INTRODUCTION

When the present scholar expressed a desire to take up a research project on the short stories of Bibhuti Bhusan Mukhopadhyay, the research guide wanted the scholar to explain the reason of her preference to this area of research. Indeed, as a reader in general and a student of Bengali literature in particular the scholar is fascinated by the study of Bengali short stories - light and serious, social and romantic, ideological and realistic. When there is a question of selection and choice from amongst a lot of good things, it becomes really a painful exercist of mind to assert one's desire and assign reasons for a choice.

However, Bibhuti Bhusan allured the scholar so to say not because of the novelty or nicely in his stories, but for his nascent
simplicity and naturalness. He is not a creator, he is an artist, and "Art is the creative response to the call of the real" ("Personality" Tagor\$). The stories, - the plot, situation and the characters as depicted by him exhibit life as it is, these are however not photographic representation, rather creative response to what he had seen. He does not create stories, his outing is no adventure to novel situations and unheard of environments. Nor does he assume the role of a pensive thinker or reformer. In fact he has not tale to tell. He picks up situations from midst his life experience and like a discreet observer he enjoys the situations, he sees the pulsating activities of life, but he does not comment, he does not give vent to a feeling of disapproval or derision. Bibhuti Thusan strikes the reader most, at the first instance because his story does not take us by surprise, the discovery of character and plot. A real artist as he is, there is nothing artificial in his stories.
Secondly, as he appears to have no motto or critical views to express, and this temperament and attitude reflected in the stories reveal his personality. He has a positive faith in man. In man's aspirations and love, his wickedness and playfulness the author finds manifestation of human nature. Even if he finds one to be naughty or sobre, fickle or serious, he has no moralist view or dogmatic concept.

This bent of mind of the author leads a reader like me to the third point. He appears to be averse to the tragedy of life. Life itself is so much full of anxieties and cares, problems and predicaments that his temperament does not allow him to play the devil to point the life black. He is not a comedian either. He hates to travel in the imaginary world of romance and in a land of extreme oddity. One can draw out juice out of a melon, a juggler can probably draw out water out of stone, but to draw out smile out of life as it is requires on objective
Bibhuti bhusan has the rare quality of evoking our sense of humour out of simple and natural events, incidents and situations. The word 'humour' is based on a root meaning "to moist". Bibhuti bhusan admits that the middle-class life is so dry and drudgerous that he did not intend to dwell on the serious and painful aspect of life. In fact, temperamentally he cannot do it. He wanted to moisten the dry courtyard of life. There are incongruities, dis­armony, disparity and imbalance in our speech and actions, in our movement and habit, -in human nature itself. He focusses it, enjoys and let us enjoy. It does not mean however that his characters behave unusually or speak artificially. No, not at all. When one stammers when a little girl imitates her mother in her expression of sentiments and actions, when an aged widow devours food like a glutton, and even when one utters a word rather with one's rural accent and wrong pronunciation, they do so innocently and
habitually. They behave as they should, but we have, an yard-stick to measure a standard norm and with the conception of norm we cannot accommodate ourselves to "What they do, how they behave and why they do."

A man buys a Hilsha fish which has become scarce now-a-days in the Ganga, and goes back home with the fresh fish suspended with a rope. On the way, who so ever meets him asks - 'Brother, how much did it cost?' There is nothing abnormal in buying the fish and nothing unusual in asking the price. The pleasure of the fortunate man who can afford to buy a nearly arrive a Hilsha and the pain of the low middle class people whose inelastic purse cannot satisfy their desire have focussed in a very subtle and dispassionate manner. The author has no witty remark to spare he does not ponder over the irony of life, nor has he any sarcastic comment on the facts of life. The lack of seriousness in the attitude of the wayside observer gives him the pleasure of the situation at the cost of pain of his fellow passers-by.
Bibhuti bhusan has shown rare skill in sketching the life and the world of the children—a world from which we elders are banished for ever. The author has however the artistic spirit and taste to enter into that world as a child and be a playmate. The over-zealousness of child, his obstinacy and innocence, his beliefs and sentiments and his acts and aspirations are as much real as the child itself. But to us, there is an element of humour in the unconscious precautionsness of the child, and in his fancy and frenzy.

In the subsequent chapters of the present work, attempt has been made to examine the characters and situations of the stories of Bibhuti bhusan and to assess the temperament of the author. While recording our views about the light stories of the author. Comparative and contrastive features have been drawn into the discussion so that Bibhuti bhusan's place as a short-story writer can be adjudged properly. Bibhuti
bhushan differs from other authors of light stories say Parsuram, Kedarnath, Bishi and others not only in developing the plots and placing the situations, but also in approach and attitude. The author is not loud enough to make his existence as a creative artist felt, neither in novelty nor in striking at the serious or weird pictures.

To prepare a thesis dwelling on the life one sentiments of the Bengali society as reflected in the Bengali short stories of the author under consideration in English, as desired by the University, is pitiable and despairing. The flavour and spirit of the original cannot, we are afraid be retained. It is like arranging the flower vase with polythene flowers in the design and pattern of the natural flowers. There may be same brightness and same colourful designs, but no scent and naturalness.

In preparing the thesis, I have consulted the Central Library of Gauhati University, Calcutta University Library and
the National Library of Calcutta. I must put on record my sense of gratitude to some of teachers who helped me with purposeful suggestions for developing the present dissertation. I must take the opportunity of expressing my indebtedness to the authors and critics who have indirectly influenced me and provided me with ample food for thoughts in preparing the thesis.

A word of thanks is due to the Authorities of Gauhati University who have kindly permitted me to submit the thesis for the degree of Ph. D.

Finally, I must submit that I have all along been carrying on the research work under the inspiring guidance of Prof. S. Biswas, Head, Department of Bengali, Gauhati University without whose keen interest and constant care, it was probably not possible for me to give a final shape to the thesis.

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