CHAPTER-I

Short story is as old as the history of mankind. From the dawn of human history, man has been narrating tales, creating them and hearing them. In the primitive world, the cave-man might have described to kinsmen stories of hunting and food-gathering. A little later, in the new stone age when man began a settled life, life became of comparative ease and comfort, after discovery of metals and wheel, he had in his life and surroundings events and incidents to describe. Discovery of cave paintings and drawing of the New Stone age depicting the hunting scene and of men and women indicates that he could by their express his emotions and thoughts. The conception of the Earth mother and three faced male deity found in Mahenjadaro and subsequently practice of worshipping the Nature Gods also point to the fact that he developed a faculty of thinking deep about the life and the world. The imaginative stories and narratives which were associa-
t ed with his beliefs and customs, magic and religion were in the months of the primitive men. (Illusion and Reality - Caldwell). Narratives and tales associated with worship, and religions festivals were in fine the projection of his mind - what he thought and believed, of then their folk - attitude found expression in music and dance and in dramatic enactment of desire ('Lokayata Darsan' - Deviprasad Chottapadhaya and Ibid Caldwell).

Human life, human thoughts and aspirations, and social as well as domestic incidents and events were pivotal source materials of stories, with the growth of culture and change of domestic and social set-up and with changed outlook the patterns of stories, descriptive, didactic, reflective and imaginative, have taken new shapes and colours. Though story-telling or writing fictional narratives or didactic tales or expressing them in sketches and in early drawing were of an early date, these were however not short stories of to-day. Emergence of short story as literary art form is relatively modern. Since the birth and development of writing systems, stories have been written in our country, these were narrative writings, fables, legends, didactic stories, episodes and incidents of
life, family and society. In spirit and soul, in form and technique, these are not short stories in the modern sense of the term.

Poetry is, generally a lyrical expression of a mood, thought or even a narrative tale. A typical subjective poem is a lyrical expression of "emotions recollected in tranquility" as Wordsworth observes. Short story dwells on a particular event or aspect of life or it tends to focus a mood or feeling at a particular setting. The characteristic feature of a short story has been described very nicely by Prof. Srikumar Banerjee in the following way - "As the bull's eye lantern focuses its light on a particular place in pervading darkness and reveals before the eye clearly and distinctly every corner of the place, similarly the art of short story lies in concentrating on one aspect or event of life and taking an introspective view of it. The dazzling brightness of particular area amidst pervading darkness around may not appear to be natural, it is nevertheless the basic property of the lantern; so also, the ups and downs, the weal and woes of life, the problems and conflict of character centering round one or singular event or
aspect of life may appear to be unreal and unnatural, yet the emphasis or prominence of their one aspect is the fundamental principle in the art of a short story. (1)

There is no denying the fact that there is a central theme both in a short story and a novel, but a novel reveals a totality of life, and it has a wider perspective. A novelist has to stretch his theme in a broad canvas, he is to go into details of events and situations, cross-currents of life and society. He is to, descriptively or discreetly analyse the themes and characters, he is to reasonably explain the sequences of events or reactions of characters with supporting materials. In a novel, novelette as well as a long story, the structure is like a tree with a number of branches having however a main stem. The sub-plots and side characters are intertwined in such a way that the central theme is carried to the desired end.

Note: (1) Quoted from - Samalochana Sahitya Parichaya - Edited by Dr. Srikumar Banerjee and Sri Prafulla Kumar Paul.
A short story differs from a novel or long story not because a short story can be "read in a single sitting" as some critics want to define it (vide, Hudson, Intro to the study of Lit.). The size of the story or the expanse of the plot is one of the characteristic design of a short story no doubt, but it is merely the external and formal features of a story. A novel cannot be converted to a short story by reducing its size. In fact, it is a distinct art-form of literature. The compactness of a short story and consequently the artist's concentration on a single mood, event or thought therein are not matters of convenience or designs, a short story has a distinct entity. The story of Kabuliwalla by Tagore, or 'Ras' by Naren Mitra for example cannot be enlarged to give it a status of a novel. That is why, a good short story does not reveal a story only, the mood and temperament, the sentiment and penetrated feelings of the writer are inextricably associated with the plot, whatever it might be. That is why, an intellectual approach to a plot (say Tagore's Bhai-phot'a), a realistic approach to a problem (as in Payla nambar of Tagore), poetic approach to a situation (Ekratri by Tagore) renders the respective stories, the distinct
Singleness of aim and singleness of effect is a short story emanate from the creative artist whose mind works from within. The plot as the external element of a story which gives expression to the intellectual, realistic, poetic or humorous mood of the artist. A perfect short story therefore becomes a subjective piece of art. A novelist sees the problem of life and society (perspective may be historical, social, domestic or national) and depicts it like a dramatist, the scenes of life-drama with sequences of events and interactions are presented before the readers, the presentation may be of different magnitude depending on the relatively more or less complications of events. The author is a dispassionate observer. A short story becomes merely a vehicle of a story, striking or interesting if the author deals with no serious mood or deeper thoughts and sentiment, similarly a novel approaches nearer to a piece of poetic art if the novelist is not merely an observer of life-drama, but a brooding philosopher ("Seser Kavita", Chaturang' of
Tagore, for example). Because of the compactness is form and deeper involvement of the author, a short story unlike a novel tends to be poetical and suggestive and a perfect short story goes beyond the frontiers of the plot, or events and character.

This distinct identity of a short story marks it as a separate and characteristic literary art form. A story-writer distinctly differs from a novelist in attitude, expression and content. Rabindra Nath remarked - poeticalness and tail, these two things are inherent qualities, these two cannot be projected forward unless they are existent. It has been noticed that a successful short-story writer cannot be a good novelist, and a habitual novelist cannot go into the penetrating depth of a short story. Tarasankar Banerjee is out and out a novelist, his short stories normally contains all the qualities of novels while the novels of Premen Mitra appear to be elongated short stories.

Let us pick up a scene where a tall man clad in an overcoat is plodding wearily through an almost desolate road in Calcutta in a winter evening, he is followed by another person, a bit short wrapped round
his body with a sheet of warm cloth. They appear to be drunken, the farmer is almost down with intoxication. He is seen to be walking like a desperate wanton, patting his breast vigourously, shouting from time to time - "Oh, My God, two lakhs of rupees!" Second one consoles him again and again, "leave it, brother, this happens in a race course, "fickle fortune will favour you" - It is the plot that does not count uppermost. A novelist may indicate how a person belonging to a decadent family was impelled by circumstances or was actuated by the aristocratic sentiments was led to a path of sin. The cross-currents of the family and the social and domestic surroundings might as well be drawn into the plot. Objective details of the sequences of events and attitudes and reactions of the characters - the relatives, neighbours and associates might be skilfully and tacitly unfolded i.e., the streak of event hinted above might be set in a broader and wider perspective. The novelist is sometimes an interpreter, he is to analyse, report in detail, describe the connected facts and situations, so that the conflict and motive of the characters are revealed in proper context. A short story writer will not and do not have the scope to indulge in long dialogues, unnecessary
situations and characters, his approach is suggestive. He need not probably extend the canvas to draw the background of the family and its surroundings. As a skilful artist, he knows how and where dots and signs are to be imprinted so as to suggest the intended idea and motive. The short story writer takes recourse to such artistic designs viz. a dim gaspost in the desolate road, the hooting of an owl, measured movements and balanced talks as will be enough to imply the tragic note of the theme.

What is technically called impressionism in fiction is often mentioned as conceptualism. Short story is a piece of literary workmanship in which a basic concept is given vent to in the form of prose. Novel intertwines a series of concepts, while a drama indicates conflict between concept and thought. In a piece of poem there is emotional exuberance of a poetical concept. A short story is a singular, with an unitary concept suggested through a piece of event, mood or aspect. Edgar Allan Poe who was a prolific short-story writer of America, was an art-critic at the same time. He and many other critics have identified short story as an unitary piece of literary
artform which is not made up of multi-coloured designs, it is singularly complete with a suggestive basic mood or concept. The design is outwardly prosaic but the flavour and fragrance is poetic. Therefore, a short story writer and a poet are akin mentalistically. They draw out the essence of life, pragmatic and materialistic as it is, but they do not indulge in photographic details, chronological series or sequences of facts. Short-story, therefore, to put it subtly, is a symbolic representation of human mood, concept and sentiments. That is why, a good story and a few lyric are compact in texture, philosophical in thought and singularly penetrating in concept or mood.

As a short story is not a clipped form of a novel, similarly an one-act play is not a diminutive edition of a drama. In content, in approach and workmanship shortstory and one act play bear some striking points of similarity to each other.

A novel and a full drama starts in a slow key, but a short story as well as one act play get into the central theme right from the start. It may probably be observed otherwise that the later do not proceed from
a starting point, they rather raise the curtain abruptly, in the middle with such suggestions and nodes as might help touch at the heart of the theme. A writer of a short story and that of an one-act play would never encourage assortment of series of events and sequences of facts. They will introduce some suggestive sketches in outline so as to imply the inner sense or idea which they want to express through the plot. Secondly, there is no scope for long dialogues or description of a scene in detail. Therefore the writer of a short story or of an one-act play has to coins suggestive words, moody, thoughts and intellectual idiom and phrases. This cut and dried style is intended to pin point the mood or thought of the writer in a very subtle way. One does not expect in a good short story or in an one act play the unfolding of events stage by stage as one normally finds in a novel or drama. The movement of the character, their actions and reactions and their speeches or deliberations are handled very carefully and artistically in a compact form. Therefore, these two art-forms of literature approach very nearer to each other. But a short story suggests whereas an one act play implies through actions and conflicts.
A story of the plot of any literary art-form is inextricably linked with life and society. Plot unfolds the problems and happenings of life and society, it gives vent to the mood and movement, wishes and aspirations of characters. Therefore, character is depicted with all sorts of feelings and sentiments of the persons, their mood of thought and expression. That is why, wit and humour and sometimes expression in lighter vain have to be introduced to represent the character in a way he exactly behaves. Wit and humour are therefore introduced in literature not merely to create a light atmosphere but also to present a character or an event in precisely the way it should be. Humour and wit are in fact parts of human nature, even in the different activities and in different spheres of life there are elements of thoughts and sentiments which provoke laughter, due to the incongruity contained in the activities themselves. Humour may be ingrained in the behaviour of men also. This incongruity in speech, movement and deed is normally a
behaviour-pattern which is a departure from normalcy, which we normally do not come across in our usual talks and deeds. There may be abnormalities, incongruities or absurdities in the movement of animal and plant world, such abnormalities may be found in inanimate objects also. This do not provoke laughter. We may sometimes feel surprised to find a plant or an animal moving and behaving in a way which it should not but we do not smile or laugh over such abnormality. An unexpected development in Nature which is certainly a departure from the set pattern may arouse gossip and deliberations in our mind, we may seriously try to find out the inducing cause for such an abnormal change in Nature, but the human mind will find no element of humour or laughter in it.

Smile and laughter in the general sense are inherent qualities of human nature. One smiles or laughs when one's mind is elevated with some sort of pleasure. Even when we find some one behaving in an unexpected fashion and when we find someone in a distressed condition we feel amused. There is also an element of pleasure in it. However amusement and humour are not identical. We feel amused if we see somebody in a very
queer dress. We also feel amused if we find somebody on the street making peculiar gestures and postures. Human nature is such that it sometimes finds pleasure at the cost of others' pain. But if the abnormal behaviour of a man or his painful movement or activities can be traced to some misfortune then his abnormal acts and speeches do not incite pleasure, because we are seriously taken aback by such jolts in his life.

The term humour is very frequently used in literature very loosely in a wider sense. Talk and movement or a gesture, light amusement and buffoonery etc. are not in fact topics of humour in the true sense of the term. Peculiar way in which Narada in "Sri Krishna Kirtan" behaves might provoke laughter but it is a very crude type of literary representation to create an atmosphere of laughter only. The cunningness revealed through the speeches and movement of Bharu Dutta in Chānīmangal and of Hiramalini in Annadamangal might evoke some amount of pleasure and amusement to a general reader. This is a crude type of artistic design introduced through gestures and speeches in order to import elements of laughter or buffoonery but there is nothing humourous in it. Wit, on the other-
hand is an intellectual approach to incongruities of life. A witty man must be intelligent enough to grasp the inner and deeper meaning of the outward absurdities or abnormalities.

There is an element of mild satire in the sardonic laughter evoked by the movements and designs of Murari Sil and Bharu Dutta of the Medieval Bengali literature. Though they have become type characters, Mukundaram reserves a tone of aspersions and oblique reactions in the minds of the readers towards a typical shrewd man like Bharu Dutta. In the narrative writings of the Middle Bengali period there are patches of laughter-provoking scenes and dialogues, but, satire, irony, humour, and wit of higher order are not met with. Before the date of Bharat Chandra, Mukunda Ram is to some extent an exception because he was not only a conscious artist but who drank life with sour and bitterness of the environment in which he lived. An artistic laughter emanates from a mind which burns, otherwise the laugh or buffoonery is the outcome of crude joy of a layman drawn out of abnormalities of a moderate living. Similarly, in the movements and activities of Gods and human beings of Bharat
Chandra, we do not hear merely an echo of traditional amusing scenes or laughter-provoking descriptions but we feel the pulsating feelings of the poet who speaks through the characters. The oddities and shock-surprise which a reader experiences do not merely evoke physical impulse of laughing, nor do they appeal to the intellect for a witty remark or reaction, they touch the heart. An element of abnormality or incongruity which pinches at the depth and exposes the artificiality of life and society is bound to be satirical or sarcastic. That is what we find in Bharat Chandra.

We may probably be permitted to say that Bharat Chandra laughed last over the socio-religious fanaticism and socio-historical decadence of the Medieval Bengal. Thereafter with the gradual emergence of individualism, spread of Western outlook and also with the break-away from the old moral and ethical values and economic soundness, the delapidated society struck notes of discord in all spheres of life. A conflict between conscious conservatism and supposed feeling of intellectual modernism gained ground. The literary works during this period (first half of the 19th Century) - essays, light compositions, dramatic works and
journalistic writings, were fed with critical views on drinking, polygamy wanton recklessness, so-called Westernism etc. Inuendoes, sarcasm, and satires were let loose to expose the ills of the society. Individuals representing a group or a class became object of scathing attack. In this way, incongruities and abnormalities which so long found expression in the external behaviour, postures, and crude mannerism were now rooted in the texture of new concepts of life.

Poet Iswar Gupta, dramatists Madhusudan and Dina Bandhu, essayists Bhavani Charan, Hutom, Tek Chand and others painted pictures of social, individual and domestic incongruities, but that was not for the sake of pleasure and amusement only, an element of afflictions and a note of despair had been working in their minds. The creative response in a lighter vein was in fact an expression of discord. Satire, wit and humour sometimes got mixed up in the approach to the sentiments. Iswar Gupta is sometimes said to be a disciple of Bharat Chandra from ideological point of view. We think, there is a marked contrast between Bharat Chandra and later satirists in the sense that the former smiled sardonically over the heaps of filth and
dust that had been accumulated over the years, while the later writers viewed like a sneering critic the depravities and disharmony of the contemporary life and society. In fact from days of Bhavani Charan Bandyopadhyay to Rajsekhar Basu satirical observations with element of humour are more or less noticeable though taste, temperament and artistic designs vary from one to the other.

It is Bankim Chandra under whose creative genius not only the Bengali prose style attained a stolid and dignified status, but the sense of humour as gleaned through literary diction and basic concept became very subtle and refined also. A note of contempt of a serious thinker and a spirit of reformation of a socialist were probably harmoniously blended together in his personality, and humour and witty observations attained the status of an artistic style of composition, reflecting at the same time the author's painful and pensive reactions towards all absurdities and oddities. Immediately after him, we find Indra Nath Bandyopadhyaya, Trailoky Mukhopadhyay and Jogendra Basu whose writings were characterised by satire, mock heroic parody, weird thoughts and ironical as well as
imaginative quibblings. Indranath and Jogendra Basu came out as conscious conservatives and upholders of the Hindu ideals and attacked bitterly against all sorts of moral degradations, fanaticism and fetishism. The riddle and ridicule of Trailokyanath was a novel type of workmanship.

Rabindranath is such a versatile that his comic countenance and humourous mood can be considered to be permanent features in his style and personality. A creative artist with composite manifestations as he was, his comic sentiments and smiling appearances cannot be singled out. In the changing environment of the contemporary society, clash of interest, conflict of ideas, abnormality in behaviour and difference in outlook provided food for light compositions, satirical, cynical, witty and humourous writings. The nature of composition and the design of writing were of varied types. The authors worth mentioning are Kedarnath Bandyopadhyay, Raj Sekher Basu, Bibhuti Mukhopadhyay, Balai Chand Mukhopadhyay (Banaphul), Parimal Goswami, Pranatha Nath Bishi etc.

Varied experiences and dispassionate outlook are
two essential pre-requisites of humourous writings. Kedar Nath draws materials from life, particularly from the middle Bengali society. He does not roam in any imaginary world. In fact he had to travel widely in different part of North India by virtue of his service. He went outside India also to China. Comic sentiments and light humour as found in his fictions are drawn from the middle class family with its woes and sufferings, joys and pleasures. Sri Sajanixanta Das observed "Stories of Dadamasai come not from his pen, but from his heart, they reflect the reminiscences of his life, he had depicted in lighter vain what he had seen or heard"(2). In fact as a story-teller he never bothered about developing the characters in entirely, he drew sketches of what he experienced and painted them in his usual humourous mood, and for which the reader need not go into the depth of the 'Characters'. Except in a few stories like 'Kali Gharami', 'Dhamma', 'Sabjifal', 'Byethar Byethi' etc. wherein he has sketched the low-class and down-trodden, he took

Note: (2) From Introduction of 'Dadamasaer Srestha Galpa.'

Original Speech :-

"ইঠনঘন্টনে আবাস হয়ে অন্ধকার দুঃখপত্র; তিনি মনে যোগান তোলে নাই(১)
যা তিনি লিখেছিল আবহাওয়া , তার সঙ্গে যা পরিয়ে অবিকল তাঁর আদেশ ছিল।"
up his pen in a mature age of his life (by the request of his favourities, as he himself said) to touch upon the decadent middle class people and their society with a view "to present the sorrows and afflictions of life and society with a quasting of sweet smile." He further observed, "Life to him was a continuous process of woes and despair. He experienced that the womenfolk in a spirit of love and dedication had been forbearing all ills of life, family and society, - and he sketched this life with a garb of light humour". (3)

A composition cannot be a humorous piece of work if it becomes a vehicle of morbid thoughts. Kedarnath dipped his pen in tears, but he did not intend to make his readers cry but to feel. So the bitterness of life has been presented to arouse the comic sentiments of the readers, but he did not want to chide them nor did he assume the role of a reformer.

Note: (3) Quoted from 'Sahitya Sadhak Charitmala' 76
Page - 39.
"अशुद्धिकर्म्मां समाहित, समस्यानां अपराधिनिः संबोधनम् स्मरण्युद्देश्यम् अनक्षेपिके विद्युति। सत्यवेदना सत्यसत्यं भवन्ति हि अनन्तसंस्कृतिः। न विषयं वार्तेण विचारं न विचारुपेन विचारः। अविनाशिक्षा विशेषविशेषं निर्देशितं स्मृति स सत्यवेदनाः। "
or he was not a sadist also. He remarks, ('Kosthir Falafal') "I had to undertake all that a man has to do as a servant, the orders of the senior boss had to be carried out dutifully as an obedient servant.

I had to take recourse to lies under impelling circumstances, I felt disgusted with service where truth and sincerity do not pay, yet I had to submit to it. I did my job and I did not hesitate to shirk from duty in opportune moments... This pathos in the life of a person belonging to the middle Bengali society has been expressed by Kedarnath in a prosaic style, there is a sting in it, and it pinches the man who speaks it. He has laughed over the paradox of life.

Kedarnath was a humourist. Thakeray remarked "The best humour is that which is flavoured throughout

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Note: (4) From - 'Kosthir Falafal'

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(4) ননুদী ননুদী ননুদী ননুদী ননুদী
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with tenderness and kindness." Kedarnath tastes the pathos of life with a soft feeling of compassionate joy. "In our life 'I' is a misnomer, everything is 'It;' - third person singular, 'I' is a mask only" so says Shibu in "I Has". We have dwelt at length on the outlook and the temperament of Kedarnath Bondyopadhyay as gleaned through his writings only to point out that there is an elemental sense of humour in man which he himself finds out when he has to face and accept situations that he detests from the core of heart. A creative writer smiles and ridicules himself even when "I lie on the thorns of life, I bleed" (Shelley).

Rajsekher Basu (1880-1965) nee Parasuram is a humorous writer of the contemporary society. Sri Basu was a profoundly learned man. A chemist by profession, he translated the Indian epics in a lucid style, he prepared a lexicon on colloquial Bengali Vocabulary, he was a linguist, an essayist and above all he was a story teller, stories devised and presented in a lighter vain. He did not draw characters and plot precisely from life, rather he discovered them often from contemporary society and sometimes from the age of Epics and Puranas, and placed them in the proper
setting in which they should be. He came with a shovel of "Parasuram" and dug deep into life. An intellectual aristocrat, a scientist, a Sanskritist and a really cultured and refined man as he was, it appears rather surprising that he wanted to pinch one and all, a greedy trader, a political, a socialist, a retired judge, a sophisticated gentleman, boys, girls and persons with ultra-modern views, a poet, a lover, an atheist, a nihilist, a conservative etc. including probably himself. He has in fact exposed the treachery, deceit, bufoonary, superfluity, artificiality in thoughts and deeds, hollowness and shallowness at all levels of urban life. He however did not come out with a motive of mud-slinging or attacking bitterly, but whoever finds himself in his writings will feel a slanderous irritation. Rajsekhar had the rare quality of provoking amusing smile through his language and style, through the setting of the plot, and through the gestures and designs of character and situations. His satirical sketch will make a dishonest trader laugh aloud, and a hypocrite laugh in the sleeve. The supernatural, unnatural and abnormal settings of plots carry allegorical references to debased mentality and assumed gentility as we find in actual life around us.
Laughing over matters which could arouse derision or nostalgia is the characteristic feature in his stories. Vivid descriptions of scenes and situations in a very lucid yet make-believe manner, observations and annotations added at appropriate places* attach an unique colouring to the author’s mood and sense of humour.

Following the line of approach we may now mention the name of Parimal Goswami who draw materials of light stories from the cross-current of common life. He observed "our day to day life abounds in materials which are funny, and laughter - provoking; one can enjoy it if one enlarges the canvas.\(^{(5)}\) ('Magic Lanthan') Pra指甲nath Bishi assessed the comic sentiment of Goswami in "by nature, Parimal Goswami is a cartoonist but this mockery that he makes as comparable to a steel knife, however small in size that might be, the...

* 'Maheer Malagatma'; 'Sri Sri Siddheeswari Limited', 'Pem Chakir' etc are cases in point.

Note : (5) Parimal Goswami Hasir Upakaran - "Magic Lanthan" (Grantha)
Original speech – "না তুমি দৃষ্টিতে পাই কেমন এলেকার, - আমার দৃষ্টিতে, তাই
গণনা করি এই গলা শিশু, আমারা আপন হাতেই ফিরিয়ে এলেকার বন্ধনের।
তাই।"
edge is sharp and it has lustre too. The steel knife which is kept concealed below the belt is not easily discernible, drawn out suddenly to give a mild stroke, next moment it disappears like a lightning disappearing behind clouds\(^6\). A journalist as he was by profession his style was that of an objective seer and the expression was narrative and one cannot presuppose at which stage the lustrous joke will, all on a sudden break out. Like an eagle-eyed journalist he focussed his attention on all and sundry matters, and the reader is kept in suspense lest any frivolity, weakness or an assumed sense of superiority on his part becomes an object of his ridicule or attack.

'Vanaphool' (Balai Chand Mukhopadhaya, 1899) made his first appearance as a fiction-writer when he was a student of Medical College. His light stories are not

\[\text{Note: (6) Pramathnath Bishi – 'Parimal Goswamir Benga Galpa': Parimal Goswamir Srestha Benga Galpa'.}\]

Original speech: \(\text{"...""}\)
as light as one might think. These are anatomical introspection of human mind spelt out with restraint. His short stories (we are concerned mainly with the light stories) leave a strange feeling with a sudden flash at the end. The author presented a copy of his first collection of stories to Rabindra Nath. The poet sent a reply in which he stated that a scientific point of view has been gaining ground in literature. The scientific approach to life and society seeks to focuss what was so long considered secondary, insignificant and imperceptible. The analytic eye does not want to please, it arouses curiosity and queer feelings which was not under the purview of literature. In fact, Vanaphool takes the readers by surprise with this strange feeling of "Curious" and "Queer". There is no joke in it, no mockery of human outlook and action, but a funny pleasure.

A poet, critic, dramatic, novelist and short-story writer, Pramatha Nath Bishi (1901) was a Chameleon. By virtue of his intellectual approach he was witty and by virtue of his scathing attack he was a satirist. He looks askance at things which to him reveal depravity of taste, degradation of culture and
importance of personality. He cuts jokes with people of all pursuits, - lawyer, professor, politician, journalist, litterateur ("Parihas vijalpitame"). Prof. Bishi, who was with Tagore at Santiniketan had a refined sense of respect for the culture and intellectual pursuits of Bengal. It was likely therefore that he would strike at the discordant and depressing aspects of life and society. He wanted, it seems to use his pen to work as a sting of bee so that the bite may make us conscious of the nascent purity of culture and life from which we have been declining steadily, but he was not a reformer nor was he a preacher.

Bibhutibhusan Mukhopadhayay (1896) is a distinct figure in the history of short stories of Bengali literature. His distinct identity however is not due to novelties in content and expression, nor did he make his marks felt by any new trends of thought. He stands in contrast to others primarily in respect of the area and environment of plot and character. He did not introduce varieties, he did not tread upon an unknown surrounding, he depicted the life as he saw and experienced. Secondly by virtue of his distinct bent of mind there is always sweet flavour of smile sprink-
led throughout his stories. This characteristic quality of his short story was reflected in his first collection of stories (Ranur Pratham Bhag). The author puts on record this trait of his taste in the preface of the book. "Soil and mind Constitute the land, Soil of Bengal is very moist and mind is soft with tears. I think, the soil will not remain as such for long: rivers, canals and pools are in distressing condition, I wish the flow of tears could thus be put in check: My accessories are "directed to this end" (7). Bibhuti Bhushan indeed does not strike a note of surprise or suspense by introducing in his plot any imaginative, grotesque and unnatural incidents. He does not make an attempt to provoke laughter or make a mockery over uncanny, undesirable or detestable events of life. He sees life as it is. He picks up pieces of usual and normal life experiences, depicts them without over-
statement. In fact, he does not consciously try to create a comic atmosphere or by artificial manipulation of plot. He draws comic relief out of life as it is. He is not a satirist either. He does not attack or pinch, nor does he present the characters as clowns or jesters. He never draws cartoons also. Sometimes he is found to dive deep into life, indicating therein the hollowness in the customs, beliefs and religious sentiments, but he is generally not serious.

In Trailokyanath, Parasuram and Pramatha Pishi one cannot fail to discover inadvertently or otherwise an unconscious or semi-conscious intention on the part of the authors to suggest either by ridicule or through satiral comments or in humorous mood a norm of life and activities which we should have. Bibhuti bhusan in this respect stands apart. Probhat Kumar Mukhopadhyay too wanted to wash off the minds with clear and unalloyed smile, Bibhutibhusan had respect for his Kindmen and brethren, he did not want to humiliate or insinuate anybody. They to him are normal citizens leading a normal course of life, yet in their speech and thought, in their attitude and movements in their daily life, they behave, react and express themselves,
quite unawares of them, in ways which provide food for amusement to a dispassionate observer. His comic sentiments drew materials from the mandane life. He never wanted to distort the events or take recourse to creating an imagery or artificial atmosphere. He found pleasure in observing how the normal man and women behaves abnormally in some situations, in noting the peculiar way his characters speak and react in some situations of life. We must however admit that there are quite a few stories written by Bibhutibhusan which are not written in a light mood. This diversion from his usual mood has been noticed in a few stories namely - "Durghatna", "Chaitali", "Amaratva", "Tirtha-tatva", "Haimanti", etc. He wants to dig at a crude and selfish trader who wants to exploit the ordinary men after a railway accident. He wants also to expose the deceitfulness prevalent in some parts of our country where some scrupulous men take advantage of our weakness in religious belief and sentiment. In the stories with plots as mentioned above he has however remained faithful to what he experienced. This naturalness is the basic feature of the plots of Bibhuti Bhusan's stories.
We will be failing seriously if we do not mention the characteristic design which Bibhuti Bhusan adopted in presenting the children's character in his stories. The behaviour of a child, its movements and activities, its beliefs and practices appear to a mature man to be abnormal and peculiar. Bibhutibhusan sketched the children's characters precisely as they are, but it appears he enjoys their funny activities and juvenile prattles. The psychological skill and the artistic beauty in which the child character has been depicted in his short stories will be discussed in some detail subsequently in a separate chapter.