In the domain of Bengali story, Bibhutibhusan Mukhopadhyaya, of 'Ranur Pratham Bhag' fame, is renowned for his sense of humour and fun. Of course, he has also written a number of stories and novels which do not primarily belong to the humourous genre, and in these too he has revealed his extra-ordinary artistic skill; yet, it is by and large true that it is as a writer of humorous stories that he won his uncommon fame and popularity.

If we have a look at the contemporary sceneris of Bengali literature, we notice a remarkable poverty in humour and fun. Everywhere, whether it is poetry, drama, novel, or short story, one notices a sense of utter darkness reigning supreme. The dark clouds of the contemporary sense of sufferings seem to have covered the entire literary firmament. The hectic
speed and resentment, class conflicts and economic problems of contemporary life appear to have effaced the beautiful and contented aspects from inside life. There is hardly any ray of hope or solace anywhere, neither the sunny glow of self-assurance nor the brightness of smiles. But, yet, though plagued with various problems and crisis, the Bengalee heart remains what it was before. The Bengalee crave for tearful kindness, expansive contentment and open-hearted laughter—both in life and in literature. That is why the Bengalee has not changed as a reader of literature. It is the litterateurs who have changed. They have turned their face away from the native soil, the native human beings, the native society—in fact, from everything of their own, and have fixed their eye on the west to carry on their imitation of Western obsession with techniques. They have been taking a narrow view of life in its serious and utilitarian aspects only. They are expounding the theories of life in their literary works, giving up the goal of extracting its elixir. But we need elixir in this wasteland of our life, need joy. Bibhutibhusan Mukhopadhyaya presented us this joy and elixir in the sphere of Bengali literature.
It is a matter of hope that we have had in Bengali literature a litterateur gifted with fine sense of humour that Bibhutibhusan Mukhopadhyaya is. Pramath Nath Bishi the critic has rightly said that most of Bibhutibhusan’s writings seem to burst out of the soil to rise to the sky. That is why his writings carry the smell of the native soil and are stamped with marks of the day-to-day life of the soil. He spent all his life outside Bengal, and that perhaps explains why—being able to take a slightly distanced view of it—he could so well understand the life of Bengal, could acknowledge the Bengali mind so truthfully. (8)

In the preface to his anthology of short stories, Ranur Prathambhag, Bibhutibhusan Mukhopadhyaya wrote—

"It is the soil and the mind that make up the country. The soil of Bengal is very wet and its

Note: (8) Bibhutibhusan Mukhopadhyaya Rachanavali, Vol.-I : Introduction.
mind is wet with tears. Hopefully, the soil will not remain wet for long - the rivers, canals, bills are all going to hell. The mental aspect if the flow of tears could be blocked even for a moment! Hence this small attempt.

In the preface to the Second Part, he has been a little more elaborate; his purpose is to lighten the problems - ridden climate of the country.

In the introduction to "Encyclopaedia of Wit, Humour and Wisdom", the Editor L.B. Williams has observed: "Who cares about the whys and wherefores of laughter?" Like weeping, laughter, too, is entirely a part of 'life's treasure' - you cannot throw it away, nor can you resist it. Tears reveal the heart in pent up suffering, laughter reveals the enjoyment of heart's happiness. Like a gust of breeze, laughter melts away much of the heat and pent up feelings of the heart's depth. As in life, the sense of humour finds expression in literature; too, through spontaneity and subtly; here enjoyment and creative art have to be mastered simultaneously, otherwise any attempt to dissect dilutes the flavour of the original rasa. Even
though laughter originates in life, its distinct expression is to be found in literature. As experts tell us:

"It is obvious that humour and wit spring primarily from real life and belong to it .......... But they greatly improve in the process of being reported; it is not only that the incident, when it becomes a tale, gains in the telling and the bon mot becomes neater and more-pointed, but to communicate the amusement greatly enhances the pleasure. Jokes of nearly every kind are improved by repetition, and literature is but speech at its best, so it stands to reason that the highest humour will be found in books."

Bibhutibhusan Mukhopadhyaya has really placed humour at the higher level of literature. He has created an exquisitely enjoyable flavour in Bengali short-story by an intimate admixture of fun, the expansive quality of the heart and filial affection with humour as also by a synthesis of humour with the tragic sense. But, before we come to discuss the special qualities and success of his literary creations,
it is necessary to dwell a little on humour in literature in general terms.

Humour in literature has various forms, as it is varied in its effects. There is one kind of laughter which arises out of the very novel manner in which events are presented. The literary effect inherent in such presentations can be termed as fun. If, while inventing such incidents or arranging them in a funny story, the author allows his fantastic imagination to run wild to add to those the touch of the ex-travagant, thereby touching the fringe of or exceeding the limits of probability, the effect that is created may be characterised as absurdity or whimsy. There is no essential difference between the absurd and what constitutes the extreme form of fun. Again, a man may be provoked to laughter by teasing his brain or delighting his intellect. This kind of humour belongs to the category of wit. Wit does not have its own independent domain - it is best appreciated by association with other forms of humour. If an attempt is made to create a novel or a short story exclusively on the basis of wit, it is bound to be shallow and rather unpleasant. Witty jugglery of words can at best
be compared to the outer ornamentation of an ornament, it is attractive as ornamentation, but one cannot create an image out of it. Even aggressive humour has its varieties: satire, sarcasm, lampoon, and many such forms. All these aim at criticising the unjust and correcting or peforming it. Hence, these can not exist without a covert or semi-covert feeling of anger behind them. But the best form of humour delights the entire self of a man, moving his mind at its roots. The major component of such humour is neither a situation arising out of arrangement of incidents nor the jugglery of intellect nor is it the objective of social reforms - man himself, his character and his joys and sorrows constitute this major element. In English, this is what is known as 'Humour'.

Of all varieties of hasya rasa, humour is the best. This pure variety of hasya rasa which is humour is a varied, mysterious quality. The outer surface of hasya rasa is like bubbles, as transient and restless as bubbles, but humour is everlasting and far-reaching.

Note: (9) Bibhutibhusan Mukhopadhyaya Rachanabali, Vol-I.

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like the inner whirlpool beneath water. It's distinctive qualities are a sympathetic view of life, an attitude of liberal, equal treatment of all, a mixed feeling of fun and thoughtfulness. The laughter humour evokes is not boisterous, it is gentle and low-keyed. In such laughter we do not find the unbounded jubilation of the joyous heart. There is a counter-flow of underlying sadness against such laughter. Thomas Carlyle, while defining 'humour', has said, "Humour is sympathy with the Seamy side of things".

In this context, Meredith's views on humour are worth quoting:

"If you laugh all round him, tumble him, roll him about, deal him a smack and drop a tear on him, own his likeness to you and yours to your neighbour, spare him as little as you can shun, pity him as much as you expose, it is a spirit of Humour that is moving you". (The Idea of Comedy by Meredith, Page No.-79).

The humourist looks upon life with an eye made gentle by magnanimity, softened by sympathy and
saddened by experience. He does make us life by exposing that which is erroneous, fallen and irregular in life, but at the same time he makes our laughter sparkle with tears.

Bibhutibhusan Mukhopadhyaya is the greatest humorist in Bengali literature. In his works we find humour at its highest level. His artistic vision is as deep as wide. He can peep into the mind of people of all ages and of all levels with an affectionate sense of fun, can discover their weaknesses with an eye full of tolerance.

Most of Bibhutibhusan's writings at their best, including even his great, humorous short stories, are replete with feelings for family ties. This makes one feel that those readers who are devoid of touch with the family life, who lack any first-hand experience of the ways of life in a family, may be hard put to it to appreciate the inner core of Bibhutibhusan's artistic self, it may even seem impossible on their part. His short stories on children are universally praised. Each of these stories is associated with family life. We may refer to a few of these by way of illustrating our point.
The short story, 'Ranur Pratham Bhag' has won universal acclaim. It reveals Bibhutibhusan's personality in full form. The story revolves round the premature house - wifery of eight-year old Ranu. Assuming the role of a veteran house-wife like her grandma', she spends her days in countless worries, and does not even have the time to finish her lessons for the First Primer. "Do I have the time for even breathing, only work - work and work". "Whenever I could not attend, it's mess. Haven't you seen what the baby has just done ! Why, tell me, is there none in the house except Ranu ? When it's time for eating, there are mouths and mouths; tell me Mejaka, did you find enough salt in yesterday's hot curry ?(10)

It is these elderly talks and conduct of the child that form the fountain-head of humour in the story. But the rasa of the story does not end there.

(10) From the story ‘Ranur Pratham Bhag’.

হৃদ - 'উপায় তে উদয়ন করো ভবনের মহীয়, আত্মা অন্ধকার হয়, হয়, ছাড় বেগ সাত শান্ত হয় কি হয় ;
'কি দেখেছ নিয়ে কৃত্রিম হলো ? এক ক্ষুদ্র কালের বন্ধু চর্চা কি হয় ? হেনিরে অফুল, অবিনায় সত্যি চর্চা কি হয় ? আমারের বন্ধু কি করেছেন যে ব্যাপারে ? আমি যাকান কিন্তু আমি যাবায়, অন্যএ কি করবেন ? এতে যে হয় ?'
Because of the zeal of a father tempted by the virtue of child marriage, the barely eight year old Ranu leaves her doll's house and is already on her way to her father-in-law's house in her bridal garb. On the eve of her departure for her father-in-law's house, her acts of presenting herself before her Majoka with a bundle of 'lost' First Primers, admission of guilt repentance and her promise of Penance may seem to be funny, but, behind this laughter rings the sad notes of Sehnai indicating the bride's departure. The story, replete with the simultaneous feelings of sadness, sweetness and humorous laughter has thus acquired the quality of pure humour.

Bibhutibhusan has opened up for us the door to an inexhaustible treasure house of rasa that lies concealed in the child's mind under homely circumstances not only in Ranur Pratham Bhag. Accepting the nectarlike bobbling of a child and the humorous potential in a child's character as the basis, he has presented a new variety of mixed rasa by combining the friendly and the final with the humorous. As a matter of fact, the image of Mother Yasoda which he has created in Bengali literature is very pleasant. In the
story, Nanichora, the child character is just a pretext. The faith of a devoted married woman, who has dedicated herself in the service of Child Krishan or Gopala, belonging to a Vaishnava family, is the source of its rasa. The Lord is born to our family in the form of a child and accepts the service of the devotee. It is this faith that makes the child's conduct mysterious in the eye of the bride-cum-mother-in-law. Even the sight of a milk-made ladu being stolen from the plate of offerings made before Lord Gopala deepens the mother-in-law's faith in the probability of the physical appearance of Gopala. The story has become enjoyable through the presentation of perfect faith and affection mixed with filial love. Simultaneously, the writer has fought shy of exposing the lighter side of the story by telling us that the mother-in-law's devotion arises out of the child's natural love of sweetmeats and habit of stealing. And it is here that the writer's humorist self reveals itself.

In the story, Swayambara, the writer has created an atmosphere of fun by showing the younger sister Dolli's desire for marriage awakened by the CEREMONIAL performance of applying turmeric powder on Rana's body.
before her marriage and Dolli's secret request to her uncle for her own marriage. On seeing the festive arrangements for her elder sister's marriage, the younger one also feels like marrying and, when the uncle is informed of this, he instead of throwing cold water on the desire of her joyous mind, assures her and raises the question of expenses, at which Dolly brings out her deposited assets and displays those before her uncle. Different flaps of the box reveal handkerchiefs, pieces of rags, and several packets of paper; inside the knot of a particularly transparent white piece of rag seemed to shine piles of guinea. A number of copper coins of the denominations of half-a-rupees, paise have been collected, the total value of which comes upto six and 4th annas. Here the writer has discovered fun within the desires of a small girl and has presented the pure joy of this fun before us.

In the story, 'Novelist', there are occasions when the humorous element has found enjoyable expressions. For instance, when Mr. Ghosal tells Sailen and Fakre - the two friends - that he will explain everything about the novel after they pass their Matriculation, Fakre tells Mr. Ghosal: "Yes, Sir,
without passing the Matriculation exam., there's no question of our taking up the pen ... But - er - we came - Saila will only pick up the technique - what I mean, Sir, -- God forbid, suppose you die meanwhile ......"

On another occasion, while Mr. Ghosal was busy explaining the strangeness of the world, Fakre, commenting on the subject of girls being transformed into boys, said - "It's nothing but planting some beard and moustache in their faces ......"

The child's natural innocence is revealed through its thoughtless acts of words. Bibhutibhuson has carefully painted such traits in a child's character. Humour originates from inconsistency.** It's

**'আনন্দী' জাতীয় বোধগুণের সাহা 'দেবোদাসীর লেখা' রচনায় দৃষ্টিন্দ্রিয় -
নিবাস হৃদ্যান সীমার পরিবর্তন হয়, মানুষ সম্পদের সীমার পরিবর্তন
হয়েছে, মৃদুলা এবং বৃদ্ধি হয় সেলাম এবং সুলাম, তাজাকে আসলে নয় 
নজর থাকছে এখন; রহস্য এর দিকে কোথা যাবে যে আসলে নয় এই আনন্দী।
চলো আজ এশানুদের সারারামের দিকে দুর্গীন শুনা তামা নয় এই আসলে নয়
আনন্দী আনন্দী তামা।
because the thoughtless acts or words of a child strike the adult as being inconsistent that they cause laughter.

In another short story, 'Ghoser Abhimanyu,' the young Ghosh, being unable to modify the play depicting the slaughter of Abhimanyu which causes pain to his friend, adopts the extra-ordinary method of using crackers to defeat Abhimanyu's enemy on the state even when the play goes on just to please his sensitive friend.

It is this kind of inconsistent traits in the child's character - which are natural to the child - that Bibhutibhusan exposes in his stories to create humour.

In some of Bibhutibhusan's stories, humour has become highly enjoyable. The story teller Bibhutibhusan is at once magnanimous, sympathetic, calm, and cool, and a detached artist with a large-hearted vision of life. His humour is pure in nature. Humour is his specific domain. He appears with pity, kindness, forgiveness and an equal eye, observes and lets others
observe, laughs and makes others laugh too. This angle of vision is active in Gansha-Dalpatir Sarharatna. The stories of 'Barjatri' and 'Basante' are replete with pure fun.

"Shall I not go on Tilu's marriage! After this, when it's may o-own marriage, you would say - Ga-Ga-Gansha, you needn't go! You better look for a jo-job."

"Gansha, stroking the pillow made of 'makhmal' with his middle finger and fixing his moody eyes on Trilochan's face, went on humming -

"Muha Pankaja Sangari Sangari
Chit mor bya - bya - bya ..."

"Bhabataran Babu muttered in indistinct voice - 'Is it Baba Landi, Bhiringi coming with Trilochan's marriage party? Would you please prepare a chillaaam"

One hardly needs mentioning that these proverbial expressions have been cited from Bibhutibhusan's story, 'Baryatri'. The six of them - Gansha, Trilochan, Gorachand, Ghotna, K. Gupta, Rajen - make up the team of six jewels. They are complementary to each other. Such team-work is a rare sight.
The above quotations amply prove to what higher category of artists their creator Bibhuti Bhusan belongs. These expressions are evidence of the fact how an artist can create rasa with the minimum of materials and with the simplest of words! Bibhuti Bhusan's pen has immortalised the stammering Gansha, the marriage-obsessed Trilochan, the poetaster Rajen, the foot-ball player K. Gupta, the gluttonous Goralchand and the fun-loving Ghotna.

In his preface to the collection of short stories, 'Basante', the writer says that all the stories are meant to entertain the reader. As regards form and style in Bibhutibhusan's short stories, sometimes it is the character which dominates, and at other times it is the story. Hence in 'Basante', on the one hand we have stories like 'Pakadekha' that belongs to the same category as 'Baryatri', on the other hand we have 'Tirthapherat Annadapisi'. Just as in the story 'Pakadekha', Gansha's Rajen Pishima (Auntie) provides ample scope for side-splitting laughter, similarly in the story 'Mmeshko Bahin', when the middle-aged Bengalee gentleman with his all-gether thirteen items comprising a platoon of children and a lot of luggages occupies
the train compartment, his shameless conduct and imitation of a strange mixture of all India language causes a unique blend of laughter and resentment. Against the garrulous nature of the husband 'Umeshko Bahin's curt reprimand "To hell with your mouth!" expressing the pent up sufferings of the married woman seems to flash out in electric sparks. Towards the end of the story when the gentleman starts narrating the story of his marriage before a Bihari co-passenger, the eccentricity of the character crosses the limits of the norm. When the gentleman pretends feeling shy while elaborating on the impediment that had cropped up before his marriage with 'Umeshko Bahin', a second co-passenger innocently remarks, "If it's anything unspeakable, why don't you give up". But would the middle-aged gentleman miss this opportunity? He loses all sense of shame and says, "No, what's unspeakable before you? I was telling you - when there is a long process of negotiations for marriage, it develops some kind of a love between the bride and groom - doesn't it? .......... I told firmly that I would not marry anyone except 'Umeshko Bahin', and on the other side 'Umeshko Bahin' also took a solemn vow". Before this utter lack of shame, even the terse reprimand of 'Umeshko Bahin, appears to have been silenced.
The same extravagance constitutes the element of humour in the story 'Basante'. The poet says:

"Aj basante viswa-khatay
Hiseb neiko puspe - patay
Jaggt jeno jhonker mathay
Sakal Kathai barhiye bole"

It's as if because of the natural impact of the spring season, Bibhutibhusan's pen also created the story in a mood of exaggerating everything.

Back from England, Pulin takes his wife for a 'change'. Winter being over, the advent of Spring has signalled the time for the return journey. Beyond the open window a group of forest-dwellers is found returning home against the background purple evening. Suddenly a young boy Mithun leaves the group and tries to be close to his companion. Perhaps this has touched an identical chord in Pulin's heart too. But Sheela cannot overcome her shyness. The maid's eye has been constantly following them. At last Sheela was compelled to agree to her husband's proposal to go out for a walk outside. On return they had a surprising spectacle before them. A Sahib and Mem-Sahib were found sitting on the sofa in their room under cover of darkness. Shortly they voiced Bhojpuri songs usually associated with the festival of 'Dolyatra'. By that
time the entire episode has become crystal clear. Perhaps the spirit of Spring had touched upon the minds and Ramlagne's heart too. That is why, in the absence of the master and the mistress, they have begun playing the former's roles. Sheela was beside her with anger at the maid's unthinkable boldness to wear her beautiful gown. The husband consoles her affectionately, "When there's so much of excess all around, would you take this matter of a petty gown so seriously, Sheela? ....... Spring is demanding its sacrifice, someone is paying by her shame, they have done it by sacrificing their sense of discrimination between the high and the low, the master and the servant, we had to sacrifice our garments. Why don't we sacrifice ungrudgingly?"

In the collection of short stories, 'Basante', it is this kind of extravagant conduct that has created humour. Again, in sheer delight of characterisation, the memorable creation in 'Basante' is the short story, "Tirthapherat Annadapisi". On occasions of quarrels in the society, those sensitive to the humourous aspect of things recall the deity of quarrels by uttering the name 'Narada' Bibhutibhusan has created the female counterpart of Narada in Annadapisi would visit all
the holy places in the country from Kamakhya to Setu-bandha - Rameswara and then return home after about four months. But her attachment to the worldly affairs made her cut short her pilgrimage after just thirteen days. Here attachment to the worldly meant having some fun with all and sundry in the society. She has her heart's content in setting one against the other, and yet another against the second one. Just after returning home, she created a stir among the womenfolk while on her way to take a dip into the Ganges. After having her bath when Annadapisi was on her way back, carrying a Kamandalu (water pot) on her left hand and a string of beads on the right, it was all noise at the venue of Sashthi puja. As she approached, all the women surrounded her. Annadapisi as of course completely unconcerned. While counting her beads, she made her way through the crowd, poured out all the sacred water from the pot on the deity's head, and made her exit out of this Kurukshetra without so much as baiting an eyelid.

By sympathetically adding a touch of the light even to the unfair conduct of such a mischievous character, the writer has transformed it into a source of humour.
In Bibhutibhusan's writings, even small incidents or common subjects have become the source of extraordinary laughter by virtue of his skill of presentation. For instance, in the story 'Cigarette,' he has created such humour out of the ordinary subject of smoking cigarettes that only Bibhutibhusan could create. The newly wed bride has a quarrel with the others over her insistence on having a puff at the cigarette before she enters the bridal chamber and so leaves the house with a suitcase in her hand. She defies everyone's request and persuasion. Meanwhile, the passers-by feel curious at the sight of a bride standing on the road at night. At last a young man comes to the rescue of the bride, picks her up in a car and takes her to a lovely hotel when the bride feels thirsty, and feeds her. In the hotel, after having had a peg of drink, the young man puts on a gold ring into the bride's finger before leaving. At last when the bride comes back to the hostel, it is revealed that she is no other than a boy of that hostel, Haladhar by name who had experience of playing the role of a bride in a stage-play, and he has left before taking part in the scene of bridal chamber because of his inability to quench his thirst for smoking. Haladhar then throws off the
wig and, while taking off the Banares-made Sari, mutters, "Well, there'll be time for comments later; would you now offer a cigarette... my stomach is swelling!"

The story reveals Bibhutibhusan's sense of fun.

In the short story, "Bar O Mafar", the gluttonous Gorachand visits his father-in-law's house with his friend Gansha with the hope of having nice dishes. Unfortunately, however, he finds that everyone except his father-in-law and a servant has left for attending a marriage ceremony. The gluttonous son-in-law enters the kitchen at night to steal food out of sheer hunger. He is about to put his hand into the curry dish when the dog, 'Bagha' starts barking from at a corner of the Varandah. This sudden interruption startles the stealthy minds of the two, and, as a result, half of the fish curry and groovy gets thrown over Gorachand's head. Gansha backs out leaping, but not before being affected by the mishap. The sub-conscious desire to see life follow its simple course under normal conditions is ingrained in the minds of all of us, whenever there occurs something that is abnormal, improper and
odd, suddenly disturbing the balance, it immediately fills our mind with sparkling laughter. Depending on the differences in situation and in the personalities involved, the laughter may be one of fun or of satire and derision. It is this kind of odd and improper conduct of Gorachand and Gansha that creates the sense of fun.

In the story entitled 'Baryatri', the occasion is Trilochan's marriage. Those who would form the bridegroom's party are his friends, K. Gupta, Rajen, Gorachand, Gansha, Ghotna, and others. Among them, someone is in the habit of stuttering, another is a football player, one is fond of singing and yet another is given to versifying. All of them had a curiosity about the bridal chamber. On the right of Trilochan's wedding, Gansha, unable to resist his curiosity, went stealthily to have a look at the situation within the bridal chamber. On his return when he described the situation before his friends, they also opted for having a look at the bridal chamber. At last all of them took the path covered with shrubs, ashes and dudung to reach the backside of the bridal chamber. Just as they were deeply engrossed in viewing the
going-on inside the bridal chamber, a woman opened the door to throw away Garbage and, on seeing them, started shouting - "Dacoit, decoit". As a result, Trilochan's friends were so scared that, to save their lives, some of them jumped into the papaya tree, while others mistook a pond for a field and threw themselves into water. Unable to stay long under the dirty water of pond, when they came out and identified themselves as members of the bridegroom's party, it was found that Rajen was all covered with mud, and he was trembling like a leaf. A big 'Chanda' fish, caught between the folds of his wrapper that had been wound around his waist, was sparkling against the light of a lantern. His breast was heaving like an air-pump. Besides, his dress was off, the under-wear becoming visible. A similar condition was found with Gansha, too. In addition, his head were a crown of water hyacinths. Here, by depicting the improper conduct of the bridegroom's party the writer had created a really funny situation. It is a kind of fun that simply delights, but never stings or satirises. This kind of innocent fun is Bibhutibhusan's exclusive creation.

In the story, 'Swayambar', Bibhutibhusan presents
another new variety of pranks played by the Gansha-Ghotna team. Trilochan is already married, but Gansha is yet to have the luck of marrying someone. The palmist has predicted, "The would-be wife is already her nature self, ready for the weeding. But Gansha suffers from a congenital fault which has to be corrected if marriage is to take place". To correct the fault, it is necessary to acquire virtues. If the services of a volunteer are rendered at the fair held on the bank of the Ganges on the occasion of Dussera bath, it will surely bring virtues. Therefore, Gansha's team engage themselves in voluntary services at the fair. The fair is, crowded as usual. The other teams have deployed enough volunteers. Gansha's party does not know how they will do good to people under such circumstances. They had an idea that on such big occasions, many are drowned to death. But, unfortunately, anybody who is found dipping, his head is seen surfacing in the water subsequently. At last, being despair of any chance of earning virtues, they have the feeling that if they could push some heads down into the river water, it would have cooled off their resentment. Just then they find a small girl sitting alone and being glad that at last they have found some work to do, they start
throwing questions at the girl in a manner that becomes a torture to the girl. On seeing this activities, the girl's grandmother assumes a belligerent form, "Who did you say was drowned to death? Khenti's granny? That's what you've made her say, haven't you? You're volunteers, aren't you? Doing service to others? If Khenti's granny is dead, if it's so easy for Amarta Bamni to die, then who am I, big boys? Who's crying death to you?"

At this stage, the laughter gets an additional impetus and becomes hilarious. Trilochan ask Gansha, "Dead women got?" Gansha replies, "Not dead, dy-dying, Rajen, - Rajen is being beaten to death, holding him by the hair; you-you come over there, leaving the girl, no hysteria. Man trademark woman. Absolutely mannish! ....." After that, what befalls them goes like this: Gorachand has put one a shirt - not in its proper place - below the waist. In the absence of anything to tie it on, the neck of the shirt has been torn at one place and widened, and then the button has got fixed near the naval. The two sleeves are fluttering around the knees. Nobody is in a talking mood. Appearing completely unconcerned as if nothing has
happened, Rajen has dipped himself in the Ganges upto his breast and is trying to gargle. Everyone will be able to come out of water when Trilochan brings the clothes.

The various oddities reflecting the extravagant pranks of the team's just blossoming youthfulness form the element of humour. But it a humour that is untouched with derision and satire. Each member of this youthful team belonging to Sibpur has his own individual traits, and humour originates from those very traits. But the humour that arises centering round the team as a whole, is largely the result of combination of events.

Humour occupies a major part in Bibhutibhushan's short stories. What is the nature of this humour? In the words of Bibhutibhushan himself, "Just as love expressed itself in a grave, solemn form, similarly laughter assumes a light form and still expresses very subtile emotions." (11)

Note: (11) Bibhutibhushan Mukhopadhyaya Rachanavali, Vol- I
'Amar Sahitya Jeevan', (Page No. 10)
Bibhutibhusan saw humour and found it, not as crude joke or cruel satire, but as the outer expression of very subtle feelings of the mind. From this point of view, he has some similarity with Prabhat Kumar Mukhopadhyaya. The latter was a follower of the cult of joy. Perhaps his attitude was -

"Achhe dukhha, achhe mrtyu, biraha daman lage
Tabuo shanti, tabu ananda, tabu anantajage."

(Rabindranath: 'Puja' (248) - Rabindra Rachanavali (4th Vol) F-83.

In making his selections out of life, Prabhat Kumar avoided sorrows and the sense of deep pain. It is not that grief, despair and disappointment are entirely absent in his short stories, but sorrows there only serve as the foil to brighten the image of happiness. The stories, 'Devi', 'Kashibasini', 'Adarini', etc. belong to this category. His short stories depict life's little errors, discrepancies, inconsistencies and egotism on the one hand, and man's large-hearted sacrifice, nobility and self-control on the other. The realm of laughter is wide, and its expression varied. Much of it is crude, heartless, Satires and Lampoons illustrate this. A derisive, satirical laughter makes
the artist look cruel. The object of satire is downed with the cruel weapon of satire. But there is another, higher variety of laughter which is subtle, sympathetic. It does not have the sting of torturing others nor the associated cruelty. Bibhutibhusan Mukhopadhyay belonged to this higher level of an artist with sympathetic laughter. He could not have been a Suresh Chandra Samajpati or a Sajanikanta Das even if he had wished. Nor could he become another Banbehari Mukhopadhyay or 'Banphool', Parasuram, Parimal Goswami. Parimal Goswami has made others laugh without laughing himself; Bibhutibhusan also could raise in others a laughter softened with sympathy and touched with sadness, without laughing himself. Bibhutibhusan is endowed with a liberality of heart, a catholicity of mind. This is lacking in Banbehari Mukhopadhyaya or Sajanikanta Das. He would not accept and reject, make selections. He has the large-heartedness to draw pure joy out of what he perceives. This is proved in his story, "B.N.W - R Branch Line". There is no reason why a bond of sympathy should bind the characters of this story with the writer, and yet they have appeared in a lively, vigorous form; the reason is the writer's mental breadth, his detached, forgiving attitude.
All the characters found in this short story are unmixed scoundrels. Barhamachari Baba the Station Master, Hira Singh the Head Pointsman of the junction, Alijan the train driver, Peter the Railway Guard, Dasu Khura the clerk – all five of them are drunkards, unruly and devoid of any sense of duty. In the name of religion or using the occasion for Kali puja, they indulge in excessive drinks. All of them are railway employees but under the influence of liquor they do not consider even derailment of trains as a crime. Barhamachari Baba neglects his duties but manages to keep his service out of danger by occasionally bribing his boss with a few bottles of wine. He also induces his associates to shirk their duties in the name of Kali Puja. It should give one the feeling of revulsion even to think of such people. And yet when they appear in the short story, they become the objects of our uninhibited laughter. For instance, Hira Singh, under the influence of liquor, once declares that he will never touch wine in his life, and the very next moment he helps himself to a glassful of wine and drinks to his utter satisfaction. Again, Barhamachari Baba exhorts Peter never to marry three wives, though one could marry four or six or ten, but never any uneven
number, for the odd one will be on your back. Then, again, when the train reaches its destination, mutters Dasu Khura - "Brother, didn't that Danford call for you when there was that petty case of a derailment? I shall see that brother-in-law of mine - with this blow. Alijan, Guard Peter drive back the train. Let's to the junction - We'll see what kind of a Sahib he is - this scoundrel Deso escapes, and you are called for an explanation, brother? An insult to our Lord Bishop!" All these speeches provide plenty of food for fun. Even the improper conduct of these contemptible characters has turned out to be the source of laughter to us. How were this transformation and change of effect made possible? We find a clue to this mystery in a remark made by an English critic who says that, in creating humorous characters "the execution always surpasses the idea". In other words, whenever may be the contemptible nature of the character, the magical art of the true humorist can make it interesting. Bibhutibhusan has not rebuked them, nor has he satirized or criticised or attacked them. He has looked upon them with forgiving eyes - as a

Note: (12) Bibhutibhusan Mukhopadhyay Rachanavali Vol.-I Introduction
matter of fact, even the really contemptible among them have been blessed by his philosophic attitude of love. Hence, even such an unfortunate bank could become, at least temporarily, the source of our pure delight.

Bibhutibhusan is a born humorist. He is not unaware of the fact that laughter arises out of the study of the incongruities of life. His short stories illustrate this again and again. The hero of the short story, 'Ekratri' boards a slow-moving, rather thinly crowded train at Mokamaghat. He carries copy of Rabindranath's 'Galpaguccha' in his hand, and has been reading the story 'Ekratri' in which, on a stormy night, Tagore's hero comes very close to the heroine Surabala. The hero that Bibhutibhusan has created has a romantic feeling about a co-passenger - a 'burkha' clad woman travelling in the same train compartment under cover of night. Under the influence of the story which he has just read, the hero of Bibhutibhusan's story imagines himself as the hero of Tagore's story. His heart is moved when he finds that mysterious 'burkha' - clad woman shedding tears behind the cover of the 'burkha'. He has purchased a railway ticket for her, entertained her with food and 'paan'. His
mind returns again and again to Tagore's 'Ekratri', and he does his best to save the burkha-clad co-passenger.

"I said, please keep it with you, you can return it after finishing your 'paan'. Once again the five golden fingers were extended. Where an ordinary red-coloured rail ticket found its place and created much unprecedented beauty, how shall I communicate what illusion was created there by that gold and silver-made, fashionable container with its exquisite craftsmanship? I saw for a while. But before my heart's desire was fulfilled, the fingers disappeared behind the wrapper - How often does a man's desire such as this get fulfilled? Was it ever fulfilled? I heard a sign almost spontaneously".

Like the hero in Tagore's short story, Bibhuti Bhusan's hero also feels - "Of all the days and nights which make up my life span, it is this one might that constitutes the highest fulfilment of my human life".

But the end of Bibhutibhusan's story has no similarity with that of Tagore's short story. The former story ends in profound disappointment - in sense
of utter humiliation resulting from being deceived and
the consequent effect of fun. At daybreak the 'burkha'
- clad shy - looking person got down from the train at
Panagarh. The Guard blew his whistle, the person stood
on the platform just facing the window where our hero
sat. The facial cover was removed and there was a
little grinning - it was, someone with thick moustache,
the face covered with beard, the check's unken, looking
devilish black, with hand and feet skilfully painted
with yellow and chalk. “Salaam Aleikum, master! No
offence, please. Finding that the master is full of
favours to woman - hah - hah - hah! It's all Allah's
blessings, it just brought me some gains by the way -
hah - hah! "With that repulsive grin he kept face
with the train for a step or two and said, "Once more
Salam aleikum, 'am living, I'm keeping the 'jurdah'
case as a memento of love, master; it will perfectly
match this chaddar and the silver pot - hah - hah -
hah'. Your servant is called Asimuddin, please remember
with kindness".

Thus romance dies an unnatural death with that
grim. It is this unexpected, starting end of the story
that reveals Bibhutibhusan's individuality. His
stories are of sting, but steeped in forgiveness and sympathy.

Much of the deeply felt emotions and devotional beliefs in human life are often rooted in false and unreal illusions, and that is often the reason why in certain particular situations man's deepest of happiness and sorrows sometimes evoke laughter. It is this kind of an outlook that reveals itself in Bibhuti bhusan's stories like 'Kalika', 'Bairagir Bhitey', 'Maimanti' and 'Varshay'. 'Kalika' is the story of an unruly, boyish girl. It is the startling tale of how, in accordance with her machinations, the dacoit Bhairab raids her father-in-law's house to commit robbery and then encounters the image of goddess Kali on the threshold of the temple, gets so frightened and overwhelmed that he forgets all about robbery so that the family is saved. Here, from the point of view of the dacoit Bhairab his vision of goddess Kali is a truth beyond doubts, whereas behind that vision lies the cunning and the presence of mind of that boyish girl. In 'Bairagi's Bhatey', under the sensational, ghastly circumstances the fear of ghosts has become a part of the reality, but when the story concludes, the entire
house acquires a grave and grim atmosphere. Everyone was startled when there was a big bang on the door and the window. Of all those present, Ramen is the most reticent. So long he has been listening everything by covering himself all over except his face and nose. Startled, he was slowly matters - perhaps to conceal his just revealed weakness - "Ganjika", "Ganja"? asks Akshay, who gets provoked and is about to say something more, when Aswini says calmly, "Don't be provoked, Akshay, he who knows the fact will never say 'Ganjika'!" Tarapada asks, "Do you know the fact? That is, under whose real or what influence ..... ?"

Aswini replies, "It's not 'gangika', it's bhang." Everyone becomes speechless, and as Akshay overcoming that momentary feeling of stupefaction, is about to say something, Aswini silences him by calmly raising his hand and says, "Wait, brother, I had mixed it with my own hand in the Kachuri; once that stuff gets down your stomach and the intoxicating effect it has on your head, who can fight it down! ....."

This is a dacoit's devotion to goddess Kali and the common man's fear of ghosts have been reduced to
sources of fun and laughter.

In the story 'Bhumikampa', a humorous situation has been created out of the fertile imagination of the sentimental character, Bankim. The latter is sentimental on the one hand, and given to literary pursuits on the other. As a result, when the country is affected by a severe earthquake, he reads in newspapers about the devastation it has caused at several places and writes a tragic short-story centering round the family of his friend Ghotna (that is, the friend who has gone to have information about his household). Using his imagination, he has managed to have all the members of Ghotna's family killed and the house itself reduced to debris by the earthquake. When the saddening atmosphere created by such a story has reached its climax, Ghotna enters the room with his uncle. Ghotna asks, "Are you still awake? Came back, I was about to board the steamer when I saw uncle getting down. He set out this morning from Mazaffapur and has reached now. A journey of six-seven hours took eighteen to twenty hours to complete. Yes, it's good news, the house has also escaped damage. Khoka, will you prepare a little tea for us. Uncle, please step in".
Khoka, growling with anger, looks askance at Bankim and says, "People die ...... and he composes a novel by going through newspaper reports".

It is this kind of unexpected, startling ending to a short story that constitutes Bibhuti bhusan's individuality. In several short stories, he has exposed the funny side of over-indulgence in fancy.

The two stories, 'Varshay' and 'Haimanti', are steeped in tragic flavour arising out of unreturned love. The eight-year old Shailen even before he moves out of the fairy land associated with the dream of romantic love in the coral islands between Prince Arup Kumar and Princess Kankavati, falls in love with the newly-wed, fifteen-year old Nayantara, playmate of his youngest sister-in-law. Narrating among friends how that child love ends in unbearable separation following its transformation into acute jealousy for Nayantara's husband and culmination into something ghostly, the thirty-five year old Shailen concludes its recollections by saying - "I haven't desired any one else in life, no other image has been painted in the canvas of my life after obliterating Nayantara. After having my
eyes fixed on that fifteen-year old impeccably youthful beauty, I've overcome it and have reached my thirty fifth year - just as the sun bends down into the afternoon after crossing over the verdently youthful earth."

There is no doubt about the profound truth in Shailen's pangs of separation from Nayantara. But what has been satirised as an under current is the pangs of separation associated with the rainy season, and arising out of the sheer incompatibility of the life-long sustaining of a love that arose in childlike attachment of an eight-year old for a fifteen year old married woman.

The story, 'Haimanti' is also tinged with the profound sadness of unrequited love. On an autumnal afternoon, a middle-aged engineer Sureswar suddenly feels about his lonely, deprived life as he sees a happy Santhal couple carrying the bundle of corns on their heads and a child in the lap. He is reminded of the story of an unrequited love that he experienced during the first flesh of his youth. The followed a time when that soft feeling of the heart was buried under the hard world of bolts-nuts-joints-angles and sheets. Life brought him enough of position and power, but there remained a crack in the heart which was never
filled up. The story has given due honour to this sigh heaved in late age in recollection of the unrequited love during his first flush of youth. Particularly, the cruel irony of fate has made Sureswar's lament over his lost love more saddening when the woman who could have made the lover's life worth living by appearing in the bridal chamber as a bride, came to him as a candidate for the post of a Steno-typist and found herself rejected. But when it is found that after coming across a photo in a photographer's shop where the image of a beautiful young lady in juxtaposed with that of his own self, he is moved to a dreamy state of love, and Sureswar has been carrying on that burden of sorrow all through his life by cherishing that dreamy romance, we are reminded of the ludicrity inherent in man's unreasonably foolish sentimentality.

The manner in which excessive sentimentality leads to inconsistencies in human conduct and provokes laughter has been well illustrated in such stories as 'Syamalrani', 'Dharmatola-to-College Square', 'Sampatti', 'Biyer Phool', 'Purnachader Nastami'. In the short story 'Shyamalrani', Sudha is found to be so strongly attached to a domestic cow that the very thought of
post-marriage life without the company of the cow in her would-be father-in-law's house inspires her to engage in an exchange of odd letters:

"Pranamabahāba nivedan midāng Karyanchage!

My wedding has been fixed with you. I am very lucky. But I shall not be able to stay without Shyamalrani. Therefore, Sir, please insist on getting Shyamali - at the time of marriage. Otherwise I shall commit suicide by taking Opium. Opium will be kept tied in a knot of my sari, it will be a thick knot visible to you. It will be no fault. Netya auntie's groom also insisted on getting a decorated lantern the other day. He did have it. Mummy says a man is known by his adamant temperament. This is Nimai. He loves me more than his life. It is he who has written this letter for me. I am a helpless woman, illiterate. I would have had to live without Shymali. Nimai is terribly learned and a very good boy. He reads in Class VI of your school. Please accept my Pranam.

No more.

Yours unfortunate one

Sudha
Sudhamayee Disi.
On the wedding night, even after a lot of enquiries, the 'terribly learned' one could not be traced in the venue of the marriage. The sari did have a big knot, but, happily, it did not reveal anything except a big marble".

The writing of funny letters because of deep attachment to the cow, Shyamali, has become the source of amusement in this story.

The short story, "Dharmatola-to-College square" illustrates how even the rare moments of life get wasted because of man's hesitation, shyness and weakness. The writer has unravelled how a newly wed couple, who has come out in the streets to enjoy their close proximity in loneliness by snatching a few hours out of the crowded world of daily life, is about to waste it amidst the crowds in a tram car. Here the helpless weakness of a shy young man and its incompatibility with the boldness of the newly wed young girl have given rise to a situation of fun.

The story, 'Sampatti', illustrates how a conceited self can make a man conduct himself to the path of
injustice and wrong. The mutual rivalry between Umesh pal and Bhairab Pal, inheritors of the 6th and the 10th part of Batashpur Zamindary, has taken on an acute form around the question of punishing a thief. The feud between the watchmen on either side as to who will punish the thief is of course concluded in the victory of the landlord over the sixth part, because the booty belongs to that side, hence the thief too belongs to them, therefore it is they who have the right to punish the thief. Because of such self-conceited attitude the landlord over the sixth part causes the thief to be seated on the back of an elephant, and makes him enjoy the elephant ride before the very noses of the opponents owning the tenth part of the zamindary and finally settles a big chunk of landed property with him. It does not matter whether the thief has been punished, what matters is whether one has satisfied one's eye by insulting the opponent.

In 'Biyer Phool', marriage-obsessed Ramtanu, on being informed of a marriageable girl by his sister-in-law (whose cousin the girl is) and unable to control his mental eagerness, goes off to Calcutta on a false pretext to be close to the girl, and the way he is
humiliated makes up the substance of this enjoyable story.

Collecting the girl's address from his sister-in-law, Ramtanu reaches Calcutta on the pretext of attending the college even before the college re-opens. It was raining heavily that day. Ramtanu got all drenched as he reached his much desired destination. There was none in the house, except a servant hailing from the Hindi-speaking part of the country who was humming some song on the verandah. Ramtanu tried hard to learn about the girl by enticing the servant and he also hands over a card to the servant as evidence of his being related to the family. But, assuming that he was a well-dressed dacoit, the servant tried to drive him away by ill-treating him. Finally, having failed to do so, the servant shouted, "Murder, come sharp, there's a dacoit!"

Ramtanu was at a loss. Instantly he got down and ran off desperately, forgetting all about love. On seeing a lane before him, he rushed in and after passing through a number of lanes he reached the turning point. He felt breathless as if his chest bones would break off.
The story illustrates how excessive emotional urge can put a man into a ludicrous situation.

In the story, "Purnima Chander Nastamai", too, excessive sentimentality leads to disharmony in the family life of Anukul and Malati. On a night of the full moon, seated on the open roof-top, Anukul has a view of the limitless expanse of the universe and the uncontrolled movement of winds and this makes him feel that he too could have become as vast as that. But he could not be so because of the various adversities of life. He has a feeling that perhaps if he had not married and had a wife like the present one, their would not have been any hindrance on his path of becoming great. This sort of ideas created a feeling of resentment against his wife. On the other hand, Malati, too, had come under the spell of the full moon. She, too, after finishing with her cooking, felt like having an intimate exchange of talks for some time with her husband on such a bright moonlit night. But Malati had by now become an eyesore to Anukul. As a result, when Malati came closer to him, he ill-treated her, so that she left the place and lay down on the bed on the pretext of headache. Consequently, there
was disorder in the house. The next day Anukul was late for his office because he had to cook his own meals. Finally when he returned from office, it was Malati who patched up the discord and served meals with affectionate care. After sitting for his meals, Anukul said, "Would you close the windows in front, the moon seems to dazzle the eyes".

"That's right, seems to be staring awfully better when it remains crooked like a sickle"—so saying Malati shut out the root of all their terribles—the full moon and attended upon her husband at meals with a fan in her hand.

Impelled by the thought of turning his own life into as beautiful and great as the radiance of the full moon, Anukul created disharmony in his family life by his improper conduct, and it is the impropriety of his conduct that creates laughter in the short story. Perhaps only Bibhutibhusan could create such enjoyable stories out of the little things of life.

Bengali literature has rarely had the kind of successful short stories based on animal character as
we find in "Adarini", "Mahesh" or "Kalapahar". From this point of view "Queen Anne", too, is worthy of special mention. Here in this story Aswini Queen Anne is just a play for creating the sense of humour. In reality, it is Rai Saheb Nanigopal Chakraborty, Zamindar, and honorary magistrate who is the central figure in the story. Rai Saheb Nanigopal is one of those creatures who came into being during the British regime as favour-seekers of the White masters always licking at their masters' feet. When the British Saheb Woodburn was on the verge of returning to England after his retirement and sold everything he possessed, Nanigopal, just to please the Saheb, purchased his horse. Nanigopal is a person of weak nerves. But, with a view to show off his bravery, he decides to ride the horse. His laughable conduct after his mounting the horse creates the occasion for hilarious laughter. A photographer has been invited to take a snap of Mr. Chakraborty riding the horse. As soon as the photographer signals by saying 'One-two', Queen Anne gives out a horsy cry, takes a turn and faces the camera. The photographer, leaving off his camera, jumps to the varandah out of fear. Those who are on the varandah moves inside. Rai Saheb releases the reins and lays
himself straight by holding on to the neck and then
gives out a loud cry. Coming forward swiftly, Amir
Hussain catches hold of the reins. In a gruff voice
he mutters, "Why should he have to say 'one-two' ? The
Saheb was training him to cross hurdles by saying that,
on seeing that three-lagged thing of his, he thought
perhaps - "

Still lying on the horseback, Raisaheb immediate­
ly added, "Take that away, photographer, take that
away. Hurdle race - that race across seven hurdles,
 isn't it ? Have you taken it off ?"

So much for Rai Saheb's bravery. Such is the
plight of a fake Saheb. Satiri mixed with fun and
humour has seeped into texture of this story. Unfor­
tunately, because of the predominance of a mechanical
age, the days of medieval chivalry are over, except
for the racecourse, horses and mares are left with
little space for their appreciation. Currently, the
Rai Saheb's have also lost their prestige. But the
final irony of 'Queen Anne' as revealed through Rai
Saheb's ambition for riding high - a twentieth Century
facical version of the medieval Knights on horseback
has found indelible expression in the pages of Bengali literature.

The story 'Drabyagun' is a unique example of Bibhutibhusan's sense of fun. The story revolves round two battles - one is an empty bottle of 'Sherbat', the other of phenael. The story carries Bibhutibhusan's narrative skill at its but by unravelling how, on seeing Sailen returning from the X-Mas bazar with two bottles tugged under his arm-pit, his boyhood mate, who is a wine-addict, has some fun at his cost and offers him same sound advice assuming that he is addicted to drinks, the next day he is chided by his neighbours, friends and well-wishers and, finally in order to reform his characters, even the Congress volunteers resent to picketing before his house. The story reveals how flimsy can be the basis of man's knowledge and judgements even when offered with apparent gravity. But, yet, the story illustrates how, thanks to Bibhutibhusan's manner of presentation, even trivial incidents can become the materials for creating excellent literary art.

The Bengali readers are more familiar with
Bibhutibhusan, the creator of short stories 'Mejokaka's Ranu is the universally loved daughter of our fictional literature. The rasa of filial love which the 18th Century devotees of the Sakti cult presented in the form of welcoming the Mother Goddess as their familiar, homely daughter with hymns associated with Agamani and Vijaya, has been recreated in its charming, domestic form through the stories of Ranu by Bibhutibhusan of the 20th Century. We have described Bibhutibhusan as the seer of life's essence. In his vision life with its sorrows and happiness, its laughter and tears is like a dolls' playhouse. He has observed this puppetry of life with a sympathetic eye. As a result, man's laughter and tears have alike brought to his lips a benign smile. He has witnessed human sorrows and happiness with the inner stream of pity forever flowing within his heart. Hence his literary creations are forever replete with sympathy. Sweetness is the dominant quality of his art.

Even though Bibhutibhusan's literary creations have in general reflected his varied experiences in life, yet, the prime components in many of his short stories have been derived from the stored up memories
his primary school life in rural Bengal seen through the wonders of a child's vision and those of his college-life nourished in the company of friends. In this category of his short stories, the social and family background of the first and the second decades, respectively, have been revealed a new to the reading public. Besides, his literary career extends from the later part of the second decade to the current decade of the present country. The ever-changing flow of life of this long period has found varied expression in his art. Perhaps the number of his short stories has also touched the highest mark no individual creations. To bring this vast and variegated treasure-trove of short stories under one particular label does not appear to be proper.

His two collections of short stories, "Barshay" and "Ashtak" contain a total of nineteen short stories. The eleven short stories in "Barshay" were composed during the period from 1344 (Bengali era) to 1347. In some of the stories in "Ashtak", one finds the reflection of the Second World War. Hence, it can be said that, starting from 1937, these stories were written within a period of more or less six years. These
stories reveal, on the one hand, his impressions of a dream-world associated with memories of his early primary school life as seen through the eyes of a wondering child, and, on another, the lighter moments of fun and frolic experienced during youth in the adventures of Gansha - Ghotna at Sibpur. Just as they have captured in light and shade the playful impressions of even-moving time, they have also given expression to the eternal varieties of human life.

To the experienced, however laughable the first awakening of consciousness of the opposite sex in a boyish heart may seem, it is a psychological fact. Rabindranath while writing about his childhood memories in his 'Jeevan-Smriti', has spoken of Kailash Mukherjee. This sensitive treasurer, who had a long association with the Tagore family, would recite a long nursery rhyme to entertain the child Rabindra. The central hero of that nursery rhyme was our poet himself, and it would brightly narrate the hope for the unquestionable advent of a future heroine. The poet has told us that, while listening to the recital of the nursery rhyme, his mind would become very eager about the image of that universally charming bride who had shone up
the lap of the future. Long after, when he was at the receding phase of his life, this same heroine re-appears in the poet's dream in the poem, 'Badhu' included in the anthology, "Akash Pradeep"; "A garland of pearls around her neck, a gold-made ring on her feet". The poet has written -

"Balaker Prane
Pratham je nari-mantra agamani gane
Chhande lahalo dol adhojaga Kalpanar Shhar-dolay;
andhar-alor dvandve je poodoshe manere bhulay,
Satya-asatyer majhe lop kari seema
dekha dei chhayar pratima".

It is this poetic dream that has found fictional expression in 'Barshay', 'Golapi Resham' and 'Upabashi'. In 'Barshay', the eight year old Sailen, who has hardly crossed the fairy tale world of love between Prince Anup Kumar and Princess Kankavati, falls in love with his sister-in-law's playmate, the fifteen-year old, newly wed Nayantara. The love that is born in the boy's heart comes to be inevitably mixed with jealousy. The boy Sailen, feeling jealous of Nayantara's Union with her husband, tries to keep him away by raising
the fear of ghosts. However ludicrous this infantile romance and its reactions may be, the thirty five year old Sailen, as he narrates this story before his friends on a summer eve, concludes with these words, "I haven't sought anyone else in life, no image of anyone else could find place in my life's canvas. Having fixed my eyes on that fifteen year old impeccable beauty of youth, I've overcome it to reach my thirty-fifth year". However, laughable the incompatibility inherent in this confession may be, by virtue of the skilful narration, the story has surpassed the level of light-hearted laughter and has become charmingly appealing by delving deep into the psychological mystery of a boy in love with a woman.

The story 'Golapi Resham' tells us about the exchange of hearts among two boys and a girl reading in the same class in a primary school. The triangular love becomes a source of fun. The girl was Charu, and boys were Sailen and Gobra. They were all playmates in the primary school. Their favourite game was imitating the acting in a 'Yatra' performance. Charu would play the major role in all such acting. Despite her being a girl, she found utmost joy in playing the hero.
In the role of Arjun in 'Draupadir Swamber' she would hit the target with the bow and arrow, playing Bheem in 'Pandaber Ajnatabas', she would kill the demon Keechak. Only in 'Subhadra Haran', she would not mind becoming Subhadra because of the lure of driving Arjun's chariot after muzzling Gobra as a horse. It was to this heroine–Charu, that Sailen's heart was irresistibly drawn, but stood on the way. It was found that Charu was more attached to Gobra. This created jealousy in Sailen's mind. By whatever means possible Charu's heart must be conquered thought Sailen. An opportunity came his way on the occasion of staying the new play 'Rizia'. Charu would not play the role of Rizia unless she got a set of nice dresses. However, she might agree if the silk dress with the colour of rose worn by the image of Radha in the temple of Radharaman were made available to her. Sailen would never spoil this precious opportunity to please Charu. That led to the theft of the rosy silk sari worn by the image of Radha. While commenting on the conclusion of the story, the aged narrator recalls his boyhood memories and says, "Even now the dazzling colour of rose makes my heart restless. I forget my present. The time's veil starts fluttering like fine silk and I
see before my eyes two youngsters standing on the other side of the veil; venue - a lonely corner of a dilapidated house."

It is worth noting that in both these stories, the hero bears the name Sailen. While beginning with the tale, Sailen says - "When I was a boy, the guardians sent me to far-off Bengal in the interest of my studies - because they lived in the distant Western part of the country". After giving expression to Sailen's memoirs, Bibhutibhusan could not conceal his own identity. That it is a kind of self-observation of his own experiences concealed behind short stories, is beyond doubt.

The third story in the series is 'Upabasi'. It, too, is a story of boyish love, Rupchand fell in love with a girl of the Bose family, Neri. Neri, however, is going to be married off. Rupchand had been looking out for an opportunity to disrupt the marriage since the day of final choice of the bride from the bridegroom's side. Even the marital ritual of a turmeric bath to the bride had already been performed. He could do nothing to stall the marriage. On the day of
wedding, he was sitting in a dejected mood. Just then Rahmat came and proposed a solution. The bridegroom's party would reach the venue of weeding by horse drawn carriages after getting down at the station. Horses are known to be terribly scared by the braying of asses. If an ass could be so placed by the side of the route the bridegroom's party would take, and if it could be made to bray at its utmost, well, the success would be assured. In accordance with the plan, the ass brayed and there was partial success as well. But the plan came to be divulged. Unfortunately, Rupchand's father was among the party that was to receive the bridegroom's party. He caught hold of the son by the ear, took him home, gave him a good thrashing and then confined him to the antic room in the house. He had to forego his food for the day. He could not even share the weeding feast. Throughout the day poor Rupchand was on fast. He fell asleep after a lot of weeping. Meanwhile, following disagreement between the bride's party and the bridegroom's party over the question of dowry, the bridegroom fled away. But unless Neri could be married to some other young man within the same night, it would lower the family's status. Therefore, in the absence of any other alter-
native, Rupchand came to be accepted as the suitable bridegroom.

It needs hardly any mention that compared to the stories, 'Barshay' and 'Golapi Resham', the art-form of the story 'Upabasi' is quite different. In 'Upabasi', the writer's attention is not fixed on the polar end of youthful psychology - which is the art-form. Here we have only a sense of pure fun and an unmixed playful mood. It is as if incidents provoking laughter have been put together here just to make the reader laugh. The kind of rasa which, in Bibhutibhusan's short stories, takes its origin from the spontaneous course of life's sorrows and happiness, seems to be absent in this story.

In respect of stories based on marital love, Bibhutibhusan has taken refuge in situations connected with the joint family system of the early part of the current century. 'Chhota-Bauma' in the anthology 'Astak' and 'Madan Gopaler Bivaha' in 'Barshay' belong to this category of enjoyable short stories. In both the cases, married life begins at a comparatively early age. Besides, the fate of a girl entering a joint
family as the youngest bride involves various inconvenience. At every step, she has to suppress her inner desires because of the strict authority imposed by the mother-in-law and the father-in-law. The family may celebrate some 'Anna-prasan' (ceremonial initiation of a baby to solid food) ceremony where every one will participate except the youngest son, for, he has to prepare for his examination. The youngest daughter-in-law comes to know of the in-laws' intention by eavesdropping and she is compelled to make a counter-move. Thus - the deceitful trick which she adopts by putting the invitation card addressed to some other invitee into another envelope and addressing it to her husband can certainly be excused by the sympathetic reader. The father-in-law has brought in the youngest daughter-in-law by his own choice. He is also all praise for her goddess Lakshi-like beauty. From his side, he has left no scope for any misgivings.

Even though in 'Madan Gopaler Bivaha', one does not have the same kind of subtle artistic craft. The light vein in which the author depicted the strange behaviour of newly married Madangopal at Calcutta where he had to go to seek an employment and the farcical
manner in which he came back to his village home to unite with his wife do not contain any element of good and sensible humour.

Prabhat Kumar was adopt in writing light stories of the sort. Bibhutibhusan may be labelled as an able successor to him. In "Chadusilpa", Bibhutibhusan seems to have stepped aside his own path and approached nearer to a path of satire. Glutton Makhan, being enchanted with a spirit of modernism married a girl skilled in 'Chadusilpa' (fine arts). He thought, an accomplishment in cookery was merely a crude type of culture and as a consequence the practical necessity of "Keeping off the wolf" to a glutton like Makhan turned into a secondary affair of their family life. His wife finds no time to cook, she is busy in knitting and weaving. Makhan does not grudge, on the contrary he attends to the needs of 'Chadu-silpa' - culture. He has become a slave in an ideologica world created by him, but he remains so much absorbed in this world of fantasy that he pays no heed to subtle satirical sting in the words of Sailen.

Bibhutibhusan seems to be an compromising at
times and cannot be relented from sparing sarcastic slash wherever that is deemed indispensable. A case in point is the story "Lansdown & Bipin Pal". He made no attempt to suppress his feeling of scornful ridicule towards the so-called educated and cultured Bengalees who with an assumed sense of aristocracy and blind and artificial fetishm turned into snobs rather than "Westernised" gentlemen.

He has however no inclination to hit aggressively. His attitude to life and people is of intense love and that is why, it pains him to slash anybody even when he is compelled by nature. In fact, to him, the weal and woes, the sorrows and sufferings, the abnormalities and absurdities of revealed in human motives and actions are like passing waves of autumn clouds. Autumn is the season of childish pleasure and fantasy. The autumnal sky might carry vapourless light clouds with possibility of a light shower, but the permanent shines with a smile of gay alacrity. He sees the problems of life, the complex and tense situations of society at large with no seriousness or a socialist or politician. The stories written in the background of second World War give a clear verdict to their attitude
of the author. When the country is swayed by the Quiet India Movement of Mahatma Gandhi he writes "Kuit India" in which he prescribes a palliative which would compel the British damsels to flee away from the clutches of Guljar Singh and Balbanta Singh. On the basis of prevailing problem of scarcity of cloth during war, the author in his usual mood wrote "Jamai-eyer Upakaritā" wherein a father-in-law shut down by the acute problem of cloth invites his son-in-law and subsequently the problem is solved. This is Bibhutibhusan. The possibility of a chilly autumnal shower is averted by an impact, not of a storm but of a breeze, probably a breeze of sighs.

The author expresses the curiosity of the foreign army-men during the time of war. A "Sahēb" came to the house of Harakali who said to be a devotee and care-taker of a Goddess. The Sahēb wanted to take a snap by his Camera, as he thought that the deity must be a "live goddess" ("Jagrata"), since the "nurse" (the caretaker) of the goddess was so lively and beautiful. It was ultimately found that the camera along with the face of the Sahēb was in the clutches of Harakali and she went on flogging by her right hand on
the back of the man with a sweeping broomstick in "quick succession like a tailor's needle moving up and down when in action." It should be admitted that at times, situations and display of reactions are exaggerated to the extreme and appear to be rather crude in style and design, yet it is true that he is not merely a narrator, he sees things and broods through which he describes. That is why, gleaming beauty of human character does not escape his attention in the sea of darkness or a "black-out" night ("Raile...") on receipt of his daughter's illness one gentleman, in a black-out night came to board a first class compartment with proper ticket. The people inside travelling either without ticket or with tickets for third class kept the door sealed. A ticketless traveller sitting beside the door gave stout resistance and would not allow him in. The gentleman came back with a cruiser, but seeing the woeful plight of the ticketless traveller he handed over his ticket to him and saved him from sure jail.

The contemporary events and incidents cannot escape attention of a conscious intellectual. In many stories of Bichutibhusan, there are references to War,
Blackout, Famine etc. but he has neither a mind to go into the roots of these problems and calamities nor does he want to assess the gravity of the passing phases of life. It does not imply that the author was not serious and sensitive enough to be perturbed by these cross-currents. It appears that the author viewed the inconsistencies and sub-normal waves of society in the same vein as he discovered inconsistencies, disparity and depravity in human life also. He took them as facts, he did not want to justify or judge them, because with all undesirable inconsistencies and unnatural oddities, life as well as society to him is real and he has a positive faith in it. Following wild rumours, unreal or factual, riots break out between two communities and the dispassionate ordinary people turn into brutes. In a tense atmosphere like this, a boy collects flowers from the courtyard of a mosque and offers at the feet of a temple God. This story (Rayat) reveals the sentiment of the author. Underneath all inconsistencies and casual or passing discordance, he finds a basic truth of life which is sublime.
Besides the humorous stories and stories written in a lighter mood, Bibhutibhushan has to his credit a few stories which touches upon the finer sentiments and deeper feelings. The aforementioned story "Royat" is an example in point. Let us now analyse the story "Fuleswari" in some detail. In stories of this sort too, the author brings in an atmosphere of contrast, and finally the external contrats are intertwined with a fine thread of inner and deeper truth. Fuleswari's father was 'boiler' of Railway engine and subsequently after her father's death her brother was given the job. Fuleswari, a village girl of adolescent age slighted Vrindavan the Gumtiman, because in her estimation, a boiler of an engine carrying mail trains must be of a higher status than a Gumtiman. Course of love does not abide by the external codes of conduct and status. A Gumtiman, though he was, Vrindavan was a young man with refinements. Immediately after joining duty, he prepared a beautiful garden around the gumty and Fuleswari a girl of blooming youth could not help going along the garden to collect pails of water because she was charmed with the beauty and fragrance of Jasmine, Chameli and the like. The gumtiman would not allow anybody to pluck flowers, but when the nephew
of Fuli comes of on the day of the 'Rasa', he does not mind sending flowers to her in the hands of the nephew. What! that haggard boy, agumtiman by profession is intolerably impertinent! What an insolence on the part of the ordinary youngman to send her flowers!

But the giant mail train which speeds past this ordinary chap everyday without earning a fig for him had to stand still one day under the nose of the youngman under his authority to stop it, and the Anglo-Indian driver who never shares at him had to come down from the engine. Is Vrindavan a person to be sneered at when he can wield such an authority? The pride of status so long cherished by Fuli was shattered.

A story delineated in such a lighter design reflects a humorous approach to sentiments of vanity and love.

Yet another interesting character is "Murari daktar", a man temperamentally jovial even when the patient is breathing high. Wherever he goes and whoever he meets has an air or smile and familiarity. He believes, had medicine the potentiality to cure
everybody and on every occasions, then Queen Victoria would not have died. Therefore aged Paresh Chakravarty breathed last under the care of Murari, but he was seen participating actively in cremation, in Sradh festival and in serving the invitees with sweets. This is plain and simple light story, but the readers reel amused at the inconsistency between the doctors philosophy and profession, between a professional practitioner and a simple hearted friend of the people.

Sometimes he singles out one event or incident but implies the motif. So that a single incident reveals a deeper meaning and the event is elevated to a level of life-pattern. In the Mokamaghat Station, the story teller has been staying in the waiting room with an up-country businessman who thinks that whatever befalls is due to the mercy of "Mother Ganga". During their conversation, a rich gentleman, well clad and healthy, silver stick in hand entered with a servant carrying hold-all and costly Tiffin Career, Bed was made ready for him, he slept and snored. The 'Sethji' lifted the curtain again and again to see as it were how the gentleman had been sleeping. "He was ultimately caught red handed by the narrator when he slipped
his hand under the pillow. The shrewd man at once turned in benevolent tone, "See, Babuji, how do the mosquitoes extract blood from man, .......... all by the mercy of mother Ganga". The story has a moral. Taking advantage of the helplessness of man, the scrupulous businessman oozes out, like the mosquitoes, life-blood of human beings ("Manafa"). A few pinches of blood stung out of a stout and healthy Zamindar do him no harm - that is a very apt remark by the Sethji which reveals the class of people he belongs. He is another edition of Parasuram's Ganderiram Batpadiya. When the narrator of the story himself felt sleepy, the benevolent Sethji, as he explains his conduct, a thin and lean man though he was, went on a carnage of ruinians (the mosquitoes) thereby left no chance of acquiring the bliss of Heaven by doing a virtuous act. Ganderiram steals purse but that is manifested in his moves, while the Sethji is yet another classic example of deception and greed.

Bibhutibhusan's wide canvas opening a vista of the children's world will be ever remembered. There is as yet none parallel or second to him. 'Pitu' is a masterpiece. Pitu is a playmate of Chabi, Ranu's
younger sister, her precepter, source of all childish pranks and pleasure. Our concept and ideology about the life and the world have again and again been proved by him to be false. Chabi collects all sorts of valuable informations which to her are undisputed coming as they do from all knowing Master Pitu. Her uncle, the author is a movice and know nothing, that is clear verdict of Chabi. For example, to Chabi's query about God's abode, he failed miserably. "Heaven! you know nothing, heaven is God's Calcutta residence, but then, his country home?" she informed that the country home of God is at the backside of the hill seen through the window from the Pitu's house at Dhanbad. The author had yet to learn from her about Pitu's adventurous journey to God's homeland. 'Pitu' is a story revealing the child's direct contact with God, while 'Ponur Chithi' is a letter retold about Ponu's prayer to God asking the latter to provide him (Ponu) with certain objects of his seeking. Among the stories revealing childish pranks and dreams written by Bibhuti Bhusan, 'Pitu' is unique in design and workmanship. It is a fantastic fairy-tale.

The story "Bhada" Centres round the peculiar
character "Khudo", (meaning 'uncle'). The elderly men finds pleasure by behaving with other like a buffoon, torturing them mentally with no sensible justification. He would unreasonably stop a poor man, a peasant or an unsophisticated common passer-by and torture him mentally by putting him in a delicate position with all abnormal question. He would find pleasure in misguiding a traveller to board a train which is not the desired one. From a fruit seller, he would pick up a bunch of bananas and distribute and devour the-fruits without making payment to the poor seller.

The collection of stories in 'Vasante' may probably be labelled as stories dwelling on the universal aspects of human life and character. "Laghupak" on the other hand may be accepted as a fictional art form based on different facets of the contemporary life. "Medical treatment" ("Chikitsa") which could other be entitled as 'Silver Tonic' is a story of a petty accountant in a wholesellers shop who during world war attained the status of millionaire through profiteering and black-marketing. He fell ill, but his condition did not improve even after proper medical treatment and care. Then his son, who had by that time
learnt the "sacred profession" or black marketing whispered into the father's ear the exhilarating news of huge profit, and the father was cured by the "Silver tonic".

The difference is relationship between one's own elder sister and one's wife's young sister (Chod-di) is attended with a note of difference between mother's brother (maternal uncle) and wife's brother (matul samvad). It has been noticed, wherever Bibhutibhousan dives deep into the question of human values as reflected in the difference and disparity in status, social and economic relationships, he appears to be a brooding philosopher, having sympathy for those who are downtrodden and who had to leave their hearth and home and who were deceived, morally, economically and socially. In "Birur Prasna" some of the problems of socio-economic disparity have been raised.

But pensive thoughts and serious concentration on socio-economic problems do not probably reflect the real nature of the author. In most of the stories, he generally strikes a humorous undertone, the essence and moral, if there be any are left to be debated or
considered seriously by the readers if they like it. Laughing over evil designs and intended motivation of fraud, falsehood and meanness is the characteristic quality of a humorist like Bibhutibhusan. The evil design and the true colour of the Sethji have been ruthlessly exposed in "Munata", but the author remains a dispassionate observer, so to say, of the events and fact without any apparent or feeling of grudge or even disapproval. He appears to be amused. The incidents or sequences of events happening before his eyes are rather funny. He is an observer but he does not want to assume the role of a commentator. The story entitled "Duhsasan" in 'Laghupak' lifts the curtain in the Compartement of a train somewhere in a station between West Bengal and the than East Pakistan. It is immediately after the partition of Bengal. A Marowari gentleman and five ladies, all of them well dressed with dazzling dresses and ornaments are supposed to have been proceeding to their East Bengal (Pakistan) home after marriage of the gentleman. He 'Stated that he has a business concern there, a residence and a residential temple where they would go to perform ceremonial affairs of second marriage. In the last scene of their piece of dramatic episode the real
facts have been revealed after advent of the police. The cases of inter-provincial rackets of black-marketeers, of which we have heard so much, have been utilized by the author as a basis of the story. The so-called ladies with layers of garments on their person and valuable ornaments and the Rajsthaní groom are shrewd black-marketeers from Co. Bengal, Orissa, Rajsthan etc. The author has similarly devised a light plot on the basis of the Hindu-Muslim conflict ('Ramatandave'). The difference, however between 'Duhsasan' and 'Ramatandave' is that the form leaves a serious note of concern at the end in the minds of the reader, while the latter ends in a funny smile leaving no trace of the tense communal trouble with minds.

In the way the author has on many occasions exposes the social evils, and the anti-social and even anti-national elements. The author has minutely observed the ways and means through which people play false on society. Through many stories, Bibutibhusan indirectly exposed the crookedness of average people, their vile motives and meanness. The way in which he presents such characters and situations becomes funny
and laughter provoking. But he is neither a reformer nor a hater, he finds pleasure in letting out the hollowness and shallowness of man. Take for example, the story of 'Kaikalar Dada'. The man is often round in the train bound for Tarakeswar. He appears to be a monk, a man devoted to the path of religion, but he is seen to be joking with the travellers. One day he asked a young traveller to show his railway ticket, then he tore away one corner of the ticket and kept it with him. When overtaken by the Ticket Collector at the station, he pretended to have been robbed of the ticket, showed the torn piece and cited the number of the ticket. The story is very simple and light but exposes the fraudulent attitude of commoners who very often, in dress and design deceive the people.

Main background of his stories, in most cases is the circle of a family. Therefore, there is an air of cordiality and affection in such stories. The stories centering round a domestic life carry soft human feelings of love, respect, friendship, filial piety and conjugal sentiments. Villains, in true sense of the terms are conspicuous by their absence in the realm of Bibhutibhusan's story. In fact, crude feelings of
animosity, or strings of jealousy and sub-human brutalities are never met with in his stories having family atmosphere. Quarrel between a husband and a wife - a misunderstanding between them contains a sweet sentiment of mutual attachment. Bibhutibhusan's story with a theme of this kind carries a pervading flavour of domestic beauty and essence of romantic sweetness.

The story 'Harjit' opens with a note of sensitive discord between Aruna and Sekhar. Sekhar is a jolly type of young man who persuades his wife not to go to her father's house with an ill-feeling and indignation towards her husband, but the sensitive wife is adamant. Aruna finds to her surprise that Sekhar is already at her father's house. The story ends in a happy reconciliation. The author finds an amorous pleasure as it were to note that the wife of Banku in her sensitive mood of anger deliberately throws away things and keeps household articles at sixes and sevens when her proposal of going to the Cinema was turned down by Banku. A very common place scene is a family life with colourful display of fits of anger and frenzy, sulks and emotions is depicted by creating enjoyable
situations. 'Khantir Maryada' prevents a very natural domestic romance. They come back from Cinema, and again they pick up altercation over the 'picture' seen by them, and subsequently the wife gets a new colourful 'Sari' at the cost of the day's sentimental strain, and sensitive over-acting. The quarrel and indignation, the sentimental feelings and hypersensitiveness, and the emotional outbursts are in fact intertwined with a fine fabric of conjugal love and attachment.

There is novelty in the design of the stories namely 'Meghdut', 'Bipanna'. The plots are based on sentiments of love. In a domestic atmosphere with crowd of persons in the family and in the midst of hectic activities, the practical environment of life is beset with obstacles for the newly married couples. In 'Yugantar' the writer has indicated contrast in the wedding rites and ceremonial details which prevailed in early fifties of this century. Secondly, the men and women are surrounded by realities of matter of fact problems of the day, the live in an age of conscious pragmatism. The author has in a subtle manner sketched the changed life-pattern, and the atmosphere of romance. The sweet moments of waiting
and asking, the nascent emotions of anxious expectation have now been marred in the morbid atmosphere of the day. The author concludes however by observing that inspite of the changing patterns of life the inherent spirit of love and romance between man and woman is as green as ever.

When one falls in love, he or she may be swept by the tender feelings of heart, and as a consequence, sometimes boys or girls of blooming age are seen to behave in contradistinction to their views and outlook. In 'Norhra' Habul who is allergic to dirt and uncleanliness falls in love with a dirty girl. Habul's sensitiveness to dirt and filth and his extra care about possibility of be infected by germs find expression in his everyday actions and deeds. A man always conscious about dirt and disease and cautions about all left-out and rotten things around him, picked up in his hand a corner of the cloth suspending on the dirty ground from the person of a dirty girl in amorous delight.

There is little difference between a child and and old man in their conduct and attitude, in their
personal feelings and thoughts. The author knows that an old man or a woman sometimes behaves in an inconsistent manner befitting an ignorant child who does not and cannot realize what it should not do and what it should avoid doing for the sake of own good. The peurile incoherence of an old man suffering from Cough and Cold has been focussed in 'Homiopathil! Though he felt a bit relieved after treatment he could not help stealthily entering into the storehouse and taking cards, but kept the door slightly open so that the mischief of stealing cards may be passed on to the cat. The Kaviraj had to be called in for the old man's increased trouble and ailment and he sensed the cause of relapse or Cough. He asked - Did the cards taste very sour? The simple-minded old man almost inconsciously replied "I don't think to", but immediately realized the gravity of the blunder and retorted 'How can I say?' There is no exaggeration in presenting such characters and situations created in such stories are realistic. The author has elsewhere focussed a similar character of an aged widow 'Govinda Masi' who stole and devoured pickles of plum. When we come across such incidents of stealing by our aged grandfather or aunt out of greed we do not feel angry for
such childish short sightedness and inconsiderate actions in relation to their health and age. We take a compassionate view of such events with mixed feeling of amusement and pain.

Bibhutibhusan has evidently a rare distinction of devising plots and characters which are uncommon and unexpected. The boys and girls, or the men and women are by no means unnatural, their moves and motives sometimes sound extra-ordinary. We have fascination for beautiful flowers, yet we eat a few species of flowers, cooked or fried. It appears to strange when we learn that Gaurikanta babu eats all sorts of flowers with various types of preparations.* His love of flower is actuated by biological pleasure of a omnivorous glutton. Absurdities and abnormalities have very often been given semblance to naturalness. Such stories do not leave any uncanny feelings of nostalgia on the minds of the readers. They are rather amused by the unique and novel ideas and struck by the

* (*) Quoted from the story 'Madhulid' -

Note : (*) Quoted from the story 'Madhulid' -
The author's ingenuity of devising situations and designs. 'Sabjanta' and 'Matha Na Thakileo' for example, are light stories, some of which, one may confess are rather cheaply manufactured to provoke laughter. 'Bibhutibhusan's temperament is such that the situations and characters designed by him never carries you to the wrong side of human behaviour, it never arouses hate, derision nor do the laughable elements contain anything which incite crude pleasure. 'Prasna', 'Matripuja', 'Asha', may incidentally be mentioned wherein the author is supposed to have struck a deep note and receded away from the general rung of light stories. In 'Prasna', a serious and debated question has been raised about the path of salvation. The story does not claim originality in debatable questions regarding the ways and means, whether 'Moksha' can be attained by divesting of all human sentiments of love, pleasure and corporeal attachment. The story gives rent to the author's poetic mood and his deliberations on Buddhistic ideal and it adds finesse in depicting the natural surroundings of an ascetic environment and in painting the sublime beauty of Nature.

'Matripuja' is a pen-picture of the feeling of
anmosity and in-fighting amongst the people during the 'Durga Puja' the greatest festival in Bengal. The author strikes a note of pathos by indicating how the people of a locality get together to make the socio-religious festival a grand success, but conflict of views, differences in opinion and absence of a spirit of co-operation and co-ordination for the sake of a community function create an atmosphere of discord and disaster. Divided we stand and united we fall.

'Asha' may probably be marked as a story of rare quality, the workmanship and artful display of the sequences of which have been commendably accomplished. An enchanting feeling of supernatural has been dexterously created within the coverage - a secluded and silent mofussil area, noontime, sensery impulse of vitality in the minds of a young poet, thrust of a dreamy beautitude on the known world of ours, heresay of an abandoned haunted house, hallucinating thoughts in the love-loru mind combine together to make a suitable background of supernatural. In such an environment, surcharged with dreamy emotions, under the shadow of darkness and light there appears a beautiful damsel in peaceful slumber on an unused cot - the
infatuated young man's mind is overtaken by supernatural feelings.

Two collections of stories, 'Haimanti' (July, 1944) and 'Kayakalpa' (October, 1944) contain stories written in humour vein, marked by the varieties rather than any deeper ideas. A poor writer's dream of becoming rich (Abunossain), sudden and unexpected arrival of a cinema star in a rural area leading to an excitement among the boys of tender age, (Bhakta), passionate attachment to dramatic performance (Charity-show) and fascination for the game of football (football League) are some of the material basis of stories. The variety of plot and design or the characterisation are tinged with light colourful display of fun and laughter. In 'Kalasya Gati' the apprehension of bomb-scare overtakes the capricious mind of a child, and the thoughts of destruction and havoc have transpired in the child mind in the form of a destructive attitude of the child in his play-house. There is probably a subtle suggestive undercurrent of human expression in the story. 'Kayakalpa' arouses a combined feeling of pity and laughter. Recalling this youthful years of love and romantic sensations by the old grandmother during
the marriage of her grand-daughter strikes a note of pathos. Painful undertone of pathos with a note of contrast between the experiences and feelings of the by-gone days and the sentiment of despondency of the present day is found in a few stories. The story entitled 'Art' reflects the indifferent and self-same attitude of a grown-up man out of a sense of despair because at one stage of life he was a benevolent man with wide outlook but his expectation has been belied. In 'Haimanti', post-autumnal fading away of the mirth and grandeur of spring has been epigrammatically indicated in the life of an aged man, who inspite of a success in life, respect of the people and economic soundness heaves a deep sigh of despondency. A contrastive picture of a happy Santali couple has created a poignant feeling of void and despair.

From the foregoing summary-discussion on the stories of Bibhutibhusan, it has been made abundantly clear that he has a rare quality of looking at the different aspects of all walks of life based on plots devised by him with utmost skill and ingenuity. In his innumerable stories he has shown originality in building up plots and creating situations of varied
types. The characters have been drawn mostly from the middle-class family and the society. From a nursing baby to an aged with one foot on the grave, from a child moving in its fancied dreamy fairyland, a commoner or a love lorn youth to a shrewd black-marketeer or a deceitful businessman or a social worker, all sorts of people have come in a row in the arena of his fictional world. Sometimes he appears to be fascinating himself as a playmate of a child in his or her doll's house, sometimes he associates himself with the energetic boys or frenzied youth, at times he feels the pulse of a romantic couple, the pranks and dreams of a blooming youth, a love-lorn youngman and at times he is found to assess the extent and designs of man's deceitfulness in the family life, social life or in the business world. He is seen to enjoy the Company of a buffoon or an abnormal person, he finds pleasure in the beauties of Nature and in association of with a blooming poet. He is pained to note a feeling of resignation and despair of the aged and the defeated in the struggle of life, defeated at mental and psychological levels.

He has seen life into eternal perspective as
well as in the contemporary period as is reflected in the life and activities of men and women. He broods over the nascent beauty of human love and softer feelings as well as finer sentiments and typifies the simplicity, purity and visionary finesse of the child mind. While he is full of praise for those who have all human virtues, he is averse to all sorts of snobbery and artificiality. Though he never assumes the role of a big brother or a reformer, he subtly exposes the evils, absurdities, abnormalities, frauds and all sub-human activities or propensities of man. Whatever appears to him to be inconsistent, incoherent, abnormal and unnatural, be it a deep and sensitive mood or aspects of life or be it a light and commonplace moments or events of life — he does not seem to take them with any amount of seriousness, he is rather amused than frustrated and disillusioned over by people's sub-normal behaviour in all spheres of life. He takes people and things as they are but never criticises them nor makes an attempt to chastise them. If he finds an element of inconsistency in something or in someone's dealing or attitude, he does not bother about setting them alright or bitterly attack them with any explicit note of disapproval.
After all he is a fiction-writer. He presents a story and hold out the situations in which the characters act and react. The author or a fiction or a story is not supposed to play a role of a sociologist or philanthropist. Yet, because a sense of humour is ingrained in the blood of a story writer like Bibhutibhusan, in his expositions of human crudeness, savagery, fraud or falsehood, he is not merely a dispassionate observer of situations or events, there is always an implied feeling of disapproval, not in the form of any statement or moral conclusion but in the pervading element of fun and pleasure at the cost of pain. It is like suppressing one's tears and smiling outwardly. In 'Kalikata-Noakhali-Bihar' the author has not only exploited the socio-political facts of history but implied a suggestive thought-provoking lesson to sensible people of this society at large. The mad frenzy of violence and hatred let loose by the scrupulous persons and short-sighted politicians to achieve their objectives brings a slur on humanity. The time-honoured sense of solidarity and brotherhood between the communities as shattered on the pre-texts of religion, culture and political priorities. The author Bibhutibhusan did not come out here as a moralist or
missionary savant, nor did he accuse anybody on this score, but his plain speaking on the mad orgy and woeful sufferings of people has an imploring appeal to humanity. In this respect, Eibhutibhusan is rather a humanist.

If Eibhutibhusan is considered to be a writer of light short stories, or if he is considered to be a skilled designer of the middle-class family and society only he will be under-estimated. If one likes to take him merely as an excellent artist who sketched the doll's house of the children very nicely, then the personality of the author, his wideness of outlook and his soft and smiling temperament will not be properly assessed. Inclusive of all the qualities as mentioned above, he was a thoughtful humanist, having a positive faith in man inspite of all short-comings and inconsistencies in his thoughts and actions. Dr. Srikumar Banerjee found in him, besides other qualities, a deep rooted poetic bent of mind with an aesthetic sense of higher order, a philosopher and a personality having a sharp and thoughtful depth*.

* 'Banga Sahitye Upanyaser Dhara' (3rd Edition)
After all that has been said about Bibhutibhusan and his short-stories, it must be admitted that the readers in general take him as a pioneer story writer who allotted maximum space and who provided maximum designs to give a very comprehensive account of child-psychology and juvenile fancies and pranks. In the history of Bengali Literature, we come across writers who have written stories for the children, fables and fanciful dreamland enjoyed by them. Bibhuti bhusan projected before the aged readers the colourful little house in which they once dwelt, he depicted the fanciful thoughts and dreams of the child which the elders had once cherished in the prime of their lives. Therefore, though the elders have no longer an access to this dreamland of childhood, they feel enchanted and attracted by the sounds of music of that world. The author has drawn the elders to this world of dream and fancy through these stories. These writings cannot be labelled as a bunch of 'Childrens literatures'. The beauty and flavour of these stories are to be tested by the childish spirit lying dormant in the minds or the aged. Bibhutibhusan has the rare distinction of lifting the curtain of the ever-green fanciful stage of life in which men as children are actors and men as parents are spectators. The dreamland of childhood, as
depicted by many poets and fiction writers in a colourful fairy land, but Bibhutibhusan's dreamland lies in our infancy in the heart of the family itself, where the children do not see, they enact. This enactment of desire as a psychological reality in the central theme in the short stories of Bibhutibhusan relating to the activities of the children.

We finally conclude this Chapter by quoting a letter written by Mohitbal Mazumdar to this author, wherein the literary quality and the personality of Bibhutibhusan Mukhopadhyay have been briefly given vent to "you are a man of such characteristics, that, I am sure, you will not hesitate to forego personal likes and conveniences for the sake of others happiness and pleasures. I am charmed by the manly virtues reflected through your writings. The type of humour that flows through your stories requires a sentiment and an element of finesse which may not emanate from an intellectual artist, it is embodied in the quality of patience and forbearance." (13)

Note: (13) Quoted from Mohitlaler Patra Guchcha.
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