Rabindranath Tagore, One of the noblest sons of India, is a versatile genius. He played a significant role in Indian cultural renaissance.

Tagore was born and brought up in an affluent and artistic family. His father and grandfather were great leaders of Bengal. No wonder Tagore inherited all their good qualities and became a genius in varied fields.

When Tagore was born in 1861, India lay prostrate at the feet of the British. The great mutiny which was also called the Sepoys' Mutiny took place in 1857 and was ruthlessly suppressed. It may be called India's first war of independence. The ancient ruling classes had been either wiped out or lay cringing in the dust. India had ceased to be creative. She had lost her freedom politically and her soul culturally.

Eighty years later, when Tagore died in 1941, the face of India had changed. Culturally, India had recovered her self respect and politically, she was about to launch the Great Rebellion of August 1942. This rebellion, which
was also known as the Quit India Movement, defied the foreign government. The credit for this political awakening must go mainly to Indian National Congress under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. But political awakening and cultural consciousness do not grow in air tight compartments. Their roots are linked together and are ultimately fed by a common stream of creative inspiration. Rabindranath Tagore is one of the main channels of this creative inspiration.

To the people of the world outside India there have appeared to be two great leaders of India's millions during twentieth century. One is the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi and the other, the gifted writer, Rabindranath Tagore. An extensive and tireless traveller, his personal dignity and burning sincerity did much to enlist the sympathy of the world for the cause of India's self-government.

It is undoubtedly true that in the course of his long life of eighty years, he wrote magnificent prose and verse. He travelled extensively, visited many lands and people, studied deeply their different principles of Philosophy and life, enriched his various experiences with life-long contemplation and gave out to the world the wealth of his wisdom.
Tagore, in his childhood, was driven more and more into mental reflection and he used to spend much of his time in a quiet garden adjoining the house. The natural beauty of the garden was a source of joy to the little boy and infused in him a spirit of serenity and an idea of the grace and harmony that reign in the universe.

As Tagore grew older, his works were enriched with the wealth of perfect sincerity, penetration and harmony. The closing years of the nineteenth century saw the poet in the full vigour of youth, completely immersed in the joy of his ever-developing power and in giving realization to his perceptions in the form of poetry, drama and novels.

The year 1901 was very important in Tagore's life. It saw the foundation of his school, Santiniketan (The Peace Retreat) at Bolpur. Tagore was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1913 and a shower of honours followed. He was the first Asian to become a Nobel Laureate. A honorary Doctorate was conferred upon him by the University of Calcutta in the same year. In 1914, he was knighted. In 1921, he opened viswabarati at Bolpur, turning Santiniketan into a world university. In 1940, he received the degree of D.Litt. form Oxford University.
Though Tagore is essentially a poet, he is much more than a mere poet. His genius enriched whatever it touched. Rabi means the sun. Like the sun, after which he is named, he sheds light and warmth on his age, vitalises the mental and moral soil of his land, and reveals unknown horizons of thought.

The vitality of Tagore's genius is truly amazing. No less amazing are the variety and beauty of the literary forms he created. He has given to his people in one lifetime what other people have taken centuries to evolve—a language capable of expressing the finest modulations of thought and feeling, a literature worthy to be taught in any university in the world.

The poetical rhapsodies and ornamentation of language in Tagore's novel, The Home and the World, are a source of delight to the reader. The language, the imagery and the metaphors used by the author express the finest modulations of thought and feeling. The lyrical beauty of the language makes one feel that it is a poet's novel. A passage from the novel may be quoted in this context. The feelings of the heroine, Bimala, when the new era of Swadeshi enters the realm of Bengal is a fine example:

My sight and my mind, my hopes and my desires, became red with the passion of this new age. Though, up to this time, the walls of the home—which was the ultimate world to my mind—remained unbroken, yet I stood
looking over into the distance, and I heard a voice from the far horizon, whose meaning was not perfectly clear to me, but whose call went straight to my heart. (22-23)

"Humayun Kabir, in his book *The Bengali Novel*, feels that in the novel *The Home and the World*, Tagore's prose: "reaches its finest flowering... there is a rare delight in the language for its own sake. Fluid and colloquial, it yet has more artistry than in any prose Tagore had written till then" (44).

There is no field of literary activity, which is not explored and enriched by Tagore's daring adventures. His ideas and feelings found spontaneous expression in his writings. Tagore is one of the few writers whose works withstand the challenge of the severest tests of great literature - eastern or western, ancient or modern. Tagore wrote a dozen novels and nearly two hundred short stories. Of all the aesthetic media to which he contributed, poetry and music were dearest to his heart. His poems and songs are on the lips of peasants and boatmen in the remote villages of Bengal. Not since the thirteenth century has India produced a genius who enriched these two arts to the extent that Tagore has done. As Goethe moulded German literature in his day, so did Tagore dominate, the Indian literary scene. An entire generation of writers bears his imprint."
Among modern writers, Tagore has the unique distinction of being praised and appreciated not only by sophisticated Bengali intellectuals and learned professors but also by the simple, unsophisticated folk in the congested lanes of Calcutta or in the remote villages of Bengal. The beauty of his literary creations is unsurpassed.

The most remarkable thing about Tagore's personality, apart from the richness of his genius, is its all-round and harmonious development. The religious, moral, aesthetic and intellectual aspects of his personality are reflected in all his writings.

Other than being a great writer, Tagore is also a singer of songs, a dreamer of dreams and he is human and humane. He is a lover of mankind, a citizen with a conscience and a patriot whose loyalty embraces all mankind. All his life he strove for social justice. The religion he preaches is the religion of man; the freedom he fights for is the freedom of humanity from all that stifles it.

Tagore is a pioneer in the field of national education. Even when he has achieved fame, which kings may envy, he is contented to be a writer in humble village surroundings. In order to unify India, Tagore puts forth the idea to bridge the gulf between cities and villages. Villages are the real reservoirs of India's national strength and the source of national vitality. According to
Tagore, life should be brought back to the village in its completeness. Villagers should be made self-reliant, strong, healthy and happy. They should be made rich with the consciousness of cultural traditions of their own country. If the villages decay, the whole nation will degenerate, sooner or later.

Tagore's love of village life can be seen in most of his short stories and novels. In Tagore's novel, *Gora*, the portraits drawn deal mainly with village life. The greenery of the village pervades the background of the novel. Gora, the protagonist of the novel, is town bred. He goes to the village to find out the truth about village life. In short, the novel depicts village life with all its greenery and vividness.

The short story, "The Postmaster" is resplendent with Tagore's love of rural life. The post master takes up his job in the village of Ulapur. The writer describes an evening in the village thus: "In the evening, when the smoke began to curl upwards from the village huts and the birds and insects sang in every bush; when the beggars sang their songs in their daily meeting place; when any real poet, who had tried to watch the movement of the leaves in the dense bamboo trees, would have felt a mysterious trembling in his limbs... then the Post master would light his lamp..." (44).
In the short story, "Subha", the innocent, sweet, dumb girl, Subhashini lives in a small village called Chandipur. Tagore describes the village and the river that flows through it thus: "The river on whose banks it stood was small for a river of Bengal, and kept to its narrow limits like a daughter of the middle class. This busy stretch of water never overflowed its banks, but went about its duties as though it were a member of every family in the villages beside it. On either side there were houses and banks shaded with trees" (34).

Born in 1861 and died in 1941, throughout Tagore's long life of eighty years, he worked in all spheres of life and in all fields of knowledge. The source of his greatness and genius lay in the catholicity of his mind, the breadth of his vision and the range of his imagination. In whatever sphere he functioned, he reached the pinnacle of glory and attained the peak of eminence.

Born in a period of earthen lamps and hackney carriages and died in an atom age, the poet in the eight decades of his life, has contributed valuable treasures to Indian literature. It has been estimated that he has written fifty plays, forty collections of short stories and thirteen novels, two thousand poems, one thousand four hundred songs and fifteen books on literary, political and religious aspects.
In his writings, Tagore extolls the ancient culture of India to the skies. He is an idealist. According to him, ancient religious and moral traditions are desirable for the growth of mankind. In the Opening Chapters of the novel, *The Home and the World*, the heroine, Bimala, is depicted in a traditional manner, which speaks highly about ancient Indian Culture: "Bimala resembled her mother, whose vermilion mark at the parting of her hair symbolised all the devotion of Hindu wifehood... Bimala's ambition was to grow up to be a model of what a woman should be, as one reads it in some epic poem" (1).

Tagore's writings are tinged with romance and sentimentality which he maintains till the last. In the short story, "The Postmaster", there are tinges of sentimentality in the young girl's (Ratan) affection for the postmaster. The post master resigns his post and decides to go back to his hometown. Ratan feels unhappy and desolate and asks him: "Dada, will you take me home with you?" (48).

The postmaster consoles her that she need not be anxious about his going away and that his successor will take care of her. These words are kindly meant, but it is hard to understand the ways of a woman's heart. Ratan cannot bear these kind words. She bursts into tears and says: "No, no you need not tell anyone anything about me. I don't want to stay here any longer" (50).
Just before starting his journey, he gives some money to Ratan. Ratan falls at his feet and cries: "O Dada, Pray don't give me anything. Don't in any way trouble about me" (50). And then she runs away out of sight.

The sentimental speculations of Tagore can be seen in the lines:

"So the traveller, borne along on the swift-flowing river, comforted himself with wise thoughts about the numberless meetings and partings in the world; and about death, the great parting from which there is no return" (51).

Ratan wanders about the post office with the tears streaming from her eyes. It may be because she still hopes in some corner of her heart that her Dada will return. There is so much of realism in this story that the reader feels that Ratan awaits for her Dada Babu's return even today.

Inspired by joy and love of the universe, Tagore pours forth his mind in endless ways. In Tagore, we have the loftiest thoughts and sentiments enlivened by a rare artistic genius. As a novelist or short-story writer, poet or musician, Tagore has a distinct ideal to make man yearn for a higher life. Throughout his life, Tagore searched for truth. He was spiritually close to the ideals of social justice, internationalism and humanism.

With what a strange alchemy a man of genius turns everything he touches into gold is best illustrated by the literary career of Tagore. He
expresses himself with equal ease through poetry, drama, fiction, short story and novel. Even today, his novels retain their freshness and his short stories never become stale. His genius is brought out in his short stories and novels. As a short story writer, he ranks with the greatest masters of the craft. His stories reveal a delicate sensitiveness to beauty. The opening paragraph of Tagore's short story, "The Renunciation" gives one a glimpse into his sensitiveness to beauty: "It was a night of fullmoon in spring and the breeze was heavy with the perfume of mango flowers. The tuneful notes of an untiring bird, hidden in the thick leaves of an old tree by the side of a pool could be heard..." (87).

Tagore's power to undertake subtle analysis of human relationship, his capacity to view life from the heights and at the same time to bring in the smallest details of life is remarkable. His short stories have remarkable compactness of design and achieve remarkable unity of effect. All these traits may be identified in the famous short story, "The Cabuliwallah". The short story, "The Cabuliwallah", revolves around a five year old girl, Mini, who is very lively and talkative. Her mother resents her talkative nature, but her father encourages it. His talk with her is always lively. The closeness and deep affection between the father and the daughter is brought out through the conversations in day-to-day life.

A Cabuliwallah enters her life quite unexpectedly. Gradually Mini and the Cabuliwallah become great friends. The language that Tagore uses in
the child's conversation with a grown up man is capable of expressing the finest modulations of thought and feeling. The Cabuliwallah often asks Mini when she would go to her father-in-law's house. Since child marriages were common in Bengal, every Bengali girl had heard about her father-in-law's house. Here Tagore refers to the custom of orthodox families where the marriages of small girls are often discussed.

Mini asks the same question to Cabuliwallah. Among men of Cabuliwallah's class, father-in-law's house is a polite expression for prison. Shaking his hand threateningly at an imaginary policeman, he will reply: "I will whip my father-in-law!" (12). Mini and Cabuliwallah would go off into shouts of laughter. Tagore's sense of humour is brought out through this conversation.

Once a year, in the middle of January, Rahman, the Cabuliwallah, used to return to his own country. One morning, Rahman picks up a quarrel with a certain neighbour, who owes him some money, but has denied it. Rahman strikes the man with his knife and is led away by two policemen. Rahman is imprisoned for many years.
Time pass by and even Mini forgets her old friend. Her life is filled with new companions. As she grows older, she spends more of her time with girls. Tagore's portrayal of realism is superb. Arrangements for Mini's marriage have been made. After the marriage, she would go to her husband's home, leaving her father's house in shadow.

The morning of the marriage dawns bright. Tagore's love of nature is visible when he says that the air seems to have been washed clean with the rains and the rays of the sun and look like pure gold. They are so bright that they even make the dirty brick walls of Calcutta look bright and shining. Mini's father's heart is filled with pain at the thought of his separation from her. The depiction of the close relationship between the members of a family is noteworthy.

The Cabuliwallah comes back from prison. He wishes to see Mini, who, he believes has not changed. He has brought grapes and nuts in memory of former days. Mini's father feels that Rahman's coming on that special day may bring them bad luck. So he asks him to come on another day. The man looks sadly at him. He hands over the gifts to Mini. Her father is about to pay him, but he says that he has brought the gifts in memory of his own daughter in
Afghanistan. Cabuliwallah shows him a small piece of paper on which there is the mark of the little hand of his daughter.

Mini's father's eyes are filled with tears. He forgets that Cabuliwallah is a poor fruit seller; all that he can think of is that he too is a father. He sends for Mini immediately and she comes and stands quietly, dressed in her red silk marriage sari. The Cabuliwallah is amazed at the lovely sight. He smiles and asks: "Little one, are you going to your father-in-law's house?" (15). Mini stands silently with her lovely head bowed down. When she has gone inside, Rahman shakes his head sadly and sits down on the floor. The idea has suddenly occurred to him that his daughter must have grown up too, while he has been away so long.

Mini's father presents him with a hundred rupee note and tells him to go back to his daughter so that the happiness of their meeting may bring good fortune to his daughter. Having made this present, Mini's father has to cut short some of the entertainments. But the marriage feast looks brighter to him because of the thought that in a distant land, a long-lost father has met again his only child.
This short story has compactness of design and unity of effect. Characterization is so marvellous that Mini and Cabuliwallah can never be forgotten by the readers. Oneness of humanity and universal love and brotherhood are emphasised by Tagore, when Mini’s father recognises Cabuliwallah as a father like himself.

No less remarkable are Tagore’s attainment as a novelist. His themes for the novels include problems of current social life. The remarriage of widows was looked down upon by the conservative society of Bengal before 1910. That is why Binodini, the widow heroine of Tagore’s novel of the same name, remains a widow, even though Bihari offers to marry her. However by 1910, a favourable atmosphere for widow remarriage has been created. That is why, in his novel Chaturanga, published in 1916, Tagore allows the brilliant widow, Damini, to marry sribilas. In Farewell, My Friend, Abanish Datta, the father of the heroine Labanya, marries a widow in his old age, after the death of his first wife.

With the advancement of women’s education, the tempo of social changes increased. The marriageable age of the girls in the upper middle class and also their educational qualifications increased with the passage of time. These changes in current social life can be noticed when we study the heroines and other female characters of Tagore’s novels in a chronological order. The
heroine of Tagore's first great novel, Binodini, published in 1903, does not have any formal education, even though her father appoints a European governess for his daughter's instruction. Again, in the same novel, Asha, the wife of the hero, Mahendra, is an uneducated girl. Sucharitra and Lolita in the novel Gora, published in 1910, do not have any college education since the story pertains to the latter half of the last century. Though Hemnalini, in The wreck, published in 1906, studies in a college, she is not a graduate. Similarly, Bimala the heroine of The Home and the World, has no formal education.

The heroines of the novels written in the interwar period (1918-39) are educated. Labanya, the heroine of Farewell, My Friend, written in 1928, is a postgraduate. Similarly Ela, the heroine of Four Chapters, written in 1934, is a research scholar before she joins the revolutionary party.

The socio-religious history of Bengal, during the latter half of the nineteenth century, is brilliantly portrayed by Tagore in his novel, Gora. The strong and weak points of Hinduism and Brahmo samaj are minutely depicted. Gora, a member of Brahmo Samaj, subsequently becomes a fanatic Hindu and remains so till he learns the truth about his birth and parentage.

Tagore's power of characterisation holds the interest of the reader throughout. Kamala, the symbol of devotion and service in The wreck, Gora,
the protagonist of the novel Gora, Bimala, the heroine of The Home and the World, torn between conflicting loyalties to the house and the outside world, Damini, the stubborn epicurean in Chaturanga, Labanya, the dignified realist in Farewell My Friend, Sarmila, the orthodox, traditional wife in Two Sisters, Niraja, the tragic character in The Garden, and Ela, the educated, independent heroine of Four Chapters portray Tagore's power of characterisation.

The ethical outlook of his characters and their great confidence in life imparts a unique charm to his novels. Like a master Sociologist and Psychologist, Tagore has studied the motives of human beings in their pursuits and conflicts. With deep insight, he has tried to understand and analyse the complications in the resulting situations of life. He could view Orthodoxy and conservatism with sympathy and understanding. In Tagore as a Literary Artist, K. Chandrasekharan writes:

He touched nothing which he did not adorn; he revealed nothing which he did not experience: he expressed nothing, which he did not realise as Truth. In Tagore, the voice of the sages of the Upanishads, the vision of the great mystics of ancient India, the devotion of the great vaishnavite poets and saints are blended. With the sensibilities of a great poet, he views the life on earth:
With a saint's wisdom, he views the beauties, sufferings and sorrows of life. And like a true humanitarian, he loves man, not inspite of, but because of the imperfections in life. A voice both of ancient and modern India, Tagore never loses his faith in man. (34)

Rabindranath Tagore is a phenomenal genius. Very few writers in the history of Indian literature can be compared with him in respect of creative energy, variety and range of creation. The word Tagore does not always mean the writer, it means a whole culture. His novels and short stories reveal the innermost heart of a great personality. As a thinker and a writer, Tagore is still a source of inspiration.

The real worth of Tagore and his works can be estimated only with the help of a coherent account of his life, thoughts, convictions and ideals. Today the name of the Poet-philosopher is greeted with enthusiasm, wonder and reverence in almost every part of the civilized world and pictures of him are to be found in many homes. In most of the great cities of both hemispheres, surging crowds have been held spell-bound by the melody of his voice, even when they did not understand the language of his addresses or recitations; larger numbers have been fascinated by his refined and well-chiselled lineaments, which, together with his silver locks, his flowing beard, his eyes full of mystic inspiration, and his long robes, have recalled to their minds, the vision of a prophet of Judea.
or of a seer of ancient India. No poet, ancient or modern, has been received
during his life time with the honour and respect with which Tagore has been
greeted, whether in the West or in the East.

Tagore is not only a great poetical force but also a moral force. He is not only the poet laureate of Asia and a great personality of the world, but also the spokesman of India and the living symbol of her culture. An Indian traveller remarks that he reads Rabindranath every day; to read one line of his is to forget all the troubles of the world. W.B. Yeats has included this remark in his Introduction to Gitanjali. Tagore’s short stories are pearls of the purest variety. They are beautifully constructed. The characterisation is lucid and convincing. He views human existence in its wholeness. He dwells on what is tragic and painful and shows the reader man’s inhumanity to man. But even from the most melancholy of his narratives the reader does not feel despair. What he sees is man’s frailty, not life’s futility. And sometimes the tenderness of human relationship breaks through and lights up the horizon.

Tagore imposed upon himself the mission of interpreting the soul of India to the rest of the world, carrying with him the story of her great and magnificent past and her achievements in art, philosophy and ethics. Wherever he goes, the poet and seer within him proclaims aloud the aesthetic, philosophical, political and moral standards which India stands for.
The year 1861 was an important date that belonged to a great period in the history of Bengal. It was the year of Tagore's birth. Indians have their places of pilgrimage in those spots where the rivers meet in confluence. The rivers are the symbols of the spirit of life in nature and meeting of the rivers denote meeting of ideals and spirits. Just about the time when Tagore was born the currents of three movements had met in the life of Bengal.

One of these movements was religious, introduced by a very intelligent and broad-minded man, Raja Ram Mohan Roy. He was an Indian religious reformer and founder of Brahma Samaj. He was the enemy of idol worship, supported the abolition of 'Sati' and worked hard to spread education among his countrymen. He visited England and France in 1832 and died on 27 September 1833, at Bristol.

The movement started by Raja Ram Mohan Roy was revolutionary, for he tried to reopen the channel of spiritual life, which had been obstructed for many years by the sands and debris of creeds that were formal and materialistic, fixed in external practices lacking spiritual significance. A bitter fight followed between him and the orthodox people, who suspected dynamic ideas. People who cling to an ancient past have their pride in the antiquity of their accumulations. They become angry when some lover of truth breaks open their enclosure and floods it with the sunshine of thought and the breath of life.
Tagore's father, was one of the greatest leaders of this movement. As a result he suffered ostracism and braved social indignities.

There was a second movement, equally important, which was started by a great man, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. He was the pioneer in the literary revolution, which took place in Bengal. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee was a Bengali novelist. He was the first Bengali to take B.A. degree. He entered Indian Civil Service, from which he retired in 1894. He was the greatest Indian novelist during the nineteenth century and his work was modelled on Scott's historical novels. Even today, his influence on other writers is remarkable. He is the author of Indian national anthem and "Vande Mataram". Among the literary young men whom he gathered around him was Rabindranath Tagore.

Self expression must find its freedom not only in spiritual ideas, but also in literary manifestations. But Indian literature had allowed its creative life to vanish. It lacked movement and was fettered by a rhetoric, as rigid as death. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee was brave enough to go against orthodoxy which believed in the security of tombstones and in that perfection, which can only belong to the lifeless. He lifted the dead weight of ponderous forms from Indian language and with a touch of his magic wand aroused Indian literature from her sleep. When Indian literature awoke in the fulness of her strength and grace, she revealed a vision of beauty.
There was yet another movement started in India, which was called National. It was not fully political, but it began to give voice to the minds of the Indians trying to assert their own personality. It was a voice of indignation at the humiliation constantly heaped upon them by people who were not oriental.

The spirit of revolt had just awakened when Tagore was born and some people were already trying to stem the tide. This movement had its leaders in Tagore's family, in his brothers and cousins and they stood up to save the people's mind from being insulted by the people themselves. The members of Tagore's family took active part in all the three movements. They had to build their own world with their own thoughts. They had to build it from the foundation and therefore had to seek the foundation that was firm.

Thus Tagore was born and brought up in an atmosphere of the confluence of three movements, all of which were revolutionary. He was born in a family, which had to live its own life. From his childhood, this led him to seek guidance for his own self expression in his own inner standard of judgement. This practice sowed the seeds of creativity in his mind, which, later on, flowered and blossomed and made him one of the greatest writers of India.

When Tagore began his life as a poet, the writers among the educated community took their inspiration from English literature. Tagore never
had the kind of school and college training, which was considered proper for a boy of a respectable family. Therefore his writings were saved from the groove of imitative forms. He escaped from an artificial standard based upon the prescription of the school master. This accounts for the originality of ideas in his verses, vocabulary and prose-writing. He yielded himself to the vagaries of an untutored fancy.

When Tagore began his career as a writer, he was the youngest of the writers of that time. He had neither the protective armour of mature age nor that of a respectable English education. So in his seclusion of contempt and qualified encouragement, he had his freedom. Gradually he cut his way through derision and occasional patronage into recognition in which the proportion of praise and blame was very much like that of land and water on earth.

One more factor contributed to the originality in his literary career. Tagore's father was the leader of a new religious movement, a strict monotheism based upon the teachings of the Upanishads. Upanishads are a number Sanskrit treatises or dialogues containing the philosophical speculations of Indian sages. They date from about 1000 BC.

The people of Bengal ostracized Tagore's father and his family members. This prevented Tagore from imitating his past. Hence he developed
a distinct style of his own and this gradually paved the way for him to become a genius. In course of time, Tagore gained reputation as a renowned writer in India. This is the history of his career. Most of the members of Tagore's family has some gift -some are artists, some poets, some musicians and the entire atmosphere of his home is permeated with the spirit of creation. Almost from infancy, Tagore has a deep sense of the beauty of nature and an intimate feeling of companionship with the trees, the clouds and the rivers and has felt in tune with the musical touch of the seasons in the air. At the same time, he has a peculiar susceptibility to human kindness. All these crave expression and naturally find expression in his writings.

In the field of music, Tagore can be acclaimed as a musician. He has composed many songs, which have defied the canons of respectable orthodoxy. But still, his songs have found a place in the hearts of his countrymen. Just like the flowers that never wither, Tagore's songs will also be sung by future generations in days of joy or sorrow, festivity or mourning. Descriptions of beautiful nature are strewn over the short story, "Subha". Subha's house looks out upon the stream. Subha sits by the waterside while nature speaks to her:

The whisper of the stream, the voice of the village people, the songs of the boatmen, the cry of the birds and the soft wind in the trees; all these things joined with the trembling of her heart. They became
one great wave of sound which beat upon her restless soul...And in the middle of the day, when the boatmen and the fishermen had gone to their dinner, when the villagers slept and the birds were still, when the boats were idle and the great busy world paused in its work, then there were only dumb Nature and a dumb girl, sitting very silent—one under the spreading sunlight, the other in the shadow of a small tree.(35)

Tagore's mind is brought up in an atmosphere of freedom, freedom from the dominance of any creed that has its sanction in the definite authority of some scripture or in the teaching of some organized body of worshippers. Therefore, when Tagore is questioned about religion, he has prepared ground on which to take his stand, no training in a systematic approach to the subject.

Tagore's religion, essentially, is a poet's religion. Its touch comes to him through the same unseen channels as does the inspiration of his music. His religious life has followed the same mysterious line of growth as has his poetical life. They are wedded to each other.

In India, the greater part of our literature is religious, because God is not a distant God. He belongs to our homes as well as to our temples. His nearness can be felt in all human relationship of love and affection and in the festivities, He is the chief guest whom we honour. In the seasons of flowers and
fruits, in the coming of the rain, in the fulness of autumn, we see the hem of His mantle and hear His footsteps. We adore Him in all the true objects of our worship and love Him wherever our love is true. In the woman who is good we feel Him, in the man who is true we know Him, in our children, He is born again and again.

Tagore's mind is the mind of a genius, the mind of a philosopher, a philanthropist, a mystic and a lover of eternity. His mind is filled with true light and true knowledge. His mind can be compared to a vast ocean - restless, endless, timeless-into which flow rivers of wide diversity.

Tagore looks upon human life with delight. According to him, life on this earth offers splendid opportunities for self-development. Human relationship and very strong morality is the essence of Hindu view. He gives utmost value for sincere human emotions. He opposes mere conventional ways of life. He is against lifeless imitations and stands for a true individual life. His outlook is global. For most of the Indians, the name of Rabindranath Tagore is almost synonymous with the high achievement of Indian literature. In his forward to History of Bengali Literature, Jawaharlal Nehru writes: "Here was a man like an ancient Rishi of India, deeply versed in our old wisdom and at the same time, dealing with the present day problems and looking at the future, the scope
of his mind could not be confined to any part of India. It was essentially Indian and at the same time, embraced all humanity...” (7).

Tagore's main significance lies in the impulse and direction he gave to the course of India's cultural and moral development. He presented himself as a genius passionately devoted to his art. He dedicated himself passionately to the service of humanity. He gave Indians faith and pride in their own cultural and intellectual heritage. Tagore is the best-known figure in the literary and cultural life of Modern India.

Rabindranath Tagore has deeply carved his name on the minds of people of all parts of India. It is a unique record for him to have witnessed his own rising popularity and recognition from intellectuals, both at home and abroad. Tribute and homage are being paid all over the globe even today.

Rabindranath Tagore is a great and vast subject. To write about him without adequate preparation will be to embark upon the high seas without proper sails. He did not live in a dreamland of his own creation. He is sensible of the hard realities of the times.

In the line of the great artists and creative thinkers of India appear the genius of Tagore, whose effulgence lit up every form of writing that he handled with rare originality.
Tagore made himself immortal through his own inimitable literary creations. He needs no tribute from posterity to make him greater than he was. We can remember him by honouring him and by sharing the great legacy he bequeathed to us.

Tagore is not only the greatest poet and artist of modern India, but is also a great sentinel of India, whose high moral principles stand out uncompromisingly on all occasions. Gandhiji rightly termed him as the Great sentinel. As a poet he would always delight his readers, as a singer he would always enchant his admirers and as a teacher he would always enlighten his followers. The world has reason to be grateful to Tagore whose genius is so consistently dedicated to the good of humanity.

For more than fifty years, Tagore was a great teacher of India. He was lovingly called as Gurudeva. He is no more, but he has left behind enough of everlasting value for India and for the world to give them solace in their hours of trial.

The supreme human element in Tagore is the quintessence of his life. He possesses the powerful capacity to understand and embrace all things human, to regard them in their true perspective and to extend to them the brimful cup of sympathy. Tagore's devotion to supreme power never dimmed his abiding faith in man.
Tagore died in 1941 when the struggle for freedom was passing through a critical phase. He was deeply mourned by his countrymen and countless readers and admirers all over the world.

Among men of letters, there are a few who come only once in a time and who by their work leave such an unfading impression upon the minds of generations who come after them, that they may be called the makers and teachers of mankind. Tagore's name and genius belongs to this galaxy of world teachers, who leave the world richer than they find it.

Rabindranath Tagore was a remarkably well-integrated man. All sides of human nature found full expression in his art. The noble idealism of the Upanishads, the compassion and wisdom of the Buddha, the rationalism of Western thought, the love of the Vaishnavas, the humanism of Jesus, the deep insight of the great mystic poets of all ages and countries; everything had its place in Tagore's World-view and his way of life. His burning patriotism did not prevent him from looking upon the entire world as a 'single nest of humanity'. He knew the value of simplicity and renunciation, but he refused to turn his back upon the joys of the world. Throughout his long life, he retained his curiosity, his sense of wonder, his fascination for the smallest details of life and his deep love of nature.
If we were to sum up our impressions of Rabindranath Tagore as a thinker, an artist and a human being, we can hardly do better than to say: He was a complete man.

M.T. Vasudevan Nair

Like Tagore, M.T. Vasudevan Nair is also a versatile genius. As the writer of novels, short stories, dramas, travelogues and also as a journalist, he has attained an enviable position among contemporary writers of India. Inherent ability, sincere love for humanity, love of freedom, keen social observation and wide reading are the sources of his genius.

The youngest member in a family of four boys, M.T. Vasudevan Nair was very much attached to his mother. His education started in the Elementary school at Malamakavu in Ponnani district. Being good in his studies, he secured scholarship in his high school classes. Intelligence and keen memory power were the roots of his brilliance.

In 1948, he emerged first in his school in his tenth standard examination at the age of fourteen. Since he could attain admission to college only at the age of sixteen, he had to spend two years at home. He cultivated the habit of going to a library three miles away from home. He read the works of
great poets and writers and this brought out the writer in him. M.T. Vasudevan Nair published his first short story, "Vishu Kaineetam" in the journal Chithra Keralam in 1950.

M.T. Vasudevan Nair's father was manager of a famous Indian Company in Ceylon. He spent the first few years of his childhood with his parents and brothers in Ceylon. When the children were grown up, mother brought them back to Kerala to teach them the language and culture of that land. His mother loved all that belonged to Kerala. M.T. Vasudevan Nair has imbibed this trait from her, which is reflected in all his writings. In his school days, he used to learn the poems of great poets and take part in the recitation of Malayalam poems. This was the stepping stone to become a great writer later.

M.T. Vasudevan Nair joined Victoria College, Palghat and became a very popular student. His short story, "Valarthumrigangal" (Trained Animals) won first prize in world story writing competition in 1954. His first collection of Short stories, "Raktham Puranda Mantharikal" (Blood stained sand) was published in 1952. The stories in this collection reveal the artistic skill and personal experience of the writer. After the completion of B.Sc. degree in 1953 M.T. Vasudevan Nair joined as tutor in M.B. Tutorial College. During this period, he published his famous short story, "Pāthiravum Pakal Vehichavum" (Midnight and Daylight). He was a good orator too. Later, he became a village officer in
Block Development Office. He published the novella, "Manika Kallu" (Precious Stone) in Mathrubhumi weekly, which was very much appreciated by children. This was followed by the publication of "Creature of Darkness".

M.T. Vasudevan Nair became the subeditor of Mathrubhumi weekly in 1956. During this period, he published his novel, Arab Gold, which reveals the underworld of Malabar. The novel delves deep into the quest for human values. He resigned from Mathrubhumi in 1981. By this time, he had become a renowned writer and film director. In 1974, his film "Nirmalyam" won President's gold medal and various international recognitions.

M.T. Vasudevan Nair is a voracious reader. He reads books in Malayalam and English and discusses them with his close friends. His novel, Mist has been described as "Magical". Many critics have made studies about Mist. This novel has been accepted as a lyrical song or a narrative poem. He has the capacity to come to the fore front in whatever literary form he touches. Mist has created a new trend in the realm of Malayalam novel. The writer compares the mind to a wild monkey springing from one place to another. The stream of consciousness technique is obvious when Vimala receives the telephone message from her brother, Babu, about her father's demise at dawn. She could not shed even a single tear. Instead of weeping, her mind started
wandering from one event to another: "The warm morning sun... A paradise for the tourists... Yes, at dawn - 5.30 a.m... A thousand strange faces..." (38).

The writer has tried to depict the mind more than life. Psychological insight occupies the most prominent role in the novel. M.T. Vasudevan Nair's creativity has come out in its best form in **Mist**. At the surface level, it is a tale of disappointment in love and of waiting. As the reader goes deep into it, the novel emerges as a saga of dreams, imagination, deep realistic pictures and deep emotions. It will remain as a beautiful creation in the minds of the readers. In this novel, M.T. Vasudevan Nair has transformed the magic of creative writing into lyrical prose with an intensity rarely found in such great measure in any Indian language. A work of art is the product of the union between tradition and individual talent. So is M.T. Vasudevan Nair's **Mist**.

Many of M.T. Vasudevan Nair's stories have been translated into English and Hindi. Thus he has become a popular and familiar writer for all Indians. His short story, "Creature of Darkness" has been translated into Hindi, which is very much appreciated by North Indians.

M.T. Vasudevan Nair is a genius as a writer of the sorrow of the lonely heart. He writes about brooding men and wistful women. Characters, who
feel lonely even in a crowd, appear repeatedly in many of his stories. A sweet sorrow envelopes his stories. Vimala in *Mist*, Sethu in *Kalam* (Time), Appunni in *The Legacy*, Govindan Kutty in *Demonseed* and Janamma in "Valarthur Mrigangal" (Trained Animals) are all living symbols of lonelines. *Mist* and "Creature of Darkness" are suggestive of loneliness of the heroine. M.T. Vasdevam Nair’s heroes are generally young men brought up in the oppressive atmosphere of joint families. These families are crumbling citadels of aristocracy. The youngsters of the families do no work and they live on their pride. M.T. Vasudevan Nair stole the hearts of his readers by narrating stories on decaying joint families and ancestral homes, desires and disappointments of the inmates of these families and internal conflicts between the family members.

M.T. Vasudevan Nair is capable of depicting the loneliness of his characters because he himself is an introvert and a lonely person. Bitter experiences of his childhood have made him lonely, sad and depressed. All these feelings are portrayed convincingly through his characters. His narrative techniques include novelty and mingling of the old and the new. His stories leave everlasting and evergreen impressions on the minds of the readers.

There is no dispute over the fact that M.T. Vasudevan Nair is a story teller par excellence. His stories are heartrending, convincing and unforgettable.
He is also an excellent communicator. These skills are inherent in him. He himself had admitted that he desired to become a writer even from his childhood days. This wish must have blossomed in his heart when he was a ten-year old boy. During his school days, he has written numerous poems, stories and articles. He published his first article, "Diamond business in India": at the age of fourteen. Inborn talent and the urge to communicate made him a renowned writer.

Even if the seed of creativity is good, it requires fertile soil to grow. Though M.T. Vasudevan Nair had an unhappy childhood, he included these bitter experiences in his later writings. Just as Thomas Hardy loved Wessex County, M.T. Vasudevan Nair loved his Kudalur Village. From this source, he weaves characters possessing rustic innocence and simplicity. In an epilogue to his "Selected Stories" (1968), M.T. Vasudevan Nair writes: "In my literary career, I am more indebted to Kudalur Village than to anything else. Velayudhan, Govindan Kutty, Kondunni Uncle, Meenakshi, his parents, brothers, relatives, neighbours-are all my favourite characters." (30).

Literature is not only a mirror of life but also a replica of man's imagination. Reading of M.T. Vasudevan Nair's stories reveal that he is a genius in transforming and designing his lively imagination and personal experiences into fictional literature. Imagination helps the writer to design his plot convincingly. He writes about Appunni's sorrow and misery in his novel, Nālukettu (The Legacy). Appunni's problems are difficult
to be solved; but they are solved in different ways in various stages. The novelist introduces characters like Muthaachi, Sayedalikutty, Nabeesa, Sankaran Nair and Paarukutty. Their duty is to shower sympathy on Appunni, who has no one to depend upon. But still, they cannot console him. This is the nucleus of the story.

Imagination mingles with reality when M.T. Vasudevan Nair narrates the bitter experiences of Appunni's childhood days. Imagination and reality merge into one, which is a mark of great art.

M.T. Vasudevan Nair's heroes desert poverty-stricken village and go to prosperous city to earn material wealth. Appunni, who leaves his village, goes to wynad and comes back later as a rich man. Sethu in Kalam finds refuge in the city. For M.T. Vasudevan Nair, city with its prosperity, cleverness and unfamiliarity, symbolises father. Village, with her poverty, helplessness and close relationship between individuals, symbolises mother.

M.T. Vasudevan Nair established himself as a short story writer and then turned to the writing of novels.

Realistic scenes and clarity of expressions have made M.T. Vasudevan Nair a popular writer. He is capable of seeing more than what
Great art arises out of divine discontentment. Divine discontentment alludes to the inability of the mind to be satisfied with the fulfilment of basic necessities of life. Mind yearns to achieve more. In the case of M.T. Vasudevan Nair this discontentment is the basis of his novels. His stories and novels are a reflection of his unhappy experiences in life. With his gifted pen, he has transformed these sad experiences into great works of art. In his novel, *Kālam*, M.T. Vasudevan Nair writes about the boy, sethu, who suffers from pangs of lack of recognition and love, poverty and seclusion. He wanders in search of love and recognition, failing which he turns over to a life of sin. The novel also has an undercurrent of the causes for destruction of Hindu joint families, weakening family ties and social changes in modern life.

In the first part of the novel, depiction of wet fields, young plants that have sprouted after the rains and green leaves swaying in the cool breeze bring out the youthful life of sethu, when his mind is free from tensions and mental strain. Even when he is lonely and humiliated, he receives consolation from someone.
In the second part of the novel, Sethu's life becomes more complicated. M.T. Vasudevan Nair's lively imagination delves deep into the tortured mind of Sethu. His futile search for a job, disappointments, estrangement and a feeling of vengeance are all revealed in a realistic manner which is a unique feature of his fiction. A boat that lies on the other bank, closed railway gates and a train that waits on the second line are all effective symbols used by him to bring out the miserable plight of Sethu.

In the third part, Sethu becomes an entirely different person, who has lost his inherent humanity. His mechanical and meaningless life in the city is compared with a dry river and its dry banks.

The words used by M.T. Vasudevan Nair in some passages in this novel have a musical quality. For example, the description of moonlight seen by Sethu, who comes back to his village after nine years, resembles a poem:

"Moonlight shines above the front door. Like a wonder, like a dream, moonlight spreads over the visible world. After many years, moonlight is coming near his door to wake him up. Thousands of flowers seem to have blossomed in the sky. Just like a smile in a dream, moonlight is reflected on tree tops..." (413).

Here moonlight symbolises an alienated & estranged mind that has lost its originality and spontaneity. That is why moonlight appears to be like a
wonder and a dream for Sethu. Moonlight is natural reflection of rural beauty. It is also the symbol of joy and consolation. Sethu cannot enjoy this beautiful sight in the city.

Thus M.T. Vasudevan Nair has a distinct style in using apt words according to the story, character and circumstances.

M.T. Vasudevan Nair's novel, *Randamoozham* (The Second Turn), Published in 1984, is very impressive and unique. It depicts the story of Mahabharata as seen from the point of view of Bhimasena. Bhima's reactions to the various situations in the story constitute the central theme of the novel. It is significant that *The Second Turn* also represents a departure from the conventional concept of a novel. The episodic story becomes less important, the real theme being built up at the psychological level through the reflections of one character. This novel is considered as a great work of art in Indian literature.

Bhima is the protagonist of the novel because he holds central position in the war between Pandavas and Kauravas. He wins the war, but achieves nothing. Hence he becomes the victor and the defeated. Bhima is always haunted by the thought that he does not receive love and recognition that he deserves from others, not even from his mother and wife. At the same
time, his unbeatable physical strength rescues Pandavas whenever they are in trouble.

Finally, Pandavas become victorious. Bhima’s elder brother asks him to rule over Hasthinapuram. For a moment, Bhima feels joy and gratitude that his valour has been recognised. But this happiness is erased immediately by his mother and wife, who recommend Yudhishtira to rule over the country. Thus Bhima wins the war, but acquires nothing. In this aspect, Bhima is comparable with the other heroes of M.T. Vasudevan Nair’s novels - Appunni of The Legacy, Govindan Kutty of The Demonseed and Sethu of Kālam. Bhima is as lonely as these isolated men. All these novels deal with the destruction of Hindu joint family system. Similarly, Mahabharata is also the story of clashes between members of a family.

M.T. Vasudevan Nair has always been honest with himself in his writings. He is not prepared to change with times. In Randāmoozham, he has tried to remake Mahabharata. Two things make this novel memorable: Firstly, M.T. Vasudevan Nair has tried to recreate historical atmosphere in the novel. Secondly, he does not strive to deceive himself. He has tried to mingle his heart and soul with that of the epic and that has resulted in this unforgettable novel. Only a genius can accomplish this.
Glimpses of M.T. Vasudevan Nair's genius can be seen in the plot and characterisation of his novel, *The Demonseed*. Govindan Kutty, a helpless victim of circumstances, is the central character of this novel. His mother gave birth to him at the age of fifty one. In order to conceal her shame, she rubukes her own son. For no fault of his, he is considered as a curse on the family and is nicknamed as "Demonseed" by his own mother. His own relatives turn out to be his enemies and he becomes a stranger in his own home and in his own village. Finally he leaves his birth place with the vow : " I'll return" (448).

M.T. Vasudevan Nair has succeeded in creating a tragic hero. Govindan Kutty is starved for affection and food right from his childhood. He receives love and affection from the Muslim family of Kumharakkar. He is condemned by all because he converts himself into a Muslim in the course of the story. He is forced to do this for self-defence. Without committing any mistake, he leads a miserable life.

There is novelty in imagination as well as narrative techniques used by M.T. Vasudevan Nair. The writer remains in the background and presents the characters realistically. M.T. Vasudevan Nair is at his best as a short story writer. He himself claims that this is the best media he likes. The masterpieces are available in
his "Selected Stories". Some of them are comparable with the famous short stories in world literature. There is perfection, beauty of expression and poetry in his short stories.

Like his novels, M.T. Vasudevan Nair's short stories also revolve around lonely individuals.

Sekaran in the story, "Nurungunna Bandhangal" (Broken Relationship) is also lonely even in the noisy crowd of his lodge. Nobody seems to understand him, except his mother. For the sake of her son, she has fought and won against poverty. The root cause of the loneliness of most of the characters is intense poverty. This creates self contempt and vengeance in them. Thus they become isolated from the main stream of society. The hero in the story, "Andhivelicham" (Twilight) says: "I have not spoken about my childhood to anyone. I feel ashamed even to think of it. Good food was a wonder. A word of love was a rare thing. A beautiful house was a dream. I have waited in front of my friend's house for hours to borrow a dress" (158).

Kuttiadthi, in M.T. Vasudevan Nair's story with that name, is different from the other lonely heroes and heroines. Efforts to overcome humiliations and inferiority complex makes her a lonely rebel. Loneliness of the heroes in "Bandhanam" (Bondage) and in "The Day after the Downpour" is due to more complicated reasons. Both these characters had experienced poverty and
isolation during their childhood. In "Bandhanam," after marriage, the hero feels sympathy for his wife Bharathi, but not love. He has an illegal affair with the unmarried woman, Margaret. Guilty conscience haunts him. He can neither break Margaret's dream to get married to him nor desert his wife who loves him sincerely. Thus he becomes isolated within his own mental framework.

The young artist in "The Day after the Downpour" does not attain a bright future due to his inferiority complex and carelessness in using opportunities. When he lives with another woman, he feels isolated from his wife and son. The love showered on him by his second wife and children make him feel more inferior and lonely.

To sum up, it can be estimated that M.T. Vasudevan Nair is successful as a writer, teacher, editor, script writer and film director. He has not left even the film world untouched. He directed the film "Nirmalyam", which received the best film award in 1974. He has written the script for the films "Creature of Darkness", "Õppol" (elder sister), Õruttam (Roots) and "Sukritham", which have won national awards. "Oru Vadakan Vēragātha", "Sadhayam" and "Kadavu" have won national recognition. "Bandhanam", Vērikuzhi" and Mist have secured state awards. Vaanaprastham won an award in 1993. The Second Turn won Vayalar award. The Legacy won Kerala sahitya Academy award and Kālam secured central Sahitya Academy award.