices and became eligible for the throne of Devendra. At a great gathering of the gods, Nahusa was elected as the Devendra. Though Nahusa got all the celestial maids at his proposal in the Nandanodyana (Nanda Garden) his passion for women was not satiated. So he began to have an eye on Indrani. She was in sorrow and misery at the disappearance of her husband Indra, and did not look at him with favor on this new move on the part of the new Indra. She sought the help of Brahaspati, who agreed to protect her from Nahusa. The newly-elected Indra could not tolerate this disloyalty on the part of Indrani. He became furious and threatened Brahaspati with death if Indrani was not sent to him forthwith. All hermits gathered round Nahusa, and tried to dissuade him from his attempt, but he would not be dissuaded. Nahusa, belittled Brahaspati and all the hermits and was rude to them. Finally, the hermits, being afraid of Nahusa, went to Brahaspati to persuade him to send Indrani to Nahusa. Brahaspati suggested to Indrani a way of safety. Accordingly, she came to Nahusa and said to him, "Lord, to become your wife is a matter of great pleasure to me. But before that I must make sure if my husband is living anywhere. So allow me to make a search." Nahusa agreed and by the blessing of the devi, Indrani found out her husband. But Indra would not return to the court, with Indrani, who then complained about Nahusa's outrageous behavior. Indra advised her a new way to protect herself from Nahusa's onslaught. Indrani returned to Nahusa and told him, "Lord, women generally love pomp and glory. I have a mania for vehicles. You should make a palanquin. Let the palanquin bearers be hermits. You must come to my house in the
palanquin with the hermits as your palanquin bearers and then I will accept you as my husband.” Nahusa agreed. He employed Agastya and such other hermits to bear the palanquin. He got his palanquin and started out for Indrani's house. His desire for Indrani was such that he thought the hermits to be very slow. To make them quick enough he ordered “sarp, sarp,” (walk quick, walk quick). The hermits began to run. Still Nahusa was not satisfied. He kicked at the heads of the hermits and whipped the dwarfish Agastya. Agastya got angry and cursed Nahusa thus: “Since you have whipped me with ‘sarpa, sarpa’, may you be transformed into a mahasarp (huge serpent) and fall into the great forest”. The horror-stricken Nahusa pleased Agastya by praise. Agastya said that Nahusa would be freed from the curse and attain heaven when he happened to meet Dharmaputra. Nahusa instantly changed into a serpent of immense size and slid into a great forest of the Himalayas.

3.1.4. Celestials deputed to create split between demons

Tilottama was a prominent celestial maiden deputed by Brahman to create split between two demon brothers. Two demons named Suna and Upasunda obtained invincible powers by doing penance. To make these two brothers quarrel with each other, by directions from Brahma, Visvakarma created Tilottama. Visvakarma collected from all inanimate and animate objects parts of objects beautiful to look at and created the enchanting Tilottama. Tilottama was then made to come to the world through the womb of Kasyapa’s wife. Because she was made tilamsa (small article of all the best (uttama) articles) of the world she got the name of Tilottama. When the two demon brothers Suna and Upasunda were creating great havoc in the world by their cruel and immortal deeds, it was Tilottama who was deputed by Brahma to create a split between them. On the eve of her departure to the world she went to Devalok to bid adieu. Brahman stood facing the south and Siva stood facing the north and Tilottama stood in the centre surrounded by the devas. Tilottama circled round the devas worshiping them. Siva was enamoured of her beauty and wanted to see her always and so a face on all the four sides of his head sprang up so that he could see her always as she circled round him. Indra was so enamored about her that he found his eyes insufficient to enjoy her beauty. Sunda was an asura. He had a brother named Upasunda. They were very cruel asuras. The two brothers performed tapas on the Vindhya Mountains with object of conquering the three worlds. All attempts
made by Devas to break up their penance failed and ultimately Brahma appeared before them. They secured a boon from Brahma to the effect that they would not be killed by anyone else but only mutually. Swollen-headed by the boon the brothers conquered the three worlds. And none could kill them. Ultimately the Devas sent Tilottama, the celestial damsels to them and she made them quarrel with each other. Both of them who fell in love with Tilottama and wanted her as his wife fought with each other and got killed.

3.1.5. Varga who became crocodile for enticing hermit

Once there lived an “asparas” (celestial maid) named Varga in Devaranya. She had four friends called Surabhiyi, Samci, Budbuda and Lata. Once they were going to the house of Kubera, their patron. On the way they saw a hermit. They saw the whole forest shining with the radiance of the power of penance of the hermit. They decided to entice the hermit somehow. With this intention they entered his hermitage. Seeing their dalliance and coquetry, the hermit got angry and cursed them to become crocodiles for hundreds years. They implored him with tears, for liberation from the curse. The hermit told them that in due course a noble man would come and get them out of the water and that they would obtain their original form. They walked towards a lake. On the way they saw Narada. They told him everything. He told them that on the coast of the south ocean there are five tirthas (holy baths) known as Agastya, Saubhadra, Pauloma, Karandhama and Suprasanna. They might go to these lakes and live there as crocodiles in each of them. In due course, Arjuna, the son of Pandu, would come and redeem them. According to the words of Narada, the five celestial maids walked to the south ocean and reached the Panchatirtha (the five holy baths) and each of them entered a lake as a crocodile. After this nobody dared to live near those holy baths. After some time Arjuna started on his pilgrimage. He passed through many places and reached the Panchatirtha. He enquired why the place was forsaken by people. The hermits told him that there was a crocodile in each of the five baths and that they would eat anybody who got into the bath. Arjuna got into one of the lakes. Immediately a crocodile came and caught hold of him. With great difficulty he dragged it out of the lake and instantly the crocodile changed into a beautiful damsel. The celestial maid Varga told the amazed Arjuna her story and she added that her four friends were lying in the other lakes. Arjuna redeemed every one of them. After this, Varga and her friends went to Devaranya and Arjuna to Manalura. From
that day onwards the five tirthas came to be known as Nāritirthas

3.1.6. Susobhana— a game player of love

Susobhana was the daughter of Ayu, the Manduka-king. She rebelled against her feminine nature and played games of love. Her father wanted to hold a svayamvara, but she protested, obstructed her father’s plans and ultimately flared up. “Do not build a new cage, father, for the pet bird caged in your love. I won’t be able to bear it.” Susobhana had spun a profoundly cunning strategy to protect herself from the scandal. She would not reveal her identity to any aspiring lover. No one knew who this much-desired woman was nor whence he came and where she disappeared forever. Was she truly the daughter of a moral father? Was she actually a woman brought up in this earthly world? Had she been churned out of the fragrance of all the flowers of some forest? Or was she a companion of the goddess of all the directions, a fairy visiting this dusty earth to pick up a few pearls? Or was she a dream of this blooming lotus, or the thirst of those constellations? That mystery was known to the maid servant Subinita. Nothing of all the wiles and strategies and encounters of the whimsical was unknown to her. Before surrendering herself to each lover, Susobhana requested one promise: “You will never show me a tamaal tree on a cloudy day.” She tricked each lover the moment her eyes fell on a tamaal tree. That very instant she vanished. Every time when Subinita persuaded her, saying, “Such a life can not be desired by any woman”, she asked, “What is the goal of a woman’s life?” “To be a bride” was the answer. Again, shattering the maiden’s advice by the sound of her scornful laughter, Shobhana said, “Being a wife means becoming a man’s slave.” When she saw mighty Parikshit, king of the Ikṣvaku dynasty, attracted by her beauty, the king fell in love with her immediately. But she played the same trick. The king was greatly angered and attacked the Mandula kingdom by force. She was taking a poison to end her life when the servant came and told her that the king Parikshit was waiting for her. Putting down the cup of poison, she told the servant to make her up in the bridal dress.

Indian women are shy and reserved in love. But why do we see such women who pursued free love and chased their desired men in the epics? It is noticeable that in the

242 Subodh Ghosh, Love Stories from the Mahabharata, p.3.
243 Ibid. p. 7.
epics they were not secular women, they were either nymphs, raksasis or celestials. They were not bound by religious rules, traditions, castes, dowry or even age. Only for those who were not mortal such love was believable.

3.1.7. Secular women in love

In the epics, Sita and Draupadi are two models that are admired and respected by traditional women because they devoted themselves completely to their husbands. But their love was not free love at all and their marriage was arranged by their fathers through svayamvara. In fact, they were not happy at all. They were exiled with their husbands for many years. Sita was exiled again by her husband Rama to the forest and Draupadi died on the last journey with her ascetic husbands. Thus they faced many tragedies in their lives.

3.1.8. Models of women in love

In the epics we have consummate and model women like Damayanti and Savitri, who pursued real love and were real models of women in all ages.

3.1.8.1. Damayanti was the only daughter of Bhima, the king of Vidarbha, and was very lovely and accomplished. Nala was brave and handsome, virtuous and learned in the Vedas, skilled in arms and in the management of horses, but he had a fatal defect: he was addicted to the vice of gambling. They loved each other for the mere fame of their respective virtues and beauty. And Damayanti pined for the presence of her unknown lover. Bhima determined that his daughter should hold a svayamvara. Rajas flocked to it in crowds, among them Nala. Four gods, Indra, Agni, Varuna, and Yama also attended. Nala met them on the way, and reverently promised to do their will. They bade him enter the palace and informed Damayanti that they would present themselves among the candidates, and she must choose one of them. Nala reluctantly performed his task, but his presence perfected his conquest and the maiden announced her resolve to pay due homage to the gods but to choose him for her lord. Each of the four gods assumed the form of Nala, but the lover’s eye distinguished the real one and she made her choice. They married and lived for sometime in great happiness. Kali arrived too late for the svayamvara. He resolved to revenge for rejection and he used his peculiar powers to ruin Nala through his love of gambling. Nala lost his kingdom and even his clothes. But,
unlike Yudhisthira, he did not lose his wife Damayanti. So the ruined monarch wandered forth into the forest with his wife and suffered great privations. He abandoned his wife in the hope that she would return to her father's court and he left her while she was sleeping. Thus left alone, Damayanti wandered about in great distress. She did not go home but at length found service and protection with the princess of Cedi. Nala fell away with the king of serpents who was under a curse from which Nala was to deliver him. The serpent bit Nala and told him that the poison should work upon him till the evil spirit was gone out of him and that he should then be restored to all he loved. Through the effect of the bite he was transformed into a misshapen dwarf. In this form he entered the service of Rituparna, king of Ayodhya, as a trainer of horses and an accomplished cook under the name of Bahuka. Damayanti was discovered and conducted to her father's home. Great search was made for Nala, but in vain, for no one recognized him in his altered form. A Brahmin suspected him and informed about this to Damayanti. She resolved to test his feelings by announcing her intention of holding a second svayamvara: King Rituparna determined to attend it and took Nala with him as driver of his chariot. Rituparna was skilled in numbers and the rules of chances. On their journey he gave a wonderful proof of his, and he instructed Nala in the science. When Nala had acquired this knowledge the evil spirit went out of him, but still he retained his infirmity. Damayanti half penetrated his disguise and at length convinced that he was her husband by the flavor of a dish he had cooked. They met and after some loving reproaches and the interference of the gods, they became reconciled and Nala resumed his form. Profiting by the knowledge he had obtained from Rituparna, he won back all and became king again. Here, although a svayamvara was held by the father as in the case of Sita and Draupadi, Damayanti chose her beloved in spite of confusion of the gods. So, she selected her husband at her own will.

3.1.8.2. Savitri Savitri was the daughter of king Asvapati. She insisted on choosing a husband at her own will and she fell in love with the prince Satyavan in distress, and disregarding the warning by a seer that he had only one year to live she married him and they lived a happy life. When the fatal day arrived, Satyavan went out to cut woods and she followed him. There he fell, dying, to the earth, and she, as she supported him, saw a figure who told her that he was Yama, the king of the dead, and that he had come for her...
husband's spirit. Yama carried off the spirit towards the shades, but Savitri followed him. The following are the details of the story as Savitri saved Satyavan, her husband from Yama with her devotion and wisdom.

Savitri: "Who are you Lord? What may be your object in coming here"?

Yama: "Hei, Savitri. As you are a hermitess of chastity I may converse with you. I am Yama. I have come to take away the life of your husband".

Savitri: "Lord, I have heard that your messengers come and take away the souls. How is that you have come in person today?"

Yama: "This Satyavan is a righteous man who is an ocean of good qualities. Messengers are not sent, in the cases of persons like him."

Saying thus Yama cast his rope and caught the soul of Satyavan. Savitri saw the body of her husband lying without life and soul. Savitri followed Yama who had gone to the south with the soul of Satyavan.

Yama: "Child, you go back and conduct his funerals. You have followed your husband as far as you can."

Savitri: "I am coming to the place where my husband is being taken. That is the duty of a wife. What impediment is there on the way to follow you, when I have the merits of vows, fast devotion to my elders, love and regard for my husband and the good will of yourself, my Lord?"244

When Yama realized that it was difficult to send Savitri back, he asked her to ask for any boon. Yama was prepared to give anything except the life of Satyavan. She requested for the recovery of sight by Dyumatsena. Yama granted it. Still Savitri did not turn back. Yama asked her to pray for one more boon. She requested for the recovery of the lost kingdom of Dyumatsena. Yama sanctioned that request also. Still she followed Yama, who was ready to grant her a third boon. She requested: "My father may, please be given a hundred sons who would continue the family." Yama granted that too. But she did not turn back. Yama told her that she might ask for a fourth boon. "I may be given a hundred sons born directly from Satyavan." Yama granted this fourth boon also. Then Savitri asked how the boon would be realized unless the life of Satyavan was given back to him.

244 M.B. Yama Parva, p.299, Chap. 293.
Yama was pleased with her at her love and devotion for her husband and returned the life of Satyavan. Yama blessed her that she and Satyavan would live for hundred years. Yama disappeared. Savitri returned and sat there taking the body of Satyavan on her lap. Satyavan came back to life. She finally dragged her husband back from death. Both of them rose up. Night came on. It was dark. They could not find the way. Satyavan wanted to reach their hermitage somehow. Savitri took the axe and supporting her husband in the dim moonlight, walked to the hermitage. Dyumatsena got back the sight. He started with his wife in search of his children, and walked about in the forest. At last all of them met together. They reached home. Then Savitri told them all that had happened. Everyone was delighted. She was not only extremely devoted to her husband after their marriage but also very clever, gentle and persistent enough to soften and move Yama.

3.1.9. Rishi maidens who also desire for love:

As is usually known, rishis are far from secular love in their hermitages. They don’t have any desires of secular people. But in fact this is not the case because they are also human beings and as human beings they have naturally all the feelings of secular people. So it is not strange that rishi maidens also desire for love. Lapika was a rishi-maiden. She desired for love. And she every day waited on the forest path hoping to see a man of her dreams. One day she did meet sage Mandapal who met her dream in every aspect. But Mandapal said that she was not the woman he was waiting for, the one whom he was waiting was Jarita the Sharingak maiden. She said, “The love of Jarita the Sharingak maiden will gain you offspring, but not the bliss of love...I am a woman even of this earth, but I know the way to keep the life of love blissful in eternal companionship, free from earthly meanness, misery and pain. I know the secret of that life... O, rishi, sit beside me in my grove on this flower-bedecked swing as my eternal lover....In Lapita’s life there is no place for any one but you.” But Mandapal left her and he did find Jarita who had been waiting for him and married her. Soon they had four children.

Mandapal’s hut was bewildered and helpless with the sounds of infants’ tender cries. Now Jarita was busy looking after the children and neglected the affection to her husband who felt alone.

245 Subodh Ghosh, Love Stories from the Mahabharata, p. 74.
Mandapal left her. He found Lapika who was still waiting and they were united. They felt very happy. But one day, Mandapal saw from afar that a gust of flame was rushing towards the Kandav forest where Jarita and his four children were living. But Lapika did not grieve. He begged lord Hutanshan, the god of fire, to spare his four sons from the fire and the god agreed. Lapika prevented him from going to see his children and threatened that if he would leave her, she would curse his children. Now he knew that Lapika had a poisonous heart. He returned to Jarita, "You are not just beautiful, Jarita, it is you who is beauty. You are not only my lover, you are my love."246 Jarita placed the garland round Mandapal's neck. One day Lapika appeared surprisingly. They were afraid that she would avenge and curse their children. But Lapika said, "Lapika has accepted defeat and it is only to announce this. I am vanquished not by you. It is your four children who vanquished me."247

And Lapika left them forever.

3.1.10. Sulabha—A sannyasini with desire and love at heart

Sannyasini Sulabha was daughter of the seer-king Pradha, the king of Mithila. He summoned an assembly for his daughter's bridegroom. All the kshatriyas came barring the Videha king Janaka. He was not attempted to win the wedding garland of any wondrously beautiful women of this world. For such assembly, the king and his daughter were expecting Janaka, but he did not come. In great disappointment, she threw the garland away. This was the same for a royal family. To clear such shame, her father told her to be a traveler on path to a world yearning for pleasure. Ten years passed, but over the sannyasini's saffron garment the designs of particles pollen dust have been left, drawn by hordes of flippant bees on a river bank. She came without awareness to Mathila where Janaka king stayed. She entered the court directly to see Janaka. Janaka: "What is the cause of your fortunate arrival in this royal court of Vedeha's rule, Janaka." Janaka felt embarrassed, "What is the reason for this of yours?" "A hope in my heart will be fulfilled with this faith have I come to see you, Lord of Mithila."248

Now Janaka knew the sannyasini was just the daughter of king Pradha for whose

246 Ibid. p.83.
247 Ibid. p. 84.
248 Ibid. p.253.
assembly bride groom hall he did not go. He was captivated and overwhelmed. He greatly regretted that he did not go. Janaka left her in the court that night, they transcended the limit of worldly desire. Her desire fulfilled, in spite of the attachment, she left without any hesitation.

3.1.11. Not love, but sacrifice of youth

Some girls got married, not for the sake of love, but for only sacrifice of political interests. They became political victims. This is just the tragedy of some chaste and beautiful women.

3.1.11.1. Bhasvati—A princess who sacrificed herself for politics

For the protection of the kingdom, sage Anala protected Mahishmati's city from the conquest of Pandav Sahadeva. He is not captivated by the dazzle of the gem-loaded chariots sent by the Pandav. But the king of Mashismati, Neel was still worried. He wanted his daughter Bhasvati to become Anala's bride. Every day she left some offerings on the path he passed. She thought that she would attract Anala. But to her disappointment, he could not be able to be captivated. One day a Brahmin called Suvarcha came to court Bhasvati. But she told him to ask for her father. Her father was not happy that her heart had changed to another young man and blamed her. He cursed her that her wicked hope would not be fruitful. Neel asked him to declare his identity. Breaking a gentle smile Suvarcha said that he was Anala. He revealed his original identity. But Bhasvati said that what she loved was Suvarcha and not Anala. And she asked him to turn back to his Suvarcha. The kingdom was survived and Bhasvati left her body to Anala but her heart to Survacha.

3.1.11.2. Sukanya who sacrificed her youth to an old sage because of a fault

Cyavana was a celebrated sage of the Bhargava dynasty. Even when he was very young he practiced austerities. He went to the forest and sat in meditation without food or sleep, oblivious of what was happening outside. Years went by and Cyavana did not stir from his place. Gradually, the earth began to cover him and soon he was completely covered by earth. Creepers grew on it and birds made their nest, but Cyavana did not know anything about it at all. One day, king Saryati with his wives and children came to that forest for a picnic. Sukanya, daughter of Saryati along with her companions separated
from the king and roamed about in the forest making merry. They soon came to the place where Cyavana sat doing penance. There was an unusual radiance around the heap of earth they saw there and Sukanya out of curiosity started striking down the earth. Then from inside came Cyavana’s voice advising her not to crumble down the earth as she was doing. Sukanya ignored the advice and searched for the source of the voice. She then saw two points of glow and taking a thorn gave two pricks at those two points and left the place with her companions. Those glow points were the eyes of Cyavana. And Cyavana felt insufferable pain when his eyes were thus pierced through. But he neither became angry nor cursed this girl who did this havoc. Cyavana went on with his penance. But soon the country of Saryati began to experience the bad effects of this evil deed. People one by one in the beginning and then the whole lot were disabled from passing urine or motion. From men and women the disease spread to the animals also. The country was in chaos and the subjects flocked to the palace to complain to the king. Saryati thought that some body must have in some way tormented Cyavana and enquired of each and every one of his subjects whether some body had knowingly or unknowingly given pain to Cyavana, but nobody had done so. The king was worried. Then Sukanya ran to her father and confessed what he had done. The king immediately went to the place where Cyavana was doing penances. And striking down the earth prostrated before the sage who was sitting there sad and miserable, the king apologized to Cyavana and requested him to pardon his daughter. The Cyavana told him that he would be enough if he gave his daughter in marriage to him to expiate the harm done to him. The king was shocked to hear this, for Cyavana was not only ugly but now blind also. The king returned to the palace sad and worried and there was gloom over the palace. But Sukanya approached his father and agreed to be the wife of Cyavana. The problem was solved and the king with great reluctance took his daughter to the forest and gave her in marriage to Cyavana.

It was the time when Indra had banned Somapana (drinking of the yaga wine) to the Asvinideva. Discontented at this they roamed about in the forest and soon came to the neighborhood of the asrama of Cyavana. Sukanya after becoming the wife of Cyavana did all she could to make her husband comfortable and happy. She would collect every sweet and tasty fruit from the forest and gave him. She would bathe him in hot water. After arranging all the materials needed for the morning rites like yava, sesame, darbha and
water, she would take her husband to the place of the puja leading him by hand. When the morning puja was over she would seat him in a suitable place and give him rice and fruit. After meal she would give him pan to chew. Only after doing all these would she go to do her daily rites. And that too only after obtaining her husband’s permission. She would finish her routine chores in no time to come back to her husband to see whether he was in need of anything. Then she would make arrangements for the evening puja and after the puja was over, she would give him his dinner. She would eat only what was left by her husband. At night she would spread a soft bedding and lull him to sleep. Then she would take a nap lying at the foot of her husband. During the summer, she would fan him and during the winter she would make fire to give him heat. In early morning she would take him to a distant place for cleaning his teeth and face. Then the routine would start with great devotion again. One day Sukanya was returning from the river after her bath and on the way she came across the Asvinidevas. They were astounded to see such a beautiful damsel in the forest and they accosted her and requested her to select one of them as her husband, she flew into a fury. Knowing her identity they advised her to forsake her old and blind husband and come and live with one of them. She flew into a fury when she heard her husband spoken so slightingly and by logical argument convinced them the error of their request. Then they told her thus: “You are aware we are physicians of the devas. We can give back eyesight of your husband and make him as beautiful as us. We will then appear before you as three lovely young men identical the same appearance and then you must select one among us as your husband.” Sukanya was immensely pleased as well as surprised to hear the offer and was eager to see her husband young and beautiful. But the last condition frightened her. Anyhow she promised to give a reply after consulting her husband and ran to the asrama to tell her husband the news. Cyavana advised her to accept the offer of the Asvinideva and Sukanya ran back to the Asvinideva and brought them to her husband accepting their terms. The Asvinideva took the aged and blind Cyavana along with them to the river nearby and the three plunged into the water. When they rose after a dip the three emerged as young lovely and charming triplets difficult to be distinguished from one another.

249 Ibid. p.42.
When Sukanya stood before the three to select her real husband she prayed to her goddess and the devi gave the power to identify Cyavana and so she correctly chose him from the three.

3.1.11.3. Lopamudra--- the quintessence of all living beings and another sacrifice

Lopamudra was the daughter of king of Vidarbha. As the hermit Agastya was walking along the forest, he saw his ancestors (pitrs) hanging head downwards in a canyon. He wanted to know the reason and they replied, “Child, we could be allowed to enter heaven only if sons are born to you. So get married as soon as possible.” The necessity of marriage occurred to him only then. But will there be any woman who could be patient enough to become the wife of this bearded dwarfish hermit? Agastya did not lose heart. At that time the king of Vidarbha was also doing penance to obtain a son. Agastya collected the quintessence of all living beings, with which he created an extremely beautiful lady and named her Lopamudra. Agastya gave Lopamudra as daughter to the king of Vidarbha. The king was delighted as getting such a daughter, employed hundred of maids to look after the child, who soon grew up to be a young lady. Agastya once approached the king and expressed his wish to have Lopamudra as his wife. The king was in a dilemma. On the one hand he did not like his beautiful daughter having the brightness of fire, to be given as wife to the hermit, clad in tree bark and tufts of matted hair; on the other he was afraid of the curse of the hermit Agastya. As the king was trying hard to find a solution, Lopamudra herself came to the king and said, “Father, I am happy to say that I shall willingly become the wife of the hermit Agastya.” At last her father consented and discarding royal garments and ornaments, Lopamudra accompanied Agastya, clad in an ascetic’s garments of bark and deer skin, as the companion of her rishi husband. As they walked, she told the rishi, “I am not a lover of ornaments, rishi. I am only his beloved. For so long have I waited for that lover. Today I have won his heart and it is that heart of his which is the only ornament of rishi-bride Lopa’s life.”

3.1.11.4. Madhavi—A girl who sacrificed her own body for a sage as gurudakshina

Gala was a son of Visvamitra. He had his education under his father. Visvamitra was

250 Ibid. p. 43.
251 Ibid. p. 45.
immensely pleased with Galava and allowed him to go away free without any *gurudaksina* when his education was over. Galava wanted to give some *dakshina* but Visvamitra refused to accept it. Galava insisted on giving and then Visvamitra asked him to give whatever he liked but Galava wanted the *dakshina* to be named. Disgusted with his stubbornness Visvamitra said, “go and get me eight hundred horses each with one of it ears black.” Galava was shocked to hear the demand and greatly worried roamed about in search of the horses of the type specified. Garuda taking pity on his sad plight took him to the palace of Yayati. Hearing the story of Galava, Yayati sent his daughter Madhavi with Galava saying that if she was given in marriage to any king he would give him the eight hundred horses of the type he required. Galava took Madhavi to Haryasva, a king of the Isvaku line. Haryasva was doing penance at that time to obtain a child. Galava said that Haryasva would get a son of Madhavi and he should therefore, accept Madhavi and give him in return eight hundred horses each with one ear black. Haryasva was amenable to the terms but the only difficulty was that he had only two hundred such horses. Finding this difficulty Madhavi said, “O, Galava please do not worry on that account. I have a boon from a Brahmayadi sage that I would remain a maiden even after delivery. So give me in marriage to this king and get two hundred horses. After giving birth to a son to this king take me another king and get two hundred horses from him and then to another and thus by giving me to four kings you will get the eight hundred horses you require.” Galava liked this plan and so when Madhavi gave birth to a son he took her to Divodasa, the Raja of Kasi. When a son was born to him Galava took her to Bhoja king Usinara. Galava thus got six hundred horses but there was nobody to give him the remaining two hundred. When Galava was contemplating what he should do the next Garuda came to his rescue. He advised Galava to give six hundred horses and Mahadvi in lieu of the remaining two hundred horses to Visvamitra. Galava gave Visvamitra the horses and Madhavi and pleased with the *gurudaksina* Visvamitra blessed Galava who married Madhavi.

3.1.12. *Puloma, Bhadra and Ruci—whose love beyond family*

In the epics, cases of love beyond family is described. This shows that couples in the epic age were confined in the family but some of them were not satiated with family life and wanted to have love beyond the family.
3.1.12.1. **Puloma** Puloma was the wife of Bhrigu. To respond to the husband’s summons was indeed the duty of a wife. When going to bathe in the river, Bhrigu asked Hutansha, his guard to keep an eye on his wife. When he left, Puloma, which was also the same name of Bhrigu’s wife, a non-Aryan youth, the companion of her adolescence came to her. He asked her to go with him. This plea had an irresistible force. She knew that her life with Bhrigu was sanctioned by the scriptures and by society but definitely not by her heart. She was drawn by the pull of that non-Aryan summons. Permitted by Hutansha, they eloped to the forest. From the young maiden Puloma’s dreaming world suddenly awakened to the image of the thirsty desire of a maiden who was eager to make love, taking the non-Aryan Puloma’s hand, outside the tradition and society. But now she was pregnant. She knew the baby in her stomach was not the one of non-Aryan Puloma’s, but Bhrigu’s. She wanted her child to be the son of Bhrigu. When the child was born, she did not want Puloma to see it. With the baby in her arms she went to see Bhrigu. Bhrigu only accepted the baby but no place for her. Under the advice of Hutansha, Bhrigu knew that he only took Puloma as a wife but not as a beloved wife. He then took her as a beloved dharma-wife.

3.1.12.2. **Bhadra** Bhadra was the daughter of Soma. She did intense penance to secure Utathya as her husband. Atri maharishi, father of Soma, came to know of the desire of his granddaughter, and got her married to Utathya. But Utathya was not interested in his beauty. He was not infatuated and no attachment for a beloved could touch him within. Then Varuna, who had loved her in the past came in and abducted her. In his abode she could not insist the male attraction and she surrendered herself in the thirsty embrace of the lord of waters Varuna’s arms. When Utathya knew that his wife was abducted by Varuna, he came to secure her. But Varuna refused to give her back. And Bhadra was a little attached to Varuna, too. With curses from Utathya, all the waters left Varuna. Varuna surrendered himself to Utathya and gave up Bhadra. Utathya confessed his coldness to his wife and Bhadra regretted that she had physical touch with Varuna and Utathya pardoned her.

3.1.12.3. **Ruci** Ruci was the extremely beautiful wife of the hermit Devasarma who was aware of the fact that Indra had often looked at his wife with covetous eyes. He had to perform a sacrifice. But he feared that if he went away from the hermitage his wife
would be carried away by Indra. At last he called his beloved disciple Vipula and revealed the secret to him. The teacher told Vipula that Indra was a libertine as well as a magician and that he would appear in various forms to entice Ruci, and asked him to protect Ruci even at the cost of his time. Then Devasarma left the hermitage for the sacrifice. Vipula followed the wife of his teacher wherever she went. He feared that Indra might come even unseen by anybody. So he decided to get inside by the supernatural powers of yoga. He made Ruci in front of him and stared into his eyes and through the rays of her eyes he entered inside her. Knowing that Devasarma had left the hermitage, Indra came in front of the Ruci. In fact, Ruci loved Indra and she was looking forward to meet him. Because life with a sage husband was too boring for her. By the power of Stambhana (suppressing the use of the faculties by mantra), Vipula made Ruci stand motionless staring into the face of Indra. At last Indra looked into Ruci with inward eyes and saw as in a mirror Vipula sitting inside her. With shame Indra left the place instantly. When the teacher returned on completion of the sacrifice Vipula told him all that had taken place. The teacher was pleased and told his disciple that he might ask any boon. He got the boon to be a righteous man throughout his life. Before he left his teacher he confessed to him that while he was staying inside the wife of his teacher, his genitals touched her genitals and his face touched hers. He had not told the teacher this. But the teacher said it needed not be considered a sin because the deed was done with no bad intention. In fact, as Ruci first loved Indra, but when Vipula went inside her and kept Indra away, she began to love Vipula, too. When Vipula left, they both hated to depart.

3.1.13. Test of love

Astavakra the sage wanted to marry Suprabha, the daughter of a sage named Vadanya. When Vadanya was approached for this the sage decided to test the love which Astavakra had towards his daughter and said, “I am, going to test you. You go to the north of the Himalayas. Pay homage to Siva and Parvati and go further north. There you will find a very beautiful damsel. You talk to her and return and when you come back I shall give you my daughter.” Accepting this challenge, Astavakra went to the north. When he went to the Himalayas Kubera entertained him. He remained there for a year enjoying

252 Ibid. p.110.
the dances of celestial maidens and then, after worshiping Siva and Parvati went further north. There he came across seven very attractive women. At the command of Astavakra the eldest of the lot, Uttara, remained with him. All the rest left the palace immediately after she started making love with him and requested him to marry her. But Astavakra did not yield and told about his promise to Vadanya. Pleased at this reply, Uttara revealed that she was the queen of the north in disguise and was testing him. She then blessed Astavakra, who, fulfilling his mission successfully, returned and married the girl he wanted.

3.1.14. Tapati—loving a king not merely for marriage, but for the world

It is noticeable that in the epics, for some females love was not merely for marriage but for something more. Tapati was a good example for this. She was the daughter of Bhagawan Aditya (Surya). Like her father, she knew much of Deva and sometimes argued before the other rishis. King Samvaran, the disciple of Vasistha, had not married. He considered that if he married, his principle of impartiality would be affected. Before he met Tapati, he did not agree with the proposal of his guru that he marry his daughter Tapati. But when they met, he immediately fell in love with her because he thought that he saw his dream lover. His arrogance regarding his ideal and the pride of his renunciation had been ground to dust by the blow of a cruel taunt. He wooed her. But she said, “By my own will or that of anyone else I can not accept any man’s garland around my neck. I can, only by the sanction of the society.” When he lifted his eyes he realized that the picture of maiden Tapati’s form had vanished. He was too shy to go back to his court and he self-exiled into the forests. And Vasistha found him. The guru persuaded him to go back to his court and his desire was fulfilled. They married happily. Handing over the entire charge of serving the subjects to ministers, Samvaran went away with Tapati to a far-off grove retreat. Samvaran craved to loot for satiating his life. Their life was not the life of a husband and wife but merely a man and a woman’s lust-overwhelmed union. Even after hearing the news that guru Vasistha had arrived, Samvaran showed no eagerness to greet the guru. Tapati was worried that her husband completely indulged himself in sexual desires. She could not be merely a companion for

253 Ibid. p.100.
254 Ibid. p.55.
entertaining some man in the privacy of a grove. She said, “My marriage with you has not taken place just for the sake of marriage, but for the happiness of the world.” Her words shattered his last illusion and he decided to go back to the court for the society and the world.

3.1.15. Swayamvara—a passive and semi love-marriage

In the Mahabharata, we see some stories of swayamvara that, in real sense, was not a way of love marriage, but a passive and half-love-marriage. The princesses marry the men who defeat other competitors. Sitas’ marriage to Rama, Draupadi’s marriage to the Pandavas were such typical cases. The women have to marry the winner of the swayamvara. Draupadi was not willing to marry Karna because Karna was the son of Suta. When Karna was insulted he retreated, but Arjuna won and she willingly married him.

3.1.16. Secular women who initiated in love

In the epics, we also see some secular women who took the initiative for their own love, but the cases were far from being the same as those of non-secular women. Because in the epic age it was unimaginable that young women could freely pursue their love. Also in the epics the secular women who went after their own love were not from good backgrounds and their desire of love was fulfilled.

3.1.16.1. Pingala—a desiring and enticing dancer

Atirath was an unmarried king. His splendidly youthful figure was like a young deodar. He had not felt the desire to surrender himself to any woman. One day the courtesan Pingala entered the dancing-floor. Her eyes were fixed on the unwedded king Atirath’s face, like that of a honey-infatuated bee on a blooming bud. The next instant, crossing the boundary of flowers encircling the dance floor, slowly and gradually, like an intoxicated swan, she stood before Atirath. Annoyed, the king Atirath said, “without a royal command it is not proper for you, courtesan, to approach me.” When you have invited me to the royal court, grant me permission to approach the throne, O king.” “Without hearing your intention I can not grant permission.” “I wish to gaze upon that which I have crave to see. I wish to offer my heart’s desire to him who I wish to pay

255 Ibid. p.55-56.
homage.” “What is this your crave to look upon?” “That glorious loveliness of your beautiful face, as fresh as the dawning sun. Today I wish to gaze closely, with both eyes, upon that face which so long I have seen only from far. Bless me by granting love, O lotus-bright youth; I want nothing else. Today my heart desires that opening wide these eyes, as thirsty as water lilies in a drought, I only keep drinking the radiant beauty of your face. Today I only wish that those two arms of yours, hardened by the company of swords, drinking the honeyed intimacy of Pingala’s neck become delicate like flowers.... I am impulsive by nature. I am a woman who dwells in the bower of love, intoxicated with wine and delight. The right to invite whomever my heart desires is mine.” But he was not moved at all. Filling up a silver vessel with pieces of gold, king Atirath lifted it up in his own hands. He summoned, “Take your reward, talented Pingala.” With a steadfast gaze, Pingala kept looking, “I can not be gratified with this reward, king Atirath.” “Why can you not be gratified, saleable one?” “There is no need.” “Then state what you want, what will gratify you.” “Promise, O, king, that you will come to my secret bower—this reward I desire and nothing else, king Atirath.” Finally the king was moved, he agreed to listen to her last song in her private bower. After that Pingala went into the forests to do penance. Some years passed. The king did not find any woman who, in order to win his love, had imagined his form as a deity’s and worshipped it. The incident of the courtesan Pingala had flashed in his memory once. He commanded the royal messenger to invite Pingala. But he was told that the woman had turned a sanyasin. The king went out into the forest to search her and he did find her. “Awake, Pingala! Discard that stony image. Come to king Atirath’s love tormented heart’s celebration hall to dance forever there.” But this time the ascetic form of the girl did not move. The king asked his charioteer to take back his crown and followed Pingala to the forest for tapasy.

3.1.16.2. Santa—An enticing princess

Santa was the daughter of Dasaratha and foster-daughter of king Lomapada of Anga.

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256 Subodh Ghosh, Love from the Mahabharata, p.57.
257 Ibid. p.67.
258 Ibid p. 60.
259 Ibid. p.61.
She was active in attracting Rṣyasṛṅga. There was a serious draught in Anga. Some Brahmīn told the king that if he could get a muni who had never seen a woman to perform a yāga, there would be rainfall in Anga. At last he got news that Rṣyasṛṅga, the son of Vibhāndaka was the sage who had never seen women. Then he began to plan how Rṣyasṛṅga could be brought over to Anga. Santa volunteered to lure the sage and she did succeed and took him to Anga. Soon the skies opened up and it began to rain. Santa was married to the sage.

3.1.17. *Gandharva—A love marriage in a real sense*

We can say that *gandharva* is a love-marriage between couples in a real sense because they love mutually. The marriages between Sakuntala and Dusyanta, Savitri and Satyavān, Arjuna and Subhadra, Rukmini and Krishna were all such ones. These couples loved each other before they got married. The stories of Sakuntala and Savitri have been mentioned. Let's review the ones separately between Ulupi, Citrangada, Subhadra and Arjuna, and between Rukmini and Krishna.

3.1.17.1 *Ulupika, Chitraganda and Subhadra*

Once a Brahmin came to the palace complaining that his cows were stolen, and Arjuna promised to help him. Arjuna did so without remembering that all his weapons were stored in Dharmaputra's palace. That year Panchalī was living with Dharmaputra. Forgetting the fact Arjuna went to Dharmaputra's palace, got his weapons and helped the Brahmin. For thus breaking the rule Arjuna left his palace on a pilgrimage for one year. He reached the banks of the Ganges and entered the waters for a bath. Here Ulupi, the daughter of the Naga king was attracted by Arjuna. She courted him and they married. After he visited places like Agastyvatam, Vasisthagiri etc, Chitraganda, the daughter of king of Manalur, loved Arjuna and she married Arjuna. Arjuna reached Gokarna and Prabhasa tirtha, where he met Gada, brother of Sri Krishna. Gada described Arjuna the great beauty of his sister, Subhadra. Arjuna went to Dvaraka and paid his respect to Krishna. Subhadra met him and they fell in love soon. A few days later the Yadavas celebrated a great festival at the mount Raivataka. From there Subhadra eloped with Arjuna.

3.1.17.2 *Rukmini* Rukmini was the daughter of Rukmi, and the king Bhismaka. She fell in love with Krisna. Her parents agreed to her choice. But her brother Rukmi was an
enemy of Krisna. Rukmi desired to give his sister to Sisupala. The date of the marriage was fixed and the heart was burning within Rukmini. She sent a Brahmin as messenger to krishna. The time of marriage drew near. While preparations were being made to give Rukmini to Sisupala in the nuptial hall, Krishna took her in his chariot and quickly left the place.

3.1.18. Impregnance of women characters with gods or sages

It is noticeable that in the Mahabharata some women born children from gods or sages before they got married and the gods or sage assured that the women could not lose their virginity. This showed that in the epic age virginity was very important for women. Satyavati and Kunti were two typical examples.

3.1.18.1. Satyavati: Satyavati was the daughter of the celestial maid Adrika. She was reared up by a fisherman. The fisherman was engaged in the work of ferrying people across the river. She helped her father in this, and she became a full-bloomed young woman. The hermit Parasara fell in love with her and took Matsya-Gandhi as his wife. From that moment she became pregnant and delivered instantly. Parasura left the place after having blessed her that she would not lose her virginity. The son born to her immediately grew up to be a youth. After promising to his mother that he would come to her whenever she thought of him, the youth went to the forest for penance. He was famous by the name Vyasa.

3.1.18.2. Kunti: To treat Brahmins who came to the court of Kuntibhoja with worshipful offerings was the duty of Kunti. Once sage Durvasa visited Kuntibhoja, and as he knew that the sage was easily annoyed Kunti was specially deputed for his service. And she served him to the utmost. One day to test Kunti, he asked her to be ready with his food by the time he took his bath, and he took practically no time to return after bath and sit for meals. By that time Kunti had managed to cook his food, which she placed before him in a plate. The food was steaming hot, and the sage meaningfully looked at the back of Kunti. Realizing the meaning of the look, Kunti turned her back to the sage so that he could place the plate of food thereon. The sage placed it accordingly on her back and began eating. Though her back was really burning, she showed no sign of it. Pleased at her behavior the sage taught her a mantra and blessed her to the following effect. "Repeating this mantra you invoke whichever Deva you like and thanks to his
favor you will get children.” After Durvasas left the place, Kunti developed an irresistible desire to test the efficacy of the mantra. One day she invoked sun-god Surya with this mantra. Soon Surya approached her in the guise of a Brahmin youth. Kunti got alarmed. Owing to the disinclination of an unmarried mother Kunti could not make up her mind to welcome the Brahmin youth. But Surya argued that his coming could not be in vain, and Kunti had to yield. She requested Surya for a son adorned with helmet and earrings. Surya assured Kunti that even though a child was born to her from him, that would not affect her virginity and after having sex with her he departed. Kunti got pregnant and delivered a son in due course of time in secret. She locked up the child in a box and floated it in the Yamuna. An old charioteer called Adhiratha picked up the child from the river and brought it up as his own son. That boy grew up to become the famous Karna.

It is interesting that all the young women who delivered children before marriage, either out of boon from sage or gods, could remain virgins even after delivery.

3.1.19. Love of the daughter of a raped and discriminated girl

In the epics women who were insulted and discriminated in sex have also been described. Maybe this was a social phenomenon of that time. Fortunately Shuktimati was a pure and beautiful girl. She was bathing in a river when a lust-blinded wretch named Kolaahal, stifling all pleas and protests of Shuktimati with his rude assault, enjoyed that virginal’s youth like a hungry beast. Vasuraji, the young ruler of Chedi, protested the girl and killed the rapist. But the poison of the rapist lust would not allow the virgin body to be free. Shuktimati got pregnant. She begged the ruler to allow her to deliver the child, and that her child should be guiltless, immaculate, and equal like all other children in his kingdom, but the king Vasuraji did not agree as he said rudely, “The child born of a raped woman’s body is this world’s lowest of the low progeny.... It is you who will have to suffer the punishment for that mistake in life. I do not protect anti-social, woman.”260

18 years passed. The king Vasuraji, when hunting, saw an extraordinarily beautiful girl named Girika. He loved her at once. He thought that the girl was a princess of an exiled king, or a daughter of some goddess. And he begged the girl to be his wife. But to his great surprise, the girl said that she was the daughter of Shuktimati, the one who was

260 Ibid. p.146.
raped 18 year ago. Now the king realized that the girl was stainless, irreprouachable, perfect and flawless. And they embraced together.

3.1.20. Amba— from love to hate

In the Mahabharata, we see a heroine whose love was quite different. When she failed in love her love changed into hatred and she began to take revenge. She was an ill-starred character in the epic. She had two sisters, Ambika and Ambalika. Bhima who had taken a vow to remain a bachelor for life, had once taken Amba, Ambika and Ambalika, the three daughters of the king of Kasi, to Hastinapura. The circumstances in which this happened are as follows: Santanu, the king of the Candra Vamsahad had two wives, Ganga and Satyavati. Bhima was the son of Ganga and Chirangada and Vicitravirya were the sons of Satyavati. Soon after Bhima’s birth, Ganga vanished. After a long period of reign, Santanu also died. Satyavati and the three sons were left behind in the palace. Bhima had a vow that he would remain unmarried in his life and would not succeed his father’s throne when Santanu, his father, was courting Satyavati, the daughter of a fisherman who made a precondition that he would not agree to marry his daughter unless he agreed to have the sons of Satyavati to succeed his throne. Bhima, instead of succeeding his father’s throne, left it to his brother Chitrangada. Once Chitraganda went for hunting. There he came across a Gandharva named Citrangada. The Gandharva did not like another man with his own name in the world. So he killed the king. After that Vicitravirya became king. Bhima had to take up the task of arranging a suitable marriage for Vicitravirya. It was this time that Bhima came to know that the king of Kasi was arranging a svayamvara for his three daughters, Amba, Ambika and Ambalika. Bhima went there and in the presence of all the kings who had assembled there, took the three princes with him to Hastinapura. There he made all preparations for the marriage. But as the time for the ceremony approached, the eldest and most beautiful of the three princesses, Amba went to Bhima and said, “I had already made up my mind long ago to marry the king Salva. Besides we are deeply in love with each other. Therefore, please consider whether it is proper on the part of a great man like you to force me into another marriage”. On hearing this, Bhima allowed her to do as she liked. Amba then went to the king Salva and made an appeal to him to accept her as his wife since they were mutually in love. To her words Silva assured,
What you have said about our mutual love is true. But it is not right for a man to accept a woman who has been accepted by another. I saw Bhishma taking you by hand and helping you into his chariot. Therefore, go at once to Bhishma himself and ask him to accept you.” Stunned by his word, she turned away. She went back to Bhishma and asked him to marry her. But Bhishma who cherished some affection for her refused because of his vow. Now she had nowhere to go. She put all the blame for her misfortune on Bhishma and was determined to take revenge on him, by killing him. She went to the forest to do hard penance. The goddess Ganga appeared and told her that it was not possible to kill Bhishma. In agony and despair, she wandered about here and there without even drinking water. The goddess Ganga cursed her to become a river. As a result of the curse, a part of her was turned into a river known as Amba and the remaining part of her engaged itself in penance. Siva appeared to her and told her that in the next birth she would attain masculinity. He added that she would be born in the Drupada dynasty as a great archer under the name of Citrayodhi and kill Bhishma. Pleased with this prophecy, she took a vow that she would kill Bhishma and making a pyre, burnt herself to death.

King Draupada’s queen had been in great distress for a long time because she had no children. Drupada propitiated Siva by worshiping him for an issue. Siva blessed him and said that a girl would be born to him, but she would be transformed into a boy. In due course the queen gave birth to a girl, but it was announced as boy. Therefore the girl had to be brought up like a boy. The child became famous under the name of Sikhandi. When Sikhandi attained youth, Drupada decided to look for a wife for her (him). Still he was greatly perplexed as how to find a wife for Sikhandi who was already a youthful virgin. But his wife assured him Sikhandi would become a man, according to Siva’s blessing. So Drupada made a proposal for Sikhandi’s marriage with the daughter of the king Dasarna. Hirayavarna, the king of Dasarna, gave his daughter in marriage to Sikhandi.

The wife came to know that the ‘husband’ was a woman. She disclosed the secret to her ladies-in-waiting. They in turn communicated it to the king. Enraged at this, Hirayavarna sent a messenger to king Drupada to ascertain the truth. He even began to make preparations for waging a war against Drupada. Drupada and his queen were in a fix. At this stage, the distressed Sikhandi proceeded to the forest, determined to commit suicide. People were afraid of entering that forest because a yaksa named Sthunakarna
lived there. Sikhandi went to the premise of the yaksa and performed certain rites for a number of days. The yaksa appeared to her. Sikhandi explained the whole matter to him. They entered into a contract. According to which they changed their sex, Sikhandi became a male and the yaks became a female. Sikhandi returned home. Drupada repeated it with great force his old plea that his child was a man. Hiryavarna made a thorough examination and convinced himself of the truth. Sikhandi received his training in arms under Drona. In the great Kaurava-Pandava battle he became a charioteer. It was the tenth day of the war and Sikhandi shot three arrows aimed at Bhismā's breast. Bhismā with a smile of contempt said to Sikhandi, “Sikhandi! Brahma created you as a woman, you may do as you like”. Hearing this taut, Sikhandi became more infuriated. Arjuna inspired him with greater courage. After that, keeping Sikhandi in the front, Arjuna began to fight with Bhisma. Sikhandi also showered his arrows. Ten arrows from Sikhandi hit Bhisma's breast. But Bhisma disregarded even those arrows. And at last he said, “I can not kill the Pandavas because they are invulnerable. I cannot kill Sikhandi because he is really a woman.” Meanwhile, Sikhandi and Arjuna were discharging a continuous and heavy shower of arrows at Bhisma. At last Bhisma fell down.

3.1.21. Secret love

Kunti and Vidura: although in the Mahabharata it was not clearly mentioned that there was love between Kunti and Vidura, we can feel from the text that there was some affection between them. The death of Pandu drew Vidura closer to the Pandavas. Vidura took the lead in performing the funeral rites and other ceremonies which followed. When Duryodhana poisoned Bhimasena, tied him with a rope and threw him into the river Ganges and was carried to the world of nagas (serpents), Kunti felt grieved at the loss of her son Bhima, Vidura consoled her. When Kunti, with her five sons moved from Hastinipura to Varanavata, it was Vidura who informed them the trick of Lac palace by Duryodhana. Moreover he sent a man named Khanaka and made an under-ground passage and reached the banks of the Ganges and helped them to escape the fire. When Duṣṣana insulted Draupadi at the game of dice, it was Vidura who made a speech against the wickedness of the sons of Dhrdarastra and advise him to forsake his own sons and to bring the Pandavas back and give them the kingdom. When the Pandavas were exiled for 12 years into the forest and one year in incognito, Vidura kept Kunti in his house. When
Kunti decided to go to the forest with Dhrtarastra and Gandhari for penance, Vidura volunteered to follow Kunti giving her full support to the Himalayas.

3.2 Women in love in Tagore

3.2.1. Love stories drawn directly from the epics but different ideas of Tagore are expressed.

Tagore made a diligent study of the two great epics. His works were full of allusions and references to these great epics. While drawing inspiration, he modified and extended the narratives. In his dramas he depicted some of the women characters such as Devayani in *The Curse at Farewell*, Chitrangada in *Chitrangada* and Gandhari in *Gandhari Abedan* (*Gandhari's Prayer*). The background for the portrayal of these was furnished by the epic indeed but he used the stories to express his own ideas on women issues. So the portraits as drawn by Tagore bore a distinct stamp of his genius and originality.

3.2.1.1. Devayani—initiative in love

In the *Mahabharata*, Devayani was the daughter of Sukra, the priest of the Daityas. She fell in love with Kacha who learned the secret of immortality, *Sanjivani-Vidya*, from her father and was prepared to return to the “land of Gods”. When he bade farewell, she disclosed the love she had long cherished for him but he rejected her advance. She cursed him, and in return he cursed her, that she, a Brahmin’s daughter, should marry a kshatriya and later, she married king Yayati.

Tagore’s play *The Curse at the Farewell* turned on the conflicting motive of the claims of love and the devotion of a loftier ideal. The piece is a stirring expression of a passionate yearning and a firm rejection of it against an extensive background of attachment and emotional upheaval contending for the fulfillment of a noble mission. Kacha tried to console Devayani that her love had become a part of his life but he smothered his burning passion for a noble cause. The true crisis of the play came when Devayani pointedly asked Kacha to choose between love and knowledge. Kacha chose the latter. Dedicated to a noble cause as he was he had to sacrifice his personal happiness. He said: “Though my heart must enclose a red flame vainly striving to devour emptiness, still I must go back to that paradise which will never more be paradise to me...Forgive me, Devayani, and know that my suffering is doubled by the pain I unwillingly inflict on
3.2.1.2. Love from external physical appearance to internal spiritual beauty

The drama *Chitrangada* was directly drawn from the *Mahabharata*. But Tagore did not repeat the story of the epics. He used it to express his ideas on women issues. The theme in this drama was that internal spiritual beauty of a woman was much more important than its physical counterpart. He expressed his idea of equality between man and woman in his play. In Tagore’s drama the *Chitrangada* the woman character Chitrangada was quite different from the one in the *Mahabharata*. Chitrangada, the daughter of king Chitravahana of Manipur who had no son was treated as a *Putrika*. The *Mahabharata* explained that the son born of the *Patrika* was to be treated as the son of the father of the girl and not that of her husband. Arjuna, continuing his pilgrimage, was charmed by the beauty of the princess Chitrangada. Having resolved to have her as his wife he approached the king and expressed his desire to him. He agreed to give her in marriage to Arjuna on condition that the son born to her should be allowed to be the perpetuator of the race of kings of Manipur. Arjuna agreed to this term and having married Chitrangada; lived there for three years. The whole of the Chitrangada-Arjuna episode was described in the *Mahabharata* in nine verses. Tagore made a radical change in the story to express his own ideas on women issues. His Arjuna never met Chitrangada’s father nor did he seek her in marriage with the permission of any of his or her guardians. With a touch of the magic wand of his genius, Tagore transformed the youthful damsel of exquisite beauty into a tomboy with her poor looks. The epics described her as *Charu-darsana* (beautiful to look at) and *Vara-roha* (having excellent buttocks) whereas Tagore’s Chitrangada lamented over her unattractive plainness.

Not only this. Tagore developed a number of women’s issues. In Tagore’s play *Chitrangada*, we get the first exposition of feminism in India. Here, Tagore went beyond the epics at least in two points. First, Chitrangada challenged the hero Arjuna for equality of women even in fields especially reserved for men. Long before she met Arjuna she had dreamt of defeating Arjuna, the greatest of warriors, in a straight fight. “Many a day my young ambition had spurred me on,” she confessed to Madan, “to break my lance with him, to challenge him in disguise to single combat, and prove my skill in arms against him.” When Arjuna pleaded his inability to accept the proffered
love of plain and unattractive Chitrangada, she propitiated Madana (Eros), god of love
and Vasanta (Lycoris), god of youth and told Madana, “I am not the woman who
nourishes her despair in lonely silence, feeding it with nightly tears and covering it with
the daily patient smile, a widow from birth. The flower of my desire shall never drop
into the dust before it has ripened to fruit.” She achieved her purpose by virtue of
superb beauty conferred by Madana and brought the world famous hero to her feet.
Second, she won the heart of Arjuna by her innate qualities. With uncommon power of
self-analysis she discovered that she was loved for her innate qualities, and not for her
borrowed beauty. With bitter sarcasm she told Arjuna, “When a woman is merely a
woman, when she winds herself round and round men’s hearts with her smiles and sobs
and services and caressing endearments, then she is happy. Of what use to her are
learning and great achievements?” She found that Arjuna had become weary of the idle
life of lovemaking. He wanted to hear of the manly achievements of the princess of
Manipur who used to protect the subjects. He was, of course, unaware of the lady with
whom he was spending his days and nights. Chitrangada put to him a straight question:
“Would it please your hero soul if the playmate of the night aspired to be the helpmate
of the day, if the left arm learnt to share the burden of the proud right arm?” At last she
disclosed her identity, and proudly declared: “I am Chitra. No goddess to be
worshipped, nor yet the object of common pity to be brushed aside like a moth with
indifference. If you deign to keep me by your side in the path of danger and daring, if
you allow me to share the great duties of your life, then you will know my true self”.
This is the quintessence of the new feminist movement which Tagore heralded.

In the drama Sampmochan (Release of Curse) written in 1931 Tagore delineated a
woman whose love exchanged from external physical appearance to internal spiritual
beauty. Gandharva Saurasen, the lover of Madhushree (later Kamalika when born in
secular world), the leading celestial musician, disturbed by the pangs of separation from
his lady-love Madhushree, failed through inadvertence to maintain measures on the drum
as he accompanied the foremost heavily dancer, Urvasi. The crucial pulse which
disturbed the dance-rhythm proved costly and the erring Saurasen’s body became
deformed forthwith. Ousted from the heaven, Saurasen was born in the royal house of the
Gandharva as Aruneshwar. Madhushree, heart-broken at the disastrous turn of events, prayed to be condemned to the fate of her beloved, now exiled under the curse. Indra, the king of the gods, granted her wish and she was sent to the realm of the mortals to suffer and cause suffering and thereby expiated the sin of breach of concord. Madhushree was thus born in the Madra royal family and was named Kamalika. It was against this supernatural backdrop that the earthly drama of the two banished Gandharva lovers took place. As Aruneshwar and Kamalika, the two earthly Gandharva lovers came of age they were joined in wedlock. To conceal his curse-caused physical deformity, king Aruneshwar met his queen only in the darkness of night. But Kamelika, though moved by his heaven-learnt music and dance-art, insisted on seeing her husband in the daytime. Aruneshwar’s counsel that unprepared as Kamalika was, her seeing him in the light would jeopardize their union which was not based on sight, went unheeded. On seeing Aruneshwar’s hideous form the horrified Kamalika fled the palace in disgust and took shelter in the sequestered forest-house of the king. Grief-stricken, Aruneshwar pursued her secretly playing on his vina the divine music of a lovelorn heart that redeemed the separation-anguished queen. The obduracy of her unawakened soul eroded, Kamalika now gained the sight of true love that was ever interior and realized that the beauty of the loved one was revealed to the light of the loving heat alone and not to the outer sight. Thus released from the curse through expiation the couple found fulfillment in a spiritually harmonized union.

3.2.2. Kamala: Sita and Savitri-style woman in love

In The Wreck written in 1906, Kamala was a simple, modest and charming girl of fourteen. She was the perfect image of the goddess Laksmi. Nalinaksha believed that she was the loveliest girl he had ever seen. And uncle Chakrabati felt that Kamala had such a sweet disposition that everyone who saw her succumbed to her charm. Her physical beauty was equally matched by her pleasing manner and virtuous behavior. In addition, she had all the accomplishments needed to make her an ideal housewife. As an orphan in the house of her uncle, Taranicharan, Kamla had to do all her work—the cooking, and the household drudgery. Her uncle, a miser, wanted to get rid of her by giving her in marriage to any stranger who was prepared to marry her without taking a dowry. He implored every Brahmān youth who came to his villages to marry his niece. Finally, he succeeded
in getting Nalinaksha who came to the village on some work, as the bridegroom. Kamala was a typical orthodox Hindu girl who had all the accomplishment of a good housewife. Ramesh noticed Kamala’s expertise in cooking and household management while on their way to Ghazipur through the Ganges. He was spellbound by “her neatness, dexterity and the cheerful alacrity with which she goes about her duties...” Besides, Kamala had such a contagious cheerful and loving disposition that uncle Chakrabarti, his daughter, Sailaja and the servant boy, Umesh became her lifelong friends. This aspect of her personality reminded us of Nathaniel Hawthorne’s novel, The House of Seven Gables. No wonder, Kshemankari believed that her daughter-in-law was a “rare gift of the gods”. Kamala’s power of observation and analytical thinking were remarkable. She was quick to notice the change in Ramesh’s behavior towards her while on their way to Ghazipur. Though she had not been trained by a traditional mother-in-law or loving mother and had not had her opportunity at her uncle’s house to observe how a husband behaved with his wife, she understood quite rightly, that Rajesh was not behaving like an ordinary husband. She contrasted his unrestrained intimacy with her during the first few months after the boat wreck with that of his present reserved and unconcerned behavior. Even though Kamala was pained by this callous behavior of Ramesh, which became all the more glaring when compared to the affection shown by uncle Chakrabarti and Umesh, she was not curious to know the reasons for this change in his behavior.

Kamala’s keen power of observation was evident while she was in uncle Chakrabarti’s house in Ghazipur. She was quick to notice Ramesh’s embarrassment when he stood before her, face to face, in an arranged meeting brought about by Sailaja and her husband without the knowledge of either Ramesh or Kamala. Then she realized the difference between the true love of a husband for his wife and that of a formal husband. At the same time, she understood the world of difference between a housewife and a wife. Again after her contact with Sailaja she comprehended that her “wedded life was a mere pencil outline, incomplete in parts and totally uncolored.” Kamala was portrayed as a contrast to Ramesh in her clear thinking, perseverance, strong willpower and resolute behavior. Unlike Ramesh, she was never perturbed by crises and did the right thing at the right moment. When Kamala by accident read Ramesh’s unposted letter written to Hemnalini, making clear his relation with the former, she understood the situation and maintained a
stoic silence. Only for a moment did she think of committing suicide by drowning herself in the Ganges. But soon she regained her composure and resolved to trace her husband with the few details given in the letter. Her self-confidence in this regard was echoed in these words: "If I would be a true wife to him I must live to prostrate myself at his feet. Nothing will rob me of this guerdon. While life endures he is not lost to me. The Lord has preserved me from death that I may serve him." Her self-confidence, perseverance and unflinching devotion made her to be prepared to face all kinds of hardships, humiliations and austerities with a view to serving her husband, whom she had never seen. Her confidence was such that she never bothered about the possible consequences. She acted with the firm conviction that she would succeed in her mission despite the obstacles that might come in her way.

Born and brought up in the traditional Hindu orthodox family, Kamala had imbibed all the qualities of the model Indian women. So she had Sita and Savitri as her ideals. Her devotion to her husband bordered idolatry. Her desire to be an ideal woman was shattered when she came to know that Ramesh was not her wedded husband. At that moment, shame pierced her like a dagger.

So, on receiving Ramesh’s letter from Allahabad, confessing his love and eagerness to meet her, she felt as though she was handling some filthy thing and threw that letter away. Latter, while narrating her story to Sailaja, Kamala confessed that she could not look at any one in the face when she even thought of those days. Such feelings were common to the traditional Hindu orthodox woman for whom the very thought of a man other than her husband was a sin. This was why Kamala erased Ramesh from her memory when she learned that Nalinaksha was her husband. To the critics who accused Kamala of ingratitude, Bimanbehari Majumdar had replied that they “Overlook the fact that to an unsophisticated Hindu married woman the idea of living with a person other than her husband is most repellent. She thought that Ramesh had done her a dreadful wrong by not divulging to her their true relation.” Kamala’s love and adoration of her husband was like the atmasamarpana of a devotee to the lord. She made no demands nor expected any favors. She was so self-effacing that she never went out of the way to reveal

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262 Majumdar, Bimanbehari, Heroines of Tagore, p.220.
her identity to Nalinaksha even when his mother tried to arrange for self-abnegation and
resolved: “From tomorrow, I shall entertain no more regrets; I shall never look unhappy, I
shall never allow myself to sigh for the unattainable. I shall be content to serve all the
days of my life. I shall never, never, never ask for anything more.”

When Hemnalini came to know about the true relationship of Kamala with Nalinaksha, she suggested that
Kamala reveal her identity, discarding the role of the cousin of uncle Chakrabarti, and
assert her place as the wife of Nalinaksha. Kamala declined the suggestion and
affirmed her decision: “I have no right to establish any.”

Among the characters, Kamala was the most interesting, lively and full-blooded. As
the heroine, she dominated the whole action with her natural charm, grace and modesty.
Kamala excelled all the other traditional heroines of Tagore like Asha, Sharmila and
Niraja, with her qualities of humility, self-restraint and self-effacement. Tagore seemed to
believe that such women could bring the much needed stability to the restless domestic
world dominated by men.

3.2.3. Girls who could not have their love fulfilled

Some girls could not have any love under Tagore’s pen. In The Auspicious Vision
written in 1900, Sudha, was a deaf and dumb country Brahmin girl whose beauty had a
rare freshness. Without knowing this, Kanti, a Brahmin landlord fell in love with her at
the first sight and proposed marriage to her father, also Brahmin landlord Banerji who
was overjoyed. On the auspicious vision, Kanti was greatly surprised to find that the
bride was not the girl in his mind. Then a girl abruptly entered to chase a leveret. She was
just the girl in his mind. But when he found that she was deaf and dumb, he turned to the
bride and found that she was more gracious and changed all his concentration to her. Now
in his eyes a deaf and dumb girl was nothing. In Tagore’s works, women in lower classes
cherished love deep in their hearts but their love was always suppressed and strangled.
Pramoda in Mayar Khela written in 1888 loved Amar but felt shy to approach him. Ratan
in The Postmaster written in 1891 was a 13 years old orphan girl from the village who
carried out chores for the postmaster in exchange for her meals. The postmaster told her
about his family. Ratan referred to the postmaster’s family as if they were her own. He

taught her to read. During the month of Sravan, the postmaster fell severely ill. Ratan took on the role of mother, calling the doctor, giving him pills at the right time. Staying awake at his bedside all night long, cooking him convalescent meals, and saying a hundred times, “Are you feeling a bit better, Dadababu?” Many days later, the postmaster got up from his bed and he decided to leave, applying for a transfer. But his application had been rejected; so he was resigning from his post and returning home. Ratan asked the postmaster to take home with him. But for the postmaster her idea was impossible. He said, “I’ll tell the man who replaces me that he should look after you as I have”. But he cold not fathom the feelings of Ratan. The passion in her heart exploded and she cried, “no, no, you mustn’t say anything to anyone—I don’t want to stay here.” He took out all the salary that was in his pocket. But Ratan sank to the ground and clung to his feet, saying, “I beg you, Dadababu, I beg you—don’t give me any money”. She followed, weeping copiously. Anon in Hatath in Shyamali written in 1936 was a lady traveling in the same compartment with a person who had been her playmate in childhood, took initiative in opening an intimate talk and told her erstwhile friend that her feelings for him were like the stars of the night that did not disappear but merely become invisible in daytime. Sonamani, an 11-year-old widow in the Guest (Atithi) written in 1895, loved Brahmin boy Tarapada. But she was too self-abased, too shy and too nervous to get close to him. Also she was interfered by her envious child friend Chamshashi. Madhavi in Apasamhar written in 1922 was a foster child of the Acharya. She loved Kumarsen, but she had to go to Cambodia as a companion to the princess who was married there. In A Single Night written in 1892, Surabala and her neighboring boy went to the same primary school. They also played together so that her mother whispered, “These two are made for each other.” When they reached marriage age, their fathers agreed that they should marry. But the boy did not want to marry because he had vowed to himself that he would remain a celibate all his life and die for his motherland. So Surabala was married off to a lawyer. Then the boy’s father died and he had to leave his studies and work as a second grade teacher at an primary school. His ambition broke down and he regretted for his refusal to marry Surabala. Later, when the boy visited her husband, she observed him through the
window shutters with a pair of inquisitive eyes. And he could not drive away the thought that Surabala, living behind the walls of her husband Ramlocha's house, belonged more to him than to Ramlocha. When a deluge came at a night, they met on the embankment of a pond. Every thing was submerged by the flood, only a few feet of the embankment rose above the water, and they two were the only two creatures on that little island. Amidst that cataclysm, when there was no star in the sky and no light on the earth, they could have uttered a word or two. But they did not. They did not even ask of each other how they were. In *The Wedding Garland* written in 1903, Kurani, a girl picked up during the famine in 1896 by Patel, fresh doctor Jatin's cousin, fell in love with Jatin. But Jatin neglected her affection since he “believed that Kurani did not understand anything and felt no shame or pain”. He rejected the garland affectionately proffered by Kurani. Kurani was so disappointed that she disappeared from the Patel family the next day. In a hospital Jatin met her who was dying of plague with the garland of dried bakul flowers around her neck. The garland was the very same garland that he rejected. Only when dying in the plague hospital did she reveal to Jatin her newly-awakened womanhood, symbolized by that withered garland. When he found that Kurani was understanding, abruptly exposing her shyness, fear and pain, he said, “I love you, Kurani... put your garland round my neck.” The lover who had scorned her now in the past begged her favor in the shape of that garland. He put a gold chain handed by Patel around her neck. But “she did not see the light of the dawn when it fell on her face.” Even educated woman could not have their loved fulfilled. In *The Rejected Story (Namanjur Galpa)* written in 1925, Amiya was a revolutionary in the non-cooperation movement that was part of the freedom struggle. Anil, one of her admirers, desired to marry her. But when he knew the fact that she was born by her father with a low-caste maidservant, he fled and deserted Amiya.

3.2.4. Women who have their love fulfilled irrespective of opposition

Young women in Tagorean time were difficult to have their love dream come true. Anyway, some of them in Tagore did have their love fulfilled in spite of opposition. Aruna in *Chorai Dhan (Stolen Treasure)* written in 1933 was the daughter of Sunitra. She was in love with Shailen and her father encouraged her to marry him, though the mother was opposed to such an alliance.
3.2.5. **Caste system, a barrier for love**

Caste is a problem in the Indian society. The caste degradation strangled love of many low-caste women. Only on the ground of caste equality that the real love of low-caste women was possible. The untouchables received great sympathy in the drama *Chandalika (The Untouchable Maiden)* written in 1933. The essence of the theme was a legend taken from *The Sanskrit Buddhist Literature (The Sardula-Karna-Avadana)* by a Buddhist from Nepal called Surala Karnabadan, edited by Rajendralal Mitra. Tagore had added flesh and blood to the dry skeleton of the old legend. On a blazing hot day while returning to his monastery, Ananda, a Buddhist monk, felt thirsty. Noticing a girl by the roadside well, he desired her to give him water. The over-awed girl, Prakriti, hesitantly submitted that being a Chandanlini and, as such, an untouchable, and the water of the well being impure, she could not dare offer him water. But the monk brushed aside the low caste girl's hesitation. She was thrilled to hear him saying that she and he were equal as human beings and no water that quenched thirst could be defiled. This ennobling assertion had an electrifying impact on her. Freed from her natal inferiority, she was roused to a consciousness of her human dignity. This tumultuous awakening was tantamount to a 'new birth'. But with her release from the curse of social degradation, the result of an aged-old caste tyranny, her habitual inertia took the form of an unrestricted self-assertiveness, and strangely enough, she fell deeply in love with her savior whom she adored. The impetuous heroine was involved in a conflict of passion and adoration when Ananda with his fellow-monks passed by without looking at her. This greatly hurt her awakened dignity. With overwhelming passion she told herself, “I want him, I want him beyond all measures. I want to take this life of mine and lay it like a basket of flowers at his feet.” She prevailed upon her mother, a dealer in necromancy, to exercise her black art and drag Ananda to her, believing that her mother's primordial power would get the better of his new fangled idea of asceticism. Her mother gave her a magic mirror from which she could see her idol. Gradually as Ananda succumbed to her sway through the instrumentation of her mother's magical power, she was shocked at the sight of the mortification of her idol helplessly struggling on the verge of his degradation. Profoundly moved and now spiritually awakened, she released him from the evil grip of her lustful desires. The action ended simultaneously with the death of her
mother who had overstrained herself in the execution of sorcery and Prakriti’s realization of the greatness of her idol who proved her redeemer a second time. Chandalika presented the tortuous process of outer awakening from social degradation followed by the passion on which flesh was prone to the final redemption that brought both the outer and inner awakening to harmony.

3.2.6. Child-marriage—Loveless and disastrous

Child-marriage has always been a problem in the Hindu society. It brings much pain and even disasters to young girls. Even princesses could not escape it. In Once There was A King written in 1893, the king, after 12 years of austerities in forests, told her 12-year-old daughter, "The first man I see tomorrow when I come out of the palace shall marry you". And he did marry her 12-years-old daughter to a 7-years-old Brahmin boy whom he first saw the following morning. Then the princess took her little husband away in great distress, and built a large palace with seven wings and began to cherish her husband with great care. Four or five years passed since their marriage. His companions always asked him: "Who is that beautiful lady in the palace?" When the Brahmin boy asked this question to the princess, she would reply, "Let it pass today. I will tell you some other day". Another 5 years passed, they both grew up. The Brahmin boy said, "If you do not tell me today who you are, I will leave this palace". To which the princess told him, "Tonight I will tell you, when you are in bed". And the princess spread white flowers over the golden bed, and alighted a gold lamp with fragrant oil, and adorned her hair, and dressed herself in a beautiful robe of blue, and began to count the hours in expectation of the night. And when she went up to the bed to tell him she found that a serpent had crept out of the flowers and had bitten the Brahmin boy. Her husband was lying on the bed of flowers, with pale-blue face.

3.2.7. Dowry problem, a block for love

Like caste, dowry is also a big block on the way of love. Kalyani in the Unknown Maiden (Aparichita) written in 1897, was the daughter of Sambhunata Sen, a famous physician of Kanpur. She is a spirited daughter of a spirited father. On the wedding, the paternal uncle of the bridegroom thoroughly checked the dowry jewels which offended her father greatly. To defend the dignity as a human being of his daughter, he stopped the marriage immediately, for he thought that the bridegroom’s paternal uncle considered the
dowry much more than the bride. Later, the bridegroom saw the Kalyani on a train and he was greatly impressed by her noble manners. He decided to court her again. But Kalyani had already devoted herself to her 'lover'--- education of women and preferred to remain unmarried.

Sairabhi in the Panraksha (A Resolve Accomplished) written in 1911 was a village girl. Her guardians earned their livelihood by weaving cloth. In her community it was the bride's party that received dowry. Once it was proposed that she would be married to Rasik, the friend of her elder brother. But as Rasik's elder brother Bansi could not arrange the necessary dowry, the marriage was postponed. Rasik asked Bansi to give him a bicycle and not getting it he left the village and became the gharjamai in a rich family. Bansi was able to save the money in course of time and before his death he handed it over along with a new bicycle to Sairabhi's father requesting him to give the cycle and his daughter in marriage to Rasik when he came back. Sairabhi waited and waited till the day when Rasik came back to the village on the new bicycle his father-in-law had given. The village boys shouted that the bridegroom for Sairabhi had come. She silently placed the cycle on the veranda and went into the room. She was greatly shocked and disappointed when she learned that Rasik had sold himself to his rich father-in-law.

3.2.8. Girls who rebel against conventions for love

The Broken Nest written in 1901 began a new career of Tagore. The initial sign of revolt against social conventions was visible for the first time in the sympathetic portrayal of Charu's love for Amal, a cousin of her husband Bhupati. Amal was a student of the third year class. She yearned for love and companionship but her husband was too busy with his newspaper to devote his time or heart to his young wife. She was fond of studying but Bhupati had no time to help her. She, therefore, turned to Amal who gladly undertook to instruct her. Amal used to secure compensation for his labor by way of small presents from her. The more he received these, the greater grew his demand. Charu was happy as she found that some body in the world was making some demand on her. She and Amal gradually became companions in study, in gardening and also in making contribution to the Bengali literature through a handwritten journal whose contribution was strictly confined to the two contributors. Amal, however, could not resist the temptation of sending some of their writings to the well-established journals of the day.

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Manda, the wife of Umapati, the elder brother of Charu, had been brought to Calcutta by Bhupati to keep Charu's company. But Charu found it secretive with regarding her plans of gardening. When Amal attained some kind of reputation through his writings, Manda began to bestow her attention on him. This made Charu jealous. This was the first symptom of her love for Amal. She considered Amal as her special preserve, whose worth was to be appreciated by her alone. Amal did not relish such a treatment though. One day Bhupati showed Charu a journal in which high praise was bestowed on her style, which was contrasted to the artificial style of Amal. This shocked her. Charu did not at first realize that she was falling in love with Amal and neglecting her husband. Amal found an escape from the tangled problem in the offer of his marriage that had come to his guardian Bhupati. Charu was surprised at his readiness to marry without raising the least objection. She could not hide her chagrin. With a view to delay the marriage as far as possible she proposed that Amal at least see the girl, but Amal brushed aside the suggestion promptly. When he sailed for England he did not meet Charu privately nor did he write any letter to her from abroad. At last she sent a prepaid cable to him at the expense of nearly Rs 200 which she collected by mortgaging her ornaments. When Bhupati found that her wife had been falling in love with Amal, he decided to go far off Mysore. In the end Charu failed to elicit the love from Amal on the one hand, and lost the love of her husband on the other, too.

Sumitra in the Stolen Treasure (Chroan Dhan) written in 1933 was the daughter of a professor, who was a great believer in astrology. Her mother and lover produced a false horoscope to convince her father that the planetary position was not unfavorable to their marriage. But she said that she was no longer afraid of widowhood, because “If I die before you and have to leave you, it will be a double death for me”. The confession of forgery convinced her of the intensity of the love of her husband. This reminds us of Savitri who insisted on marrying Satyavan although she was warned by a seer that her lover had only one year to live. When the fatal day arrived, she moved Yama by her graceful manner and she finally made him to agree to bring her husband back to life.

In the Parir Parichaya written in 1922, Kajari was a beautiful girl of dark color belonging to the aboriginal tribe. A Hindu prince married her, but she deserted him. That a
wife should desert her husband, in Tagore's time, was an idea far ahead of the time.

3.2.9 A tomboy girl who perfectly enjoyed her free love

Here we have another fresh and new heroine—Mrinmayi in The Conclusion written in 1893, a rebellious girl. Mrinmayi, was a wild and tomboy village girl. She laughed at the tumble of Apurba, a BA student who was coming home from Calcutta and getting down the village ghat. At the request of his widowed mother, he went to see his intended bride but found her veiled up to her chin and too shy to reply to his requires. Mrinmayi, the naughty girl however, laughing, appeared on the scene, gave a loud smack on the shoulder of Rakhal, the young brother of the prospective bride because she had failed to draw him for play, pulled up the veil from his sister's face and rushed out of the room like a miniature tornado. But before she went out she managed to take away the patent leather shoes of Apurba. When Apurba was back going home awkwardly with a pair of borrowed old slipper, she flung the shoes before him with peals of laughter. This sort of liveliness impressed him so much that he told his mother that he had selected Mrinmayi as his bride. After some tiffs and sulks with his mother, he and Mrinmayi got married. She wanted to see her father, but was not allowed by her mother-in-law. She escaped and was found back. So her mother-in-law locked her in. Her husband opened the door and they went out without the knowledge and permission of his mother to see her father who had not been able to be present at the marriage ceremony. When her husband was going to Calcutta to study law, she would not follow him. She was yet too young to feel the impact of love on her heart. As a child wife, she liked more to go to her mother's to see her mother and her playmate Rakhal. When they were bidding farewell, the affectionate Apurba requested her to give him a loving kiss, and she burst out laughing and prepared to kiss him. She came close, giggling and began to laugh again. She tried twice, and at last gave up, muffling her hilarity with her sari. Outwardly she was a wife, but she was a child, too. In her mother's house, she found that she could not settle to anything. The desire to go to Calcutta overwhelmed her now. The creator's sword severed her childhood from her youth unaware. A profound sense of womanhood filled every fiber of Mrinmayi and made her tender as heart ached. She began to repay all her debts to Apurba with kisses and caresses on his pillows. Love made the lively naughty girl a docile wife. Her mother-in-law took her to see her husband in Calcutta and stayed in her married sister-in-
law's. The sister-in-law gave her brother a surprise: she asked her brother to stay at night. He was about to climb into the bed when with a sudden sound of bangles, a soft arm took him in its embrace, and a pair of lips like a flowering bud smothered him with a flood of passionate kisses that left no space to express surprise. He was startled for a moment. Then he knew that the half-kiss interrupted by fits of laughter was at long last being concluded among uninhibited tears. Mrinmayi won love from Apurba by her unique loving behavior and when love made the lively naughty girl a docile wife, she expressed her love like an erupting volcano.

3.2.10. A symbol of love and beauty—Nandini

Nandini in the drama *Raktakarabi (Red Oleander)* written in 1924, was a symbol of love and beauty, who animated and inspired all who came in contact with her. Nandini was represented as a girl of the village Ishani, where she played freely with boys. She attracted even the boys of neighboring villages. She was, therefore, conscious of her charm and of her hold over the village youths even when she was playing with boys in the village. She asked Kishore who was madly in love with her to hand over the tassels red oleanders to Ranja. Nandini fascinated Bishu, who once was an informer of the authorities of the Yaksha Town. She drew his heart and his songs, too. She told Bashu with regret: "When you sing I can not help feeling that I owe you much, but have never given anything to you." Nobody could resist the charm of Nandini. Even the learned professor, a man of advanced years, paid high tribute to her when he told her: "In this Yaksha Town all our treasures is of gold, the secret treasure of the dust. But the gold which is you, beautiful one, is not of the dust, but of the light which never owns any bond." There appeared to have been no rigor of social convention in that town, because the professor, probably leading the life of a bachelor, invited Nandini to his room, so that he might be reckless in his waste of time for a while. She even moved the king and the deputy governor of the Yaksha Town. She told Kishore, Bishu, professor and the king that she was deeply in love with Ranjan. She told Raja, "I love Ranjan as the rudder in the water might love the sail in the sky, answering its rhythm of wind in the rhythm of

265 Tagore, *Red Oleander*, p. 94.
266 Ibid. p.5.
waves."\textsuperscript{267} When the king asked her whether she could die for him, she replied without a moment's hesitation, "This very moment". She found Ranjan lying dead in the chamber.

3.2.11. \textbf{A triangular love, the first case in Indian Literature}

But different from the above-said women, Bimala, the wife of Nikhil in \textit{The Home and the World} written in 1915, did not agree with 'caged birds'. Set against the stormy days of the Swadeshi Movement in Bengal (1903--1908), \textit{The Home and the World} unfolded the trials and tribulations of a home, caught up in the convulsions of a political struggle, with profound implications for the individual and the nation alike. The dominant theme of the novel was the triangular relationship involving Nikhil, Bimala, and Sandip and the Swadeshi Movement activated and complicated the relationship between these characters highlighting the tension and the conflict between the home and the world. Through \textit{The Home and the World}, Tagore pointed out how love could come in conflict more narrowly, more fiercely with politics also. It was the poignant story of a woman who underwent terrible mental tension and turmoil by taking part in the Swadeshi Movement and was torn asunder by the conflicting loyalties to the house and the outside world. Tagore elevated the simple story of a love triangle to the literary heights by making the two male characters of the novel, Nikhil and Sandip, represented the conflict between idealism and realism, or truth and illusion. Perhaps for the first time in Indian literature it depicted the extra marital love of a woman. Bimala was the first Indian woman to make a frank analysis of her illegal passion. The novel raised certain fundamental issues like the role of women at home and outside, and the equality of the sexes. For nine years, Bimala had led a happy married life, anchored in the love of her husband, the modern-minded Nikhil, who arranged for her English education and introduced her to the modern ways of life. Longing to find her blossom fully in the knowledge of herself in the wide world outside, Nikhil urged her to step into it: "What I want is, that I should have you, and you should have me, more fully in the outside world. That is where we are still in debt to each other... I would have you come into the heart of the outer world and meet reality.... If we meet and recognize each other, in the real world, then our love be true."\textsuperscript{268} Perfectly content with her life and also out of regard for the conventions of the Rajh's house, she

\textsuperscript{267} Ibid. p. 73.
declined to come out of the Zenana. She recalled: "I have read in the books that we are called 'caged birds'. I can not speak for others, but I had so much in this cage of mine that there was not room for it in the universe, --- at least that is what I then felt."269 The eruption of the Swadeshi Movement broke down the barriers between the home and the world for Bimala because its impact was felt even in the innermost recesses of every home in Bengal. Bimala recounted: "One day there came the new era of Swadeshi in Bengal; but as to how it happened, we had no distinct vision. There was no gradual slope connecting the past with the present. For that reason, I imagine, the new epoch came in like a flood, breaking down the dykes and sweeping all pure prudence and fear before it. We had no time even to think about, or understand, what had happened, or what was about to happen. My sight and my mind, my hopes and my desires, became red with the passion of this new age. Though, up to this time, the walls of the home—-which was the ultimate world to my mind—remained unbroken, yet I stood looking over into the distance, and I heard a voice from the far horizon, whose meaning was not perfectly clear to me, but whose call went straight to my heart.270 Eager to do some personal sacrifice, she wanted to get rid of her English teacher, Miss Gilby and also burn her foreign clothes but was dissuaded by her husband who told her: "... why this bonfire business?... Why not try to build up some thing? You should not waste even a tenth part of your energies in this destructive excitement."271 Bimala felt happy that though her husband supported Swadeshi, he had not whole-heartedly adopted the spirit of Bande Mataram. Unbeknown to herself, she had a longing for the flamboyant and the passionate, and hence, her husband’s ‘dull, milk-and-watery Swadeshi’272 did not appeal to her. It was at this critical point in the story that Tagore introduced Sandip whose fiery eloquence held Bimala spellbound. Setting behind a screen at his meeting, she impatiently pushed it away---the action was symbolized that now she was face to face with the world---and fixed her gaze upon him. She recorded later: "I was no longer the lady of the Rajh’s house. But the sole representative of Bengal’s womanhood. And he was the champion of Bengal. As the sky had shed its light over him, so he must receive the consecration of a woman’s
benediction. I said within myself that his language had caught fire from my eyes; for we
women are not only the deities of the household fire, but the flame of the soul itself. 273
Binjala represented both the traditional and liberated classes of women.

3.2.12. Girls who were unlike the traditional ones in their love

In Tagore we see some girls who are quite different from the traditional ones in love. In
the drama the Sodhodh, (Acquittance) written in 1926, Nalini was a girl who had
modern idea about love and marriage. That is, despite of family ground of the boys, she
chose her lover on the basis of intrinsic goodness and sincere love. Nalini was the
daughter of the prosperous barrister Lahiri. This bright young girl belonging to the smart
set of which she happened to be the center of attention. She was courted by Barun Nandi,
a successful, highbrow, well-groomed bar-at-law, considered by her parents a perfect
eligible match for their daughter. But Nalini who did not judge people by externals
rejected Nandi. She had a feeling heart and valued intrinsic goodness and sincere love
which she found in the impeccuous Satish, her one-time class-mate, who cut a poor
figure in the sophisticated social circle of the Lahiri’s. An understanding girl, she was
restrained in her expression of love for Satish which ever baffled him. While she
remained constant in her love for him, Nalini felt amused at the lack of self-confidence in
Satish who gave expression to his adoration for her in the form of costly presents. Satish
in his humble circumstances, suffered from a feeling of inferiority and his desperate
efforts to ape the modishness by which he thought he could win Nalini’s heart proved a
great drain on his family resources. His mother and his childless aunt, in defiance of his
father’s will, pampered him too much, contributing to this aberrant disposition in him.
The sudden death of his father precipitated a crisis in the domestic set-up, forcing him to
take shelter in his uncle’s house. There was yet another shock in store for him. The hope
of inheriting the property of his rich and childless uncle was dashed consequent on the
unexpected birth of a child to his aged aunt. The reversal in the attitudes of his aunt from
one of extreme indulgence to that of an unconcealed aversion deeply hurt his self-respect
and made him embezzle a large sum of money from the office to clear off his debt to her.

272 Ibid. p.122.
273 Ibid. p.28—29.
This landed him in great trouble, for his office-chief, accompanied by the police, came from the office in order to save himself from utter ignominy and dissuaded him from carrying out his intent. Nalini, reacting agitatedly to this drastic decision, hurriedly arrived on the scene. And the lover’s long-awaited union, despite all odds that had gone into the maturing of the character of Satish, finally came off. Nalini stood by sound human values and demonstrated her difference from the class she belonged to. She was unaffected by the externals of living clung to by her parents, who were desirous of seeing their daughter favorably disposed towards Barun Nandi. A diamond-studded bracelet had been sent by him along with an autographed photo of his and a letter carrying the information that he was to pay a call on them before long to congratulate Nalini. She was least attracted by the self-important ways of Nandi and with admirable tact avoided displeasing her parents in not carrying out their wishes. Satish, who was deeply in love with Nalini, was brought on the stage. Hoping to have a few words with her alone, he came well ahead of time. He was in low spirit on seeing his low-priced gift of an album placed against the costly bracelet presented by Nandi. Thinking of the poor show his gift would make, he took away on a pretext his album from Charubala who had been kept in charge of the birthday gifts. But before he could slip away, Nalini captured and brought him back. Charubala who was happy at the good riddance was surprised to note that Nalini had a soft spot for Satish. The hesitant lover that he was, he tried unavailingly to explain to Nalini the significance of his gift. To hearten Satish, Nalini said: “Let me make it plain to you that he is mistaken. Anybody may present a photograph but only a few can give the piece for keeping it. Timid! Let your invisible photo win the day. (She tears Nandi’s photo into pieces) What’s wrong? What made you jump up like that? You have an epileptic fit it seems.” The tearing to pieces of the photo of his rival revealed her dislike for Nandi and deep-rooted love for Satish, a victim of dubiousness. Unable to read her mind even at this explicit act, Satish asked her with his characteristic hesitancy to be told plainly whether she loved him or not. Nalini laughed away the doubts of Satish, who, unprepared as he was, could not catch the import of her suggestion. The scene ended with the surprised remark of Charubala on noticing the fate of Nandi’s photograph. The

274 Tagore, Acquittance, p.58.
exposition introduced the important strands of the plot; Nandi’s love for Satish; her
dislike of Nandi and the preparation for Nandi’s engagement with Charubala. When
Satish appeared at the tennis court of Lahiri without proper tennis suits, and with a
feeling of inferiority tried to slip away, Nalini detained him. Representing the right
human values she told him that there was a bigger world beyond the tennis court where
even unfashionable clothes, the object of Nandi’s decision, could not eclipse the
humanity. Sharp tongued and critical of every body deviating from the norm, Nalini
exposed Nandi who affected the snobbery, prevalent in the anglicized society of the time
by extracting from him the admission that even he was in England he kept himself aloof
from the company of Bengalis there. Nandi selected Charubala as his partner from the
thought that Nalini took interest in Satish simply for his monumental absurdity, whereas
for Nalini Satish was a man of sound heart gone astray and as yet unredeemed. The two
lovers, Nalini poised and Satish lacking in balance, offered a contrast to each other. She
pulled up Satish for his apishness in presenting her a necklace costlier than that of
Nandi’s gift of a diamond bracelet. Though Satish had come with the sole purpose of
taking the “gifted” necklace back to resolve the financial crisis its purchase had got
himself in, his lover’s conscience plunged him in an emotional conflict. He urgently
needed it back but could not force himself to do so. The dramatic interest was sustained
by delicate play of feelings. Nalini tried to make it clear to Satish that the value of a
lover’s gift did not depend on its cost. Her shrewdness made her perceive that Satish must
have incurred debt on her account and succeeded in prevailing upon him to take back the
necklace. As Satish was about to depart with the necklace in his hand, he became the
object of Nandi’s biting remarks. To snub Nandi, Nalini wore the necklace, presented by
Satish, and placed a rosebud in his button hole right before Nandi’s eye, bluntly but with
sound distinct, asking the latter to take away his bracelet which had no value for her.
Nalini’s rejection of Nandi ---a comment on the shallow ways of the sophisticated section
of the society ---hastened its union with Charubala her exact opposite. Nandi gave the
same bracelet to Charubala and his action was being conveniently and hastily engaged
with her, revealed the hollowness of his love for Nalini, in contrast to the steadfast love
Satish had for her. When Satish met Nalini at the house of Sasadhar, Satish told her that
Lahiri had broken off their engagement because of his destitution and hence he had
decided upon taking final leave of her. He asked Nalini: "I want know whether you hate poverty". Composed as ever she replied: "Yes, very much if such poverty tries to hide itself in falsehood". On being told that he failed to understand her, Nalini answered: "How can you? I am not your necktie or collar of the latest fashion. You know only what you think of day and night". When Satish, in great peril when his boss took police to arrest him since he had defalcated a big amount of money to pay his uncle and in despair he wanted to kill the son of his uncle and then end his life with a pistol, Nalini, who had remained constant in her love despite his fluctuating fortunes, came to his rescue with an unconcealed expression of her involvement in his destiny. The climactic stage was charged with emotion when Nalini hurriedly entered with her ornaments and feelingly admitted that she had practically stolen them, as they were not hers as yet, thereby consoling Satish and reassuring his faith in himself. The two lovers were now at one emotional level. The culminating moment was reached with the two lovers, Nalini, the gem of a woman, and Satish, who now became worthy of her, being left together on the stage was happy and perfect union—the central issue of the play. All dramatic involvements were brought to a reposeful close.

Princess Nuruni in the *False Hope* was another model who loved in spite of discrepancy of religions. Nuruni was the 16-year-old daughter of Golamkadar Khan, the *nawab* of Badraon. She loved Keshar Lal, the army-commander who was a Hindu Brahmin whose regular, piety, fair and supple body, Brahminical sanctity and grace chastened the ignorant heart of Nuruni with a strange reverence. When the fighting broke out between the Company and the sepoys, Golamkadar Khan did not want to fight against the Englishmen, while Keshar Lal insisted resistance against the enemy. She took her whole array of ornaments, tied them up in a cloth and gave them to her maid to take to Keshar Lal. But Golamkadar secretly gave red-shirted English commander the news of the revolt. Keshar Lal commanded such loyalty in the Nawab's guard that they fought to the death with their guns and blunt swords. With grief and hatred of her traitorous father, she dressed in the clothes of her brother and escaped from the *zenana*. She was trying to find Keshar Lal and she did find the unconscious hero. She fetched water from the Ganges with her clothes soaked wet. As soon as the hero heard who the girl was he roared
out like a lion and struck her a heavy blow on her cheek and she nearly fainted. The hero boarded the boat and released the mooring. The boat quickly drifted to the stream and gradually faded from view. Nuruni began her 30 years journey to look for her beloved. She endured many trials and dangers and indignities. Thirty years went by, she became a Brahmin inside and out, in habit and behavior, in body, mind and speech. After 30 years, she saw her hero in Darjeeling who was aged, in a Bhutanese village with his Bhutanese wife, sitting in a filthy yard with their grandchildren. Her dream broke like a full balloon.

Tagore depicted another love story of a princess who loved the court poet. In The Victory written in 1892, Ajita was the princess of King Narayan. She was never seen by the court poet Shekhar. On the day he recited a new poem, she was the unseen listener in the screened balcony high above the hall. But doubt never arose in his mind as to whose shadow it was that moved behind the screen, and whose anklets they were that sang to the time of his beating heart. Just then set forth from his home in the south a poet called Pundarik on his path of conquest. And the new poet asked the king for a challenge of the court poet Shekhar. Shekhar cast his glance towards the screened balcony high above, and saluted his lady in his mind, saying, "If I am the winner at the combat today, my lady, thy victorious name shall be glorified." But unfortunately Shekhar lost the challenge. From the upper balcony came a slight sound of the movements of rustling robes and waist-chains hung with golden bells. Shekhar rose from his seat and left the hall. One by one he tore his books to fragments, and threw them into a vessel containing fire. He opened wide his windows. He spread the flower of Jasmine, tuberoses and chrysanthemums that he loved upon his bed, beside bringing to his bedroom all the lamps he had in his house and lighted them. Then mixing with honey the juice of some poisonous root he drank it and lay down on his bed. Golden anklets tinkled in the passage outside the door, and a subtle perfume came into the room with the breeze. The poet, with his eyes shut, said: "My lady, have you taken pity upon your servant at last and come to see him?" The answer came in a sweet voice: "My poet, I have come." Shekhar opened his eyes—and saw before his bed the figure of a woman. His sight was dim and blurred. And it seemed to him that the image made of a shadow that he had ever kept in the secret shrine of his heart had come into the outer world in last moment to gaze upon his face. The woman said, "I am the princess Ajita." The poet with a great effort sat up on his bed.
Ajita whispered into his ear: "The king has not done you justice. It was you who won at the combat, my poet, and I have come to crown you with the crown of victory." She took the garland of flowers from her own neck, and put it on his hair, and the poet fell down upon his bed stricken by death.

In the play *The King and the Queen (Raja O Rani)* written in 1894, Ila was the daughter of Amaru, the chief captain of Trichur in Kashmir. To curry favor with Vikram, the king of Jalandhar, her father wanted to offer her to Vikram. But she had already betrothed Kumarsen, the prince of Kashmir. The king was greatly pleased with her beauty and grace and wanted to make her new queen. But she bravely declined. The king changed his idea and decided to make preparation for a wedding festival for Ila and Kumarsen. But Kumarsen had been beheaded and his head had been offered to Vikram. She only heard the bridal music.

3.2.13. Girl who tried to win ‘love’ at the cost of the life of another boy who loved her

Tagore in his works condemned those women who, to win their ‘love’ made other people become their victims. He told readers that the love which was won at the cost of others was not real love at all: Love meant morality but not evil. In the song–dance drama *Syama* written in 1939, Syama, the beautiful courtesan, was enamored of the handsome Bajrasena, a foreign merchant, and resolved to save him from the false charge of theft from the royal treasury for which he was arrested and according to the law was liable to be put to death. When she appealed for help from any one, Uttiya, a silent yet fervent adolescent adorer of Syama, came forward with the ultimate offer of laying down his life taking upon himself the entire blame and consequence of Bajrasena’s alleged guilt. Royal wrath pursued Syama as she fled the capital with Bajrasena hoping to live with him in bliss. Pressed repeatedly by Rajrasena to reveal how his life was saved from certain death, Syama disclosed to her beloved the sinful act she had committed to possess him. Learning that he had been saved at the cost of the life of an innocent man, he deserted her in moral revulsion. No amount of her passionate imploring for forgiveness was to move him. The two were thrown apart to expiate but never to be united. The sad and lovelorn Bajrasena’s yearning for his beloved brought her near him once again but with her appearance he disdainfully rejected her a second time. Convinced of the failure of the
union, Syama touched Bajrasena's feet and departed finally resigning herself to her fate. Bajrasena stood self-condemned with Syama's memory haunting him and the bitter realization dawning on him that in his inability to forgive Syama, sinner though she was, he had committed a greater sin.

3.2.14 The oldest unmarried girl who was both a tragedy and a comedy in love

Sarala in The Garden written in 1934 was the oldest girl in Tagore's works. A distant cousin of Aditya, she was a remarkable character. She was the only woman character of Tagore who remained unmarried till the age of 31 and went to the prison fighting for the freedom, wearing a khadi saree. She lost her parents while she was very young and was brought up by her uncle. She was tall and slender, of dark complexion. The most striking feature in her appearance were her large eyes, at once luminous and full of tenderness. She was very simple in her dress. She was sober and dignified. Aditya had spent his childhood and youth with Sarala in her uncle's house. Her uncle, a florist gave training to Aditya and advanced money to him when he set up business. For these reasons, Aditya was attached to Sarala and concerned about her welfare. After the death of her uncle, his garden passed into the hands of his creditors. Sarala being an orphan, came to Aditya on his request. She attended on Niraja, Aditya's bedridden wife and helped Aditya in tending the garden. She was quite unaware, in the beginning, that her arrival would cause a crisis in Niraja's family. Sarala was sincere and frank in confessing her love for Aditya. She revealed to Ramen, a cousin of Aditya, that in the beginning she was not aware of the fact that she had fallen in love with Aditya. Hence she could not understand why Niraja hated her and was jealous. She said to Ramen: "At first I could not understand why Boudi was angry with me. I was greatly surprised. I had never looked into my own mind before, but now the flame of Boudi's passion has lighted up its dark recesses, and I could see myself." Thus the dormant love between Sarala and Aditya was enflamed by Niraja's jealousy. Sarala was not a rebel, but an embodiment of patience and self-restraint. She was not swept away by passion. She used her discretion even in times of crisis. She prevented Aditya from his precipitating a crisis: "What is use of rebelling against? What must be accepted now? Nothing will come of this lashing about." and told Aditya "I

275 Tagore, The Garden, p.140.
276 Ibid. p.144.
shan’t let you get entangled with me like this” Sarala’s love was marked by the spirit of self-abnegation. To avoid the jealousy of Niraja and attachment of Aditya, she pretended to rush illegally into governor’s palace and was imprisoned. This was an extreme act, but she sacrificed her love so that bedridden Niraja could feel better and her family could be harmonious. The story ended when Niraja died. But the readers can guess from the story that her dormant love to Aditya was enflamed by Niraja’s jealousy that they could get united. So the love of Sarala was first tragedy and and possibly comedy.

3.2.15. Love of the newly emerging educated women and their conflicts with the traditionalists

Tagore in *The Wreck* presented the first modern educated woman, Hemnalini, who was the precursor of the other modern women characters like Sucharita, Lolita, Labanya and Ela of his later novels. She impressed the readers with her simplicity, loyalty, sympathy and understanding for her beloved, Ramesh. She was the true representative of the newly emerging class of emancipated women of the early twentieth century. She heralded the new age of the liberated and progressive women who were free from the prevailing traditional notions and superstitions. She was beautiful, though dark and slim. She fell in love with the cultured, orthodox Ramesh who was introduced to her by her brother. She asked his guidance in the study of philosophy for preparing for her M.A. course. She often met him over a cup of tea at her home. Hemnaini, though educated, was traditional in her look, especially in matters of love. She believed in the sanctity of true love, she was among those people who believed as Shakespeare said “love is not love which alters when its alteration finds.” Her devotion to Ramesh and faith in his love were unshakable and in no way less than the married women’s devotion for their husbands. When Ramesh wanted to postpone their marriage, she did not insist on his explanation or reasons for it. When her brother became inquisitive about Ramesh’s reasons in this regard she cut him short, stating, “you, others may think what you like, but I don’t suspect him at all.”

277 She plainly told him that she did not see any necessity to know the reasons for his decision. Again when Akshay and Jogendra gathered particulars from the boarding school where Kamala was admitted and informed Hemnalini, she did not believe a single word they

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277 Tagore, *The Wreck*, p. 78
said. She told them: “I’ll never believe it until I hear it from his own lips.” Unfulfilled love transformed Hemnalini into an ascetic. She stopped drinking tea and eating fish and wore spotless white clothes. As Jogendra remarked she has turned: “…the whole house holy grounded; there’s hardly a spot where a fellow like me can set foot.”

She could not erase the memory of Ramesh from her mind in spite of her contemplation and austerities. Her unflinching loyalty, fidelity and steadfast devotion to Ramesh were so unshakable that she did not respond positively when her father conveyed the proposal of Nalinaksha. She felt it “impossible”. Hemnalini’s consent later to marry Nalinaksha was not inconsistent with her previous behavior and in no way discredited her. The reason was that she was swayed by one consideration only to serve Nalinaksha and his mother. Even in moment of crisis she could keep her composure and balance. She was not perturbed when Ramesh appeared along with Jogendra, after she had given consent to marry Nalinaksha. Again when she read the long letter of Ramesh and came to know the sequence of events about his entanglement with Kamala, she was least perturbed and maintained her composure. She handed over the letter to Nalinaksha who happened to be there at that time. After learning that Kamala was the wife of Nalinaksha, she did not feel jealous of her. Moreover, it was she who prompted Kamala to reveal herself as his wife and establish her rights. She told Kamala that she had no reason to keep her husband in the dark. She suggested that Kamala should reveal her identity to him, for better or worse. Hemnalini remained a spinster for no fault of hers in spite of her steadfast love and unflinching faith in Ramesh. There was no suggestion of their marriage in the end.

3.2.16. Love overcame hatred:

Just contrary to Amba in the Mahabharata whose love became hatred, Tagore described a story where love overcame hatred. In Dalia (Maharani of Arakan,) written in 1891, Amina was the youngest daughter of Sha Shuja who took shelter in Arakan out of fear of Aurangzeeb. As the ruler of Arakan proposed to marry the three daughters of Shuja to his sons, Shuja felt insulted. His eldest daughter preferred to commit suicide, the second swam away under the escort of a trusted servant while the 3rd one Amina was
drowned in the river by her father himself. But a fisherman saved her and brought her up as his own daughter. The prince of Arakan, the anonymous Dalia, who moved in the guise of a rustic youth saw her and was charmed by her beauty and wit. He tried to win her heart by plucking fruits and flowers for her and also by presenting to her the deer he hunted. Amina took great delight in ordering about and sometimes playfully chastised him for his awkward work. At this stage her elder sister who had swam away came to her and proposed that the two sisters should revenge the death of their father. Amina was reluctant to give up her state of idyllic felicity for the sake of taking part in the terrible drama of politics. Her sister bewailed her degradation. She got information that the prince of Arakan had seen both the sisters at the cottage of the fisherman and decided to marry Amina. He now pressed Amina to utilize this opportunity and murder the prince. She even handed over to her a sharp knife. Dalia saw all these and to the astonishment of the two sisters felt amused. Amina too felt a little sorry when she found Dalia was unmoved by the prospect of her marriage with the prince. She attributed this indifference on his part to his foolishness. Amina's love for this rustic was demonstrated by her handling over her ring to the fisherman asking him to give it to Dalia when he visited him next. With considerable difficulty she persuaded herself to kill the prince. But when she found that the prince was no other than Dalia himself she fainted and her elder sister, too, forgot all about her revenge. The efficacy of love in transforming the life and thought of young ladies was depicted in a masterly fashion in this charming romantic story. Love triumphed over the spirit of vengeance.

3.2.17. Heart-stricken and immortal love

Like Vyasa, Tagore also described some immortal love in his works. In *The Beggar Woman* written in 1877, the 10 year-old Kamal, late highly placed official's daughter and the 16-year-old Amarsingh, General Ajit Singh's son were deeply in love. Soon Kamal was to be married to Amarsingh. A week or two were left for the wedding before news came that the war had broken out along the borders of the kingdom. General Ajitsingh would have to go to war and would take his son Amar along to teach him the principles of warfare. Then Kamal's widowed mother fell ill and bedridden without food. Kamal had to beg for alms. But she did not know how to do so. Weak from hunger, weary of walking, downcast and exhausted, she fell down on the snowing mountain path,
unconscious. Shortly she was taken prisoner by dacoit who put a ransom for Rs 500. The widow sold all her jewelery, begged door to door and only managed to raise half of the demanded amount. The desperate mother had to come to wealthy Mohunlal, a zamindar’s son who had proposed marriage to Kamal but was not agreed by her father. Kamal was released but she had to marry to Mohunlal. The fatherless girl escaped from one rogue’s clutches only to fall into another one’s. Five years later Amarsingh came and was stunned when he learnt that Kamal had been married. He was completely overwhelmed because his dream of happiness was devastated by this stroke. Mohun left Kamal with her mother and went away. One day Kamal suddenly heard that her Amar had returned home. Then they met up. In a moment Kamal put her arms round his neck, laid her head on his shoulder. The agitated Amar also shed tears in the darkness. Then suddenly he moved away like someone stung him. The artless girl had come laughing, with a joyful heart, but she went away weeping and feeling distressed. Kamal thought that the same Amar of her childhood had returned and that the same Kamal would begin playing with Amar on the morrow. Though Amar had been deeply hurt he was not angry at Kamal nor did he show that he was offended with her. So that the married girl would not neglect her duties and the very next day he went away and no one knew where. The young girl was stricken and she gradually became thin and weak to such an extent that she could not even stand. She understood that she was about to die. She had no other desires but would pray all the time, "May I see Amar before I die." The poor widow did not have the money to undertake the expenses of the treatment. Mohan was not at home and even if he had been, she could not hope for anything from him. The widowed mother would go to the physicians’ houses and beg them to come and see Kamal just once. After many requests one physician had agreed to come at night and examined Kamal. It was a cloudy, dark night with the deep rumbles of thunder echoing in every cave of the mountains and the incessant flashes of lightning were striking the peaks. It was pouring and the wind was blowing furiously. The widow had given up all hope of the doctor’s arrival in this storm. Suddenly she heard the sound of a horse’s hooves. There entered the doctor. From head to foot he was covered with a piece of cloth and from the wet clothes a shower of drops falling. The physician went and stood near the Kamal’s straw bed. Lifting dumb, sorrowful eyes to the doctor’s face Kamal saw that it was not the physician, it was the
handsome and dignified looking Amar. The overwhelmed girl looked at Amar with steady, adoring eyes. Tears overflowed and fell from her large eyes and her wasted face glowed with a peaceful smile. But the diseased body could not bear so much joy. Gradually the tear-filled eyes closed forever. Aparna in the drama Viarjan (Sacrifice) written in 1889, was a beggar girl. But in the context of the prevailing conditions of the 19th century Hindu society even a beggar girl could not remain unmarried in her youth. Aparna was the first to raise her voice of protest against the forcible seizure of her young goat for sacrificing it before the image of the goddess. Her grief at its loss moved the heart of Jayasingha, the temple servant. Aparna felt that the tears forge a bond of sympathy between her and Jayasingha. She boldly asked Jayasingha to dissociate himself from the temple and accompany her. This call became the burden of all her subsequent talks with Jayasingha. Aparna instinctively felt the utter solitariness of his heart and informed him of her own pitiable loneliness. Raghupati, the high priest of the temple and the spiritual preceptor of Jayasingha, was clever enough to find that Aparna had become a rival to the goddess in the heart of Jayasingha. He called her a sorceress and drove her away. But she could not go far away from Jayasingha. She stood sadly at a short distance from the temple and heard his mournful song. Despite the repeated call of his guru he proposed to go away with her and live by begging. His son Raghupati again ordered him to drive her away, because he felt that she had bewitched. The latter yielded under protest and asked Aparna to move away. Because there was no pity and sympathy in this world except in death. But Aparna persisted in her call to Jayasingha who, however, told her that he was tied down to the pledge he had taken. To fulfill the promise of bringing royal blood to the image he sacrificed his own life. Her love was strangled.

Also, we see Romeo and Juliet type lovers who sacrificed themselves for the sake of love. Bidyamala in Ritimata Novel written in 1892, was a princess of Kanchi, Lalit, the commander-in-chief of Kanchi, loved her and she also reciprocated. But he was banished for his audacity in approaching her. He turned into a robber and ultimately she died along with Lalit. In Rudhachandra written in 1881, Amiya, the daughter of Rudhachandra, who having been banished by Prithviraj swore eternal vengeance against him. Amiya loved Chand Kavi, the bard of Prithviraj, as her elder brother, but her father forbade her to mix with him. Amiya lost her father who committed suicide on hearing of the death of
Prithviraj as a captive of Muhammad Ghori. She too died in the presence of Chand Kavi.

3.2.18. Three girls who dealt with love differently

In the drama Goday Galad (Wrong from the Start) written in 1892, Tagore delineated three female characters who dealt with their love differently. Indumati, who strove for her real love; Kamalmukhi who deposited her love on destiny and Kadambini who loved only for properties. Indumati was the daughter of Nibaran who was the guardian of Kamalmuki whose late father Aditya was Nibaran’s good friend. The two young girls deeply attached to each other and lived together like sisters. Proposals for their marriage gladden Nibaran. The eagerness of Shibcharan, an old friend of his, to unite his son Nimai with Indumati in wedlock pleased him. He was equally happy when Chandrakanta, his lawyer-neighbor, accompanied by his friends Binodbihari and Nimai, a medical student, visited his place to propose a match between Binodbihari and Kamulkumakhi, the girl left in Nibaran’s care. Contrary to expectations, however, things took a queer turn. Indumati and Nimai fell in love at first sight without knowing each other’s name. Both were set on wrong tracks right from the start. Indumati out of maidenly modesty gave her name as Kadambini of the Choudhuries of Bagbazar and she herself was made to believe Nimai to be Lalit, one of the friends of Chadarkanta. The enamored Nimai continued to visit Bagbazar staring at the house of the Choudhuries and composed poems in the name of his beloved. Shibcharan was irritated to find his otherwise obedient son unwilling, for no obvious reason, to marry Indumati, the girl of his choice. On the other hand, to the consternation of all, Binodbihari, realizing soon after his hasty marriage that his romantic ideal of marital happiness unable to reconcile the romantic concept of an ideal marriage with the drab reality of his circumstances, persuaded his wife Kamalmukhi to go back to the house of Nibaran, her guardian. Presently, Kamulkumki came to know from Nibaran that she was not a poor man’s daughter as had long been known but was well provided for by her father before his death. After getting possession of her inheritance the level-headed Kamalmukhi designed a scheme. With the intent to bring her husband closer she rent out a well-furnished house and concealing her identity engaged him as a lawyer to look after her property. Unrecognized by Binodbihari, for she kept herself veiled, Kamulkumki gradually won him over finally disclosing her identity. She
was also instrumental in dispelling the delusion of Indumati and Nimai. Kamalmukhi made Binidbihari invite his friend Lalit who declared to Indumati's great shame his ignorance of anyone called Kabambini. She also brought Indumati and Nimai face to face thus clearing up their confusion and bringing about their union. In the drama, Indumati was highly critical of Kumalmukhi's equanimity and her inexplicable devotion to a husband guilty of caprice though he was. Kamalmukhi's acceptance of her lot as ordained was indicative of the traditional Indian feminine attitude to marriage. In contrast, Indumati showed a vehemence of sentiment against the whimsicality of the male sex, adding that she would not accept any young man foisted on her. She refused to marry the person of her father's choice.

3.2. 19. Love outside the family

When wives were treated coldly by their husbands, their budding youth was withering away through lack of love, the hunger of their hearts strongly burned for them to look for love outside the families. Binida in Son—Sacrifice (Putrayajna) was the wife of zamindar Baidyanath who was more concerned with the oblations after his death than was with love, but Binida, though ripe for child-bearing, failed in this. Therefore she was accused of being barren. Her wasted youth wilted, like a flowering plant kept indoors away from light and air. Whenever she could bear the scolding and repression no longer, she would go to Kusum's house to play cards. The terrible shadow of damnation lifted for a while. On days when Kusum had no female partner for the game, she would call in her young brother-in-law Nagendra. It thus happened that Binida and Nagendra started to meet each other. His eyes and mind were on something more vital than the cards. Binida was well aware of this. The young woman delighted in watering the seeds of love. One day at noon Binida, Kusum and Nagendra were playing cards. After a while Kusum went out to see her young child, suddenly their youthful passion broke through the barriers of modesty: they embraced, wrenched each other and kissed. But this was noticed by a servant-woman who soon raised a storm in Baidyanath's house making light of what she had seen but greatly elaborated what she had not. Baidyanath turned on her with the words: "Slut! Get out of my house."

Interestingly, in the epics, most women characters in love were non-seculars while secular women were much fewer. Urvasi, Surpanaka, Devayani, Hidimba and Svaha were
initiative in love. Sakuntala was a model in love and Parvati was most typical in love initiative. Only one non-secular woman was exceptional---Indrani who warded off enticement of Surapadma and Nahusa. In the epics, some non-secular women like Urmila, Tilottama were deputed to entice hermits or demons. Varga was cursed into crocodile for enticing hermits. Sushobhana even was a game player of love. In a real sense, enticement was only a desire but not a love. For secular women, love of Sita and Draupadi was not real love because they married by svayamvara. Love for Damayanti and Savitri was pure. They were models of women in love. Rishi maiden like Lapika and Sulabha also desired for love. Some secular women sacrificed themselves in marriage. Bhāsvati married as a sacrifice of politics. Sukanya married Cyavana for her fault. Madhuri married love for a sage as gurudakshina. Such sacrifice was not real love, either. Puloma, Ahadra and Ruci had love beyond family. From them we know that such love beyond family reflected a human nature and was historical. Also in the epics different aspects of love were described. Test of love like the case between Suprabha and her courtier Astavakra, and love of Tapati for the world. Svayamvara was at most a half love while gandharva was real love because the couple loved each other before marriage. There was indeed a secular woman, Pingala who loved king Atirath madly but she was indifferently rejected because she was a dancer. The end of her love was that she went into the forests. In the epics, we see an interesting phenomenon---impregnation of secular women like Satyavati and Kunti who had sex with sage or god and gave birth before marriage. And what was more interesting was that they could keep their virgin by the mantras from the sage or god. Amba, when losing love, began to hate and revenge. A secret love---may be only mentally but not physically at all was between Kunti and Vidura. Love in the epics, although heroines were almost all from royal families, was various and vivid enough.

In Tagore, most of the heroines in love were secular women. Some heroines were directly from the epics. But Tagore used them to express his ideas on love. In the Curse at Farewell, Tagore stressed that Kacha also loved Devayani very much, but for his holy cause he had to suppress his love. In the Chitraganda, he emphasized that internal spiritual beauty was more important than external physical beauty. Tagore described women characters who did love like Kamala. Love of newly emerging educated women
like Hemnalini, triangular love---the first in Indian literature between Bimala, Nikhil and Sandip, love at life cost of others, love from free will, love as destiny arranged, love for properties, love outside families and even stricken and immortal love---such were the aspects Tagore depicted. Tagore also portrayed those heroines who could not have love due to their low positions, caste, dowry and young age. Tagore created some women characters who loved against the conventions. He described an oldest unmarried girl— Sarala. As in other chapters, Tagore depicted love of women from all social classes and backgrounds, which, helped us to see the love more completely and thoroughly of his time.