The appearance of Tarasankar in the field of Bengali stories and fictions is very significant as he brought a new note in Bengali literature by voicing the sentiments of rural folk.

In the writings of Bharati, Pragati and Kallol group of writers the rural people with their traditional living and practices had little place, as these writers were mainly influenced and inspired by continental literature and city life. To a majority of Bengalee readers the subject—matter, theme and expressions in their writing appeared to be very artificial. In those days the readers were much pleased with Saratchandra’s writings on rural Bengalee society and middle class Bengalee family-life.

At that time Sailajananda’s stories on the milieu of coalmine areas of west Bengal drew the attention of the readers for their regional flavour. Tarasankar, through the depiction of Radh and specially Birbhum, has popularised and enriched the regional type of fictions.

When privately interviewed by an author, a few months before his death, Tarasankar being asked to mention his main achievements made certain generalising observation of which the following two are presently important.

1. I have brought the common people, particularly the depressed and the untouchables in the field of literature and portrayed their lives with faithfulness and passion.

2. I have portrayed all sorts of lives of Bengal from 1920 to 1950 and there is a cross-section of every class in my writings, and the works serve a faithful document of the people and society of Bengal during the period mentioned above.

The striking feature of Tarasnakar’s works is delineation of regional life; particularly, the typical way of living of different aboriginal groups of people. To stress upon the regionality of his writings Srikumar Bondopadhyay has pointed out — “Like some other modern writers his characters are not only the representatives of universal humanity without an identity of clan, caste and marks of any tradition”.


2. P.595 B.S.U.D.
We can note the observation of Pramanath Bishi -
"A piece of great literature is basically regional. It is written about some particular area but it becomes universal through the qualities of writing and that is why it is called great. But which we call a great literature must be at the same time regional as well as universal. This is more true to novels and short stories. Novels and short stories essentially deal with the inner world of men, but the outward grab of the characters are not to be overlooked. This structural design of the characters owns its success to the regions concerned." 3.

Some critics have expressed that, though most of Tarasankar's stories and fictions are localised yet these should not be classed 'Regional', which, in their opinion, implies a limitation, whereas these writings ultimately reveal eternal human truth. 4.

But we are not convinced with this explanation. A literary work with a touch of regionality does not necessarily prevent the reader from realising in it the amplitude and mysteries of human life in general. It may contain matters of general human interest as well. As, in the words of Wordsworth, 'the meanest flower that blows can give thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.' So, a regional writer may make the petty affairs of an area, a concern for the entire mankind. The writer of genius can, however, see human destiny through his chosen region, as appears in the case of Hardy.

Therefore, here, we like to affirm the point that, Hasuli Baker Upakatha and Nagini Kanyar Kahini are absolutely regional novels. And from regionality point of view, though not of same grade, Ganadebata, Pancagram, Kabi can also be termed so.


and

Here is an observation of Rabindranath:

"A study of all actions and reactions in mankind, anywhere in any form, has surely got some value. There is something educative in observing living man and not the man in the pages of a book. In this way, not only the knowledge is gathered but also the power of knowing develops to a degree which is not found through academic lessons." 5.

In the same article Ravindranath has hinted at the hollowness of our bookish knowledge of ethnology that ignores the very people before us. He has, also, tried to draw our attention to the necessity of studying the differences in the social customs and ceremonial performances of Bengal which vary in different places.

Ravindranath is said to have said once that,

"The country which comprises innumerable villages do not appear before our visual image. In our literature Tarasankar is one of those pioneers who have diffused this unerring vision to different parts of the entire country." 6.

"Engels said about Balzac's works - "I have learned more than from all the professional historians, economists and statisticians of the period together." With this allusion Biney Ghosh has pointed at the educative value of Tarasankar's writings - "Regarding Tarasankar's literature it can be affirmed that, we have learnt from his stories and fictions many things about the rural society and folk culture of Bengal (specially of Radh) which could not be gathered through many writings of professional historians, economists and statisticians". 7.

Tarasankar has always taken interest in describing the life of different ethnic groups along with their past. He 'excels in the depiction of the life of tribal and semi-tribal people of Birbhum who did not appear on any large scale in Bengali fiction before his advent.' On this consideration 'Nagini Kanyar Kahini' and 'Hasuli Baker Upakatha' have been mentioned as 'anthropological novels' by Humayun Kabir.*

While evaluating Tarasankar's literary contribution, more than once, Arun Kumar Mukhopadhyay has attributed him with the term 'chronicler'. He asserts -

"The uncommon skill in depiction of living nature, the total life and the rapid currents of social changes have made Tarasankar a chronicler of his time." 9.

8. P.24 Kaler Pratima.
After a brief analysis of Tarasankar's novels written on Radh the critic concludes -
"Tarasankar the chronicler has written a history of the land of Bengal and the Bengalee society." 9.

Two emphasise the literary achievements of these works another author puts in more elaborate terms -
"Through all his novels Tarasakkar has wanted to write a chronicle - a chronicle of total man." 10.
This critic feels that, inspite of its loose structure, a chronicle bears an appeal of totality and eternity which surpasses the limitations of a Regional and Period novel.

But chronicle means only a historical record of events in the order in which they happened.'
Tarasankar, in his novels, has drawn the total life of Radh following a sequence of time and hence in a narrow broad sense it be compared to a chronicler but the literary appeal of these writings places him far above a mere chronicler.

"The range of the novelist, that is, those parts of his experience which he is able to use creatively, is probably a matter over which he possesses little control. It has generally been dictated to him by his nature or his early environment. The importance of early environment in determining a writer's range could be provided over and over again." - This is the opinion of Robert Liddell who finds that, the novelist generally wants to write about his own country - its mental, social or geographical aspects, and no other subject is so much interesting to him. 11.

We should mark that Tarasankar's early environment, the nature and people of Radh worked in his artistic experience and constituted his range. Though he had experienced city-life for good many years yet it was out of his artistic range. It becomes evident from the uneasiness of his literary style on urban plots and characters, with a few exceptions, e.g. Saptapadi and Bicarak.

Tarasankar's contribution to Bengali literature is ascertained in the following words of Gopal Haldar -
"Tarasankar was the pivot of the trends which were remarkable in the years proceeding the Second World War, viz. the realism or humanism in literature and, as such, success of regional literature." 12.

11. P.43. Treatise on the Novel.
12. Tarasankarer Dan O Sthan. Sanibarer Cithi.

Asadh,1371.

Another writer remarks in 1353 B.B. -

"After the stage of sur-realism the sense of social realism - which met is not outer incident but exploration of its underlying social truths - is eminent in Bengali fictions. Till now Tarasankar's Regional novels are successful attempts in this direction." 13.

So, Tarasankar, through his regional fictions, has introduced remarkable trends in Bengali literature. And till today he is the most prominent regional novelist in Bengali literature, with large number and great success of such writings.

True, that, his works lack modern artistic techniques but this is not the ultimate evaluation of an art. A writer of ultra-modern trends may also be regarded as a total failure. After all, it can not be assumed that the symbolic swan of goddess Sarasvati, necessarily, moves along the path of modern style. In the regional fictions of Tarasankar the reader is not startled by the metallic dazzle of a sharpened steel; but the stirred wood of Sal and Mahua, the scorched soil of Birbhum, the flowing vitality of the river Kopai - all with a beauty of the forceful primitive life overwhelm the reader.

In way of praising Tarasankar's success in depiction of rural life, Srikumar Bandopadhyay has remarked on his artistic specially in general:

"These descriptions stamp Tarasankar as the ballad-poet (Caran Kabi) of the vicissitude of rural life." 14.

Ashit Kumar Bandopadhyay has commented on it in the following words -

"To depict the rural life with a tinge of romance and beauty or to hark back the past nostalgically is the traditional practice with the ballad-singers. But has Tarasankar written cheap, emotionally-stirred romance? No doubt the decadent village-life and vital impetus of life have been depicted in his novels, but, still then, he can in no way be called a ballad-poet." 15.

The critic feels that to call Tarasankar a ballad-poet is to disparage him.

We feel, the term ballad-singer stands for both the senses - appreciation and depreciation. It is suggestive of unrefined rurality and it may be taken for a drawback in art, or else it may be its merit. Particularly, this ruralisation may be apt and artistically sound in the context of the kind of art Tarasankar practised and he achieved it as well.

Thus, through the regional novels of Tarasankar a new world emerged in Bengali literature—a world born not of the urban intellectualism but elemental passions, the almost untapped feelings and emotions of the rural folk. The elemental world of emotions which was lost in the domain of poetry reappeared itself in the writings of Tarasankar.

In the foregoing chapters we have sought to establish Tarasankar Bandopadhyay as a successful regional novelist. But a good many of his novels fall outside the purview of the present discussion. And these non-regional writings also may draw the sympathetic attention from the scholars.