CHAPTER - VI
THEMATIC SIMILARITY BETWEEN SOME OF
TAGORE'S SHORT STORIES AND POEMS

Rabindranath Tagore was a bonafide resident of Calcutta in the truest sense of the term. But the family had a large estate in East Bengal. Jyotirindranath Tagore, Rabindranath's fifth eldest brother, had been in charge of the estates. But in November 1889 the management of the estates had been transferred from Jyotirindranath to Rabindranath. The decision had been taken by his father Maharshi Debendranath Tagore with the thinking that he would be an active resident of the estates. Accordingly, Tagore took charge of the estates and settled there in the year 1891. There he lived in the house-boat named 'Padma' on the river Padma. From the house-boat he observed how their ryots lived there with their families. His observation of the lifestyle of the people enabled him to start writing short stories. In this context we may quote Krishna Kripalani's observation:

All this time while the benevolent land-owner was concerned with the welfare of his tenants, the artist in him was watching the life of the common people, their joys and sorrows, loves and enmities, their little deeds of patience and heroism, their capacity for sacrifice in the cause of family or religion and their cowardly acquiescence in injustice and oppression. Always seeking the great in the small, he found ample material in the lives of the common folk for his short stories....

Some of Rabindranath Tagore's short stories had been written against the background of rural Bengal. Some of Tagore's best poems and short stories were written in the same year. Sometimes Tagore has directly reshaped some
of his poems into short stories and short stories into poems. His attention was focussed on the same subject matter. It is as if Tagore had tried to strike a balance between the real world and the poetic world. The stories apparently belong to the real world and the poems reveal the innermost feelings of the poet. It would, however, be more appropriate to observe that together they unfold a history of solidarity and interdependence.

Many more stories and poems are similar in nature. Tagore's *Ek Ratri* (*A Single Night*) is a remarkable story. This story was written in 1892. (B.S. 1299, Jaistha) There are two poems written in the same year. The poems are *Paraspathar* (*The Touchstone*) and *Akasher Chand* (*The Moon in the Sky*). These two poems belong to *Sonar Tori* (*The Golden Boat*). The link between the story and these two poems is too obvious to be ignored.

The story *Ek Ratri* (*A Single Night*) centres around a late nineteenth century youth's mission to find an opportunity to unite with Surabala, his boyhood dream. Earlier he surrendered his boyhood dream for becoming Mazzini or Garibaldi. Surabala is married to a lawyer and the youth becomes a school teacher. This is the irony of his fate that his schoolhouse is quite near the house of the couple. He is acquainted with her husband. During a school holiday, he visits their house one day. He passes hour-and-a-half talking and smoking with Surabala's husband without her presence. But, suddenly, he feels her presence:

> এমন সময় পাশের স্বরে অত্যন্ত মুদু একটু চুড়ির টুকটু, কাপড়ের একটুখানি বসন্তের এবং পায়েরও একটুখানি শব্দ শুনিতে পাইতাম, রেশ রূখিতে পারিলাম, জানালার ফাঁক নিয়া কোনো কোনো কোনো হলপূর্ণ নেত্র আমাকে নিরীক্ষণ করিয়েছে।

> তৎক্ষণাৎ দুখানি চোখ আমার মনে পড়িয়া পড়ে—বিশাল সরলতা এবং শৈলপ্রতিষ্ঠিতে চলাচল দুখানি বড়ো বড়ো চোখ, কালো কালো তারা, ফনকৃষ্ণ পল্লব,
(...) As we talked I heard in the next room the soft tinkling of bangles, the rustle of garments, the sound of footsteps; it wasn't hard to deduce that inquisitive eyes were observing me through the half-open window. Suddenly I remembered those eyes — large eyes full of trust, simplicity and childish devotion: black pupils, dark eyelashes, an ever-calm gaze. Something seemed to clench my heart, and an anguish throbbed within me.

The image of sound and the image of sight have been mingled here with one another like 'the soft tinkling of bangles', 'the rustle of garments', 'the sound of footsteps', 'eyes — large eyes full of trust, simplicity and childish devotion', 'black pupils', 'dark eyelashes' and 'an ever-calm gaze' to create organic images. The organic images work through the sensations of 'clench [his] heart' and 'an anguish throbbed within [him]'.

He returns home with the aching feeling. He has lost his Surabala. Even he has no right to see her. She is far away from his life. He regrets for not doing the right thing at the right time. Wrong and impossible desires come to him at the wrong time. He wants to meet Surabala once again to fulfil his impossible dream.

The names of both the poems *Paraspathar (The Touchstone)* and *Akasher Chand (The Moon in the Sky)* suggest impossibility. In *Paraspathar (The Touchstone)*, the hero becomes crazy to find out the touchstone. He does not want any royal treasure but the touchstone:

সমুখে গর্জনে সিঁড়ি অপার অপার।

তরসে তরস উঠি হেসে হল কুটিলকুটি।
Before him the endless ocean roared.

The garrulous waves ceaselessly talked
of hidden treasures, mocking the
ignorance that knew not their meaning.

Maybe he now had no hope remaining,
yet he would not rest, for the search had
become his life,—

Just as the ocean for ever lifts its arms
to the sky for the unattainable—

Just as the stars go in circles, yet
seeking a goal that can never be reached—
Even so on the lonely shore the madman with dusty tawny locks still roamed in search of the touchstone.)

In *Akasher Chand* (*The Moon in the sky*), too, the mental agony of the hero can be felt. The hero of the story, *Ek Ratri* (*A Single Night*), wants to become Mazzini or Garibaldi surrendering his boyhood dream to marry Surabala. In the same way the hero of the poem wants nothing but the moon (*shasi*) at his palm. As the hero of the story regrets for his past mistakes for not marrying Surabala, so the hero of the poem, too, realizes his mistakes for not looking at the others in the world and wants to return to his past life but it is too late. It becomes impossible now:

দেখে একদিনে কালোপুরীয়
অশীতিজীবন-সেখা,
অত্রবির সনার কিরেন
নুতন করণে লেখা।
বাহ্যের পাতে নয়ন তুলিয়া
চাহে নি কথনো ফিরে,
নবীন আভায় দখা দেয় তারা
মূর্তি-স্বরে তীরে।
হতাশ-ক্ষয়ে কানিয়া কানিয়া
পুরী রাগিণী বাচ্ছে,
দু বাং বাং ছুরে ফিরে যেতে চায়
ওই জীবনের মাঝে।
নতুনের আলোক ফিলায়ে আসিল
তবুও পিছে চেয়ে রহে
বাং পেয়েছিল তাই পেতে চায়,
তার বেশি কিছু নহে।
Like house of shadows far away
He looks at the rays of past life,
With the golden light of the setting sun
It has been written in a new way.
Whom he never looked back,
They arrive with a new look down the memory lane.
Weeping continuously in the tune of Purabi Ragini
With a dejected heart,
He wants to return to that life
Welcoming the past with extended hands.
The daylight dies down
But he looks back at his past
Whatever he got then
He wants nothing more than that now.
The valuable life remains here
But he has been floating aimlessly
Has he been crying for the moon
In a land where there is no sun and no moon?)

In this context, Promathanath Bisi observes that like the sannyasi (the sage) of the poem the hero of the story Ek Ratri (A Single Night) also considers Surabala his touchstone.
Again, the poem *Manas-sundari (The Beautiful Lady of Life)* from *Sonar Tori (The Golden Boat)*, written in 1892, is very much similar to the story named *Jay-Parajay (The Victory)* written two months before the poem, written in 1892 (B.S.1299, *Poush*). According to Promathanath Bisi, the similarity lies in the underlying ideas of both the compositions. The lady in the poem is the sweet heart of the poet's imagination. In the same way the court poet, Shekhar, the hero of the story *Jay-Parajay (The Victory)*, has a lady love whom he cannot see and touch:

*She was the Princess Ajita.* And the court poet of king Narayan had never seen her. On the day he recited a new poem to the king he would raise his voice just to that pitch which could be heard by unseen hearers in the screened balcony high above the hall. He
sent up his song towards the star-land out of his reach, where, circled with light, the planet who ruled his destiny shone unknown and out of ken.

He would espy some shadow moving behind the veil. A tinkling sound would come to his ear from afar, and would set him dreaming of the ankles whose tiny golden bells sang at each step. Ah, the rosy red tender feet that walked the dust of the earth like god's mercy on the fallen! The poet had placed them on the altar of his heart, where he wove his songs to the tune of those golden bells. Doubt never arose in his mind as to whose shadow it was that moved behind the screen, and whose anklets they were that sang to the time of his beating heart.)

The poet is eagerly waiting for his lady love. He composes and recites his poems in order to please her. He has surrendered his life to her 'rosy red tender feet'. The actual realization of her feet 'that walked the dust of the earth like God's mercy on the fallen!' in the story-teller's description is achieved by a concentration of what T.S. Eliot called the auditory imagination like 'a tinkling sound' and 'the anklets whose tiny golden bells sung at each step'.

In the poem, *Manas-sundari (The Beautiful Lady of Life)*, Tagore himself invites the lady of his life, the guiding force of his poetic genius, whom he cannot see but feel:

বীণা ফেলে নিয়ে এলো, মানসসুন্দরী—
দুটি রিন্থ হুজু শুধু আলিঙ্গনে ভরি
কঠে জড়িয়া দাও — মূগাল-পরশে
রোমাঞ্চ অন্ধিরি উঠে মর্মান্ত হয়ে,

..................................................
Lay Down your lute, my love, leave your arms free to embrace me.

Let your touch bring my overflowing heart to my body's utmost brink.

Do not bend your neck and turn away your face, but offer up a kiss to me, which has been like some perfume long closed in a bud....

The images have been presented here in a beautiful fashion. The images involved here are visual and tactile as well.

At the end of the story, *Jay-Parajay (The Victory)*, Shekhar, the court poet, meets his beloved. He has been defeated by another poet who came there on his way from south to prove his superiority. After his defeat, he feels insulted and decides to bring to an end of his life:

রাজি অনেক হইল। শেখর তাহার ঘরের সম্ভ বাতায়ন খুলিয়া দিলেন। তিনি যে যে ফুল তালোবাসিতেন সক্কাবেলা বাগান হইতে সংগ্রহ করিয়া আনিয়াছিলেন।

সবগুলি সাদা ফুল—তাই কেলা এবং পানা। তাহারই মুঠা মুঠা লইয়া নির্মল বিষ্ণুর উপর ছড়াইয়া দিলেন। ঘরের চারি দিকে প্রদীপ জ্বালাইলেন।

তাহার পর মুখুর সঙ্গে একটা উড়িষ্যের বিষ্ণু মিশাইয়া নিষিদ্ধমুখে পান
(The night wore on. Shekhar opened wide his windows. He spread upon his bed the white flowers that he loved, the jasmines, tuber roses and chrysanthemums, and brought into his bedroom all the lamps he had in his house and lighted them. Then mixing with honey the juice of some poisonous root, he drank it and lay down on his bed. Golden anklets tinkled in the passage outside the door, and a subtle perfume came into the room with the breeze).

The images have been presented here in a superb fashion. The images involved here are visual, auditory and olfactory as well. T.S. Eliot’s auditory imagination has been presented here superbly with the tinkling sound of the ‘Golden anklets’.

The presence of the lady love has prominently been felt by the tinkling sound of are ‘Golden anklets’. She has been asked by the court poet about her presence. At the end the identity of the lady love has been disclosed:

The woman said: "I am the Princess Ajita."
The poet with a great effort sat up on his bed.

The Princess whispered into his ear: "The King has not done you justice. It was you who won at the combat, my poet, and I have come to crown you with the crown of victory."

She took the garland of flowers from her own neck, and put it on his hair, and the poet fell down upon his bed stricken by death.)

But in the poem the lady love of the poet has been remained elusive till the end and the poet solicits her importunately and repeatedly:

(Come sleep, come peace,
Come my beloved, enchanted reticence kind beauty,
Take me in your breast; keep me carefully on
The bed of unblemished, oblivion, charming death.)

Another story Kabuliwala, written in 1892, is thematically similar to a poem named Yete Nahi Dibo (I Won't Let You Go) written in the same year. This poem also belongs to Sonar Tori (The Golden Boat).

Both this story and the poem project a universal theme — a father's love for his daughter. The recurrent use of autumn season can be noticed
in both the compositions. The season symbolizes the union between the father and the daughter in Bengal.

In *Kabuliwala*, Rahamat, a peddler of clothes and dried fruits from Kabul, establishes a relationship with Mini because in her he finds out his own daughter whom he has left out in Kabul. He first meets Mini during autumn. The relationship continues for several days before Rahamat's arrest for killing somebody. By this time Mini is grown up and reaches her marriageable age. Her marriage has been fixed during autumn. And ironically the day before Mini's marriage Rahamat is released from the jail. On that day, he reaches the house of Mini and with great effort gets the permission to meet Mini once again. Looking Mini in bridal-attire, he realizes that his daughter has reached her marriageable age too. The time has come to depart. The parting between the father and the daughter in this world is a painful event. Every father feels in the same way as the four year daughter in the poem says to her father—'মেয়েতে আমি দিব না তোমার' ('I won't let you go').

The *puja*-holiday is over and the father of the little girl has to return to his working place:

*দুয়ারে পশ্চিম গাড়ি; বেলা বিশ্বাস;*  
*হোমেতে শাহ কমে হাতেছে পথের;*  
*অনন্যা পটলপথে খুলি উঠে যায়;*  
*মধ্যাহ্ন-বাতাসে; বিশ্ব অপরের ছায়;*  
*ক্লান্ত বৃষ্টি ভিক্ষীর জীর্ণ বন্ধ পায়;*  
*ঘুমায়ে পড়েছে নেন কৌতুম্বী রাতি;*  
*কী কী করে চারি দিকে নিঃস্ব নিঃশান—*  
*শুধু সোর ঘরে নাহি বিশালের ঘুম—*  
*গিয়েছে আত্মিন — পুজার ছাঁটির শেষে*
(Twelve o'clock: the carriage is at the door.
The autumn sun is steadily growing hotter.
In the empty village streets, the noonday breeze
Scatters the dust. In the peepal's soothing shade
The weary beggar-crone has spread her rags
And gone to sleep. As in a sun-filled night,
Everything silent, lifeless: only no sleep
Or rest within my house. Ashwin is over:
The puja break has ended, I must go back
To where I work, far off. And so the servants
Are busy with the baggage, tying loads
With great commotion, in this room and that.
My lady of the house, with swimming eyes
And stony weight upon her heart, yet has
No time to weep. ...)

So everyone in the house is busy. The head of the family has to leave
the house and to return to his working place far away from his native village.
The man has a four-year-old daughter. He has been united with her during
_Durga-puja._ Now the time has come to leave his daughter. No father in this
world wants to leave his daughter but when time comes he has to accept the harsh truth of life. The same feelings has been expressed in the poem 'I Won't Let You Go' in a beautiful fashion:

(Beside the door, wrapped in her thoughts, there sat
My daughter, four years old. On other days
She'd have had her bath before this, and her eyes,
Before she'd swallowed scarce two mouthfuls of
Her mid-day rice, been shut in sleep. Today
Her mother had not seen to her: even now
She had not bathed or eaten, but like a shadow
Hugged my steps all this time, watching each move
With mute unblinking eyes. Worn out at last,
She now sat silently beside the door
With who knows what intent: and when I said
'I'm leaving, little mother,' with sad eyes
And pale look answered, 'I won't let you go.'
She sat where she was, neither clutched my hand
Nor shut the door; only declared the right
Born of her heart's love: 'I won't let you go.'
Yet the time came to an end, and she, alas,
Could not but let me.) 31

Again, there is a similarity between Basundhara (The Earth) from Sonar Tori (Golden Boat) that was written in November 1893 and the story named Samapti (The Completion) written in the same year. The theme of both the poem and the story centres round the poet's attraction for countryside Nature. 32 The poet is closely associated with Nature. He considers himself as the child of Nature and asks her to take him back again in her lap as her own child:

আমারে ফিরিয়ে লান্ধে, অর্থ বস্তুতাপে,
কোলের সংলানে তব কোলের ভিতরে
বিপুল অঞ্চল-তলে। ওগো মা মৃত্যুশী
তোমার মৃত্তিকা-মাঝে ব্যাপ্ত হয়ে রইলো।
(Take me back, mother earth,
Take your infant in your lap
Under the vastness of this ground, mother, earth
Stretching beyond the usual limit
Like the delight of the spring ;
I want to be diffused in the earth.)

Again, he says:

আমার পৃথিবী তুমি
বন বরষা, তোমার মূর্তির সনে
আমারে মিশারে লোরে অনন্ত গগনে
অনাদি চরণে করিয়াছ প্রদক্ষিণ
সর্বভূমি, অনন্ত রজনীদিন
যুগযুগান্ত্র ধরি আমার মায়ারে
উঠিয়াছে তৃণ তব, পুষ্প তারে ভারে
রুটিয়াছে, বর্ষণ করেছে তরবাজি
পঞ্চমুখে গমনে। তাই আজি
কোনদিন আনমনে বসিয়া একাকী
পদাতিতে, সমুদ্রে মেলিয়া মূল্য আর্থি
সর্ব অজ্ঞে সর্ব মনে অনুভব করি—

........................................

tাই আজি কোনদিন — শরৎ-কিরণ
pতে যে পরশুর অর্ধেকে পরে,
nারিকেলগুলি কীপে বায়ুতের
(How often, great Earth, have I felt my being yearn to flow over you, sharing in the happiness of each green blade that raises its signal banner in answer to the beckoning blue of the sky!

I feel as if I had belonged to you ages before I was born. That is why, in the days when the autumn light shimmers on the mellowing ears of rice,

I seem to remember a past when my mind was everywhere, and even to hear voices as of playfellows echoing from the remote and deeply veiled past.)

Like Mrinmayi, the heroine of the story Samapti (The Completion), the poet has also been inseparably united with the surface of the earth and the Nature. In the story, the name of the heroine has been used symbolically.
Mrunmayi actually means a thing which is made of earth. Mrunmayi is so united with the earth that she has not realized the love of his husband at first. But, later on when she has realized the meaning of love, she separated herself from the earth and united with her husband.

*Megh O Roudra* (Cloud and Sun) was written in the year 1894. The poet lived at the mofussil then. And it was the time when India was under the British rule. Living at Mofussil, Tagore also observed the torture of the Indians by the English people. The story *Megh O Roudra* (Cloud and Sun) is the outcome of such observation. The poem *Ebar Phirao More* (Now Turn Me Back) from *Chitra* that was written in 1893 also has the same effect.37

Sashibhushan, the protagonist of the story *Megh O Roudra* (Cloud and Sun) is an M.A,B.L. but does not have taken up any work to earn his livlihood. He is of different nature. He does not have the ability to mix with people or speak even a few words at a meeting. So when after many efforts he cannot find a job, his father sends him to the village to look after their small village-estate. As he cannot mix up with people, so he has to bear a lot of ill-treatment from the villagers. Again, as he is not willing to marry, the parents of marriageable daughters consider him as a proudy fellow. But there is an only human being with whom he has a contact. The human being is a little girl named Giribala. When Sashibhushan first met her, she was eight years old. Now, she is ten. In these two years, Sashibhushan taught her English and Bengali alphabets. As a result she has finished reading three or four easy books. So in Giribala, Sashibhushan has got a very nice companion.

But the relationship between him and Giribala's father, Harakumar, is not good. Harakumar was the sub-landlord of the village in the past. Falling into a miserable condition, he had sold out everything. After that he has become the manager of their landlord who has been living far away. Knowing
Sashibhushan has passed his law examination, Harakumar sometime asks his advice about his lawsuits. But he does not show much interest and even expresses his ignorance of law to Harakumar. Harakumar considers this as a deceptive trick. In this way two years have passed and their relationship has been worsened day by day for various reasons and Sashibhushan decides to leave the village. While he is making his preparation to leave the village, the Joint Magistrate comes to the village:

(Whilst he was making his preparations, the Joint Magistrate Sahib's tents were pitched in the village, which thereupon became astir with constables, khansamas, dogs, horses, syces and sweepers. Batches of small boys began to wander about the outskirts of the Sahib's camp with fearful curiosity, like packs of jackals on a tiger's trail.)
The Manager Babu proceeded to supply fowls, eggs, *ghee* and milk to the Sahib under the heading of hospitality, according to custom. He freely and unquestioningly supplied a much larger quantity of food than was actually required by the Joint Sahib; but when the Sahib's sweeper came one morning and demanded four seers of *ghee* at once for the Sahib's dog, then, as ill-luck would have it, Harakumar felt this was the limit and explained to the sweeper that though the Sahib's dog could doubtlessly digest much more *ghee* than a country dog without fear of consequences, still such a large quantity of fat was not good for its health; and he refused to supply the *ghee*.

Harakumar's refusal to supply the *ghee* makes the Sahib angry and he at once summons the Manager Babu. When the Manager has come and stood before the Sahib, the Sahib asks him angrily why he has driven away his sweeper. Harakumar hurriedly replies with folded hand that he does not have the courage to drive away the Sahib's sweeper but, as the sweeper has asked for four seers of *ghee* for the dog, so he has made a mild protest in the interest of the dog. He also tells the Sahib that he has already sent out his men to various places for the collection of *ghee*.

When the Sahib asks him who has been sent out and where, Harakumar at once tells him some names. The Sahib starts enquiry what the Manager has said is false or true:

... সেই সেই-সামাজীয় লোকগণ সেই সেই প্রায়মে যুত আনিবার জন্য গিয়াছে কি না সন্দান করিতে অতি সন্দ লোক পাঠিয়া দিয়া সাহেব নায়েবকে তাহুদেত বসাইয়া রাখিলেন।
The Sahib despatched messenger at once to enquire whether the aforesaid persons had been sent to the aforesaid villages to procure ghee and meanwhile kept the Manager Babu waiting in his tent.

The messengers came back in the afternoon and informed the Sahib that nobody had been sent anywhere for the ghee. This left no doubt in his mind that everything the Manager had said was false and his sweeper had spoken the truth. Whereupon, roaring with rage, the Joint Sahib called the sweeper and said, "Catch hold of this swine by the ear and race him round the tent", which command the sweeper executed in front of the crowd of spectators, without waste of time.

The report of this event spread like wild fire through the village and Harakumar came home and lay down like one half dead, without touching a morsel of food.

Sashibhushan when gets the news, his blood starts boiling within him out of anger and he spends a sleepless night. Next morning he goes to
Harakumar's house. He assures weeping Harakumar saying that a case for defamation must be brought against the Sahib and he will fight the case as his legal representative. The event has inspired dispirited Sashibhushan to make a revolt against the Englishman. Sashibhushan's revolt reminds us of the poem *Ebar Phirao More (Now Turn Me Back)* where the poet has expressed his strong emotion observing the disrespected life led by the Indian people under the British regime:

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সঃসারে সবাই যেরে সারাখন শত কর্মে রত,
তুই শুধু ফরাষ্টা পলাতক বালকের মতো
মধ্যায় মাঠের মায়ে একাকী বিষণ্ণ তরুণ্যায়ে
দুর্বলতার মনগতি ক্রান্ত তত্ত্বায়ে
সারাদিন বাজা নি বুঝি। ওরে তুই ওঠু আজি;
আমি দেখেছ কোথা? কার শরু উঠিয়াছে বাজি
জাগতে জগৎ-জনে? কেখা হতে ধরিয়েছ কঠনে
শুন্ততল? কোনো অষ্টকাঁক্ষে জরর বন্ধনে
অনাবিনী মাঝিছে সহায়? স্বন্তকায় অপমান
অষ্টকর বণ্ড হতে রতে ভাষি করিতেছে পান
লক্ষ মুখ দিয়া; বেদানার করিতেছে পরিত্যাস
আর্চেন্ত অবিচ্ছ; সংকুচিত ভীত ক্রীতদাস
ফুলাইছে ছয়বেশে। ওই যে সারাদিন নতুনির
মুক সবে — সম মুখে লেখা শুধু শত শতাব্দীর
বেদানার করণ কাহিনী; স্থেশ যত চাপে তার
বাহি চলে মম গতি, যত্তমশ থাকে প্রাণ তার—
তার পরে সতনের দিয়ে যায় বংশ বংশ ধরি,
নাহি তর্কে অদুষ্টের, নাহি নিশ্চে দেবতারে অহি,
মানবের নাহি দেয় দোষ, নাহি জানে অভিমান,
শুধু দুইটি অম সূটি কোনোমতে কষ্টক্রিয় প্রাণ
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The world's busy all day with a hundred tasks:
Only you, like a tetherless truant boy,
Alone in the noontide field, in a tree's sad shade
To the warm sluggish weary woodland breeze
Played all day on your flute. Rouse yourself now!
Somewhere a fire has started: someone blows
A conch to wake the world, while through the skies
A weeping sounds — a shackled orphan-girl
Begs help in some dark prison; from feeble mouths, sucks out blood. Self-weening unrighteousness Mocks at pain; the fearful cringing slaves Hides in disguise. See, standing with bowed heads A silent crowd, long centuries' tales of pain
Writ on their faded faces; weighed down more
And ever more, they trudge on while life lasts,
Then pass their burden down the generations.
They neither carp at fate, nor chide the gods
Nor men, bear no resentment, only draw
Their lives out in affliction, picking at
A few poor grains of rice: when robbed of that,
Or struck at heart by blind pride's tyranny,
They do not know the door to seek redress —
So, calling once upon the poor man's God,
They heave a sigh and wordlessly expire.
To each one of those pale dumb ignorant faces
Speech must be given, those tired withered
shattered breasts Made no resound with hope.
They must be told,
'Stand together a moment, heads held high.
The evil you fear is more afraid than you:
When you wake and rise, he will run away;
When you confront his path, he'll cringe aside
Like a street cur, stricken with shame and terror.
The gods desert him, no man is his aid:
He rants, but in his heart knows all too well
His own abjection.')

The poet feels an unbearable pain in his heart for his helpless, poor
countrymen. His sorrow has been transformed into anger and therefore, he
has used such harsh words here against the extortioners. He revolts against
them. He thinks that it is his duty to make people aware of such torture.
He finds duty in his real life. He first calls himself to rise against the British extortioners and to sacrifice his life. The protagonist of the story *Megh O Roudra (Cloud and Sun)*, Sashibhushan, has done the same thing in reality what the poet wanted to do. He is the representative of the poet. The story has been written seven to eight months after the poem has been written. So, in Sashibhushan we can see the poet's sense of responsibility, sense of pride and above all the urge to sacrifice life for the sake of absorbed countrymen. He has made a protest in such a fashion as if the voice of the poet has been ringing in his ears:

(That Sashibhushan who had hitherto always tried to lead a guarded and secluded life screened from the public eye, it was that same Sashibhushan who now presented himself in court. On hearing his case, the Magistrate took him into his private chamber, and treated him with the utmost courtesy, saying, "Sashi Babu, wouldn't it be better to compromise this case privately?")

Keeping his short-sighted frowning gaze fixed very steadily upon the cover of a law-book lying on the table Sashi Babu replied, "I cannot advise my client to do so. How can he make a compromise privately when he has been insulted publicly?")
The reply of Sashibhushan reminds us of the poet's voice, 'Stand together a moment, heads held high. ...' But Sashibhushan's effort has been proved fruitless. The case against the Joint Magistrate Sahib has been withdrawn and Harakumar has been appointed as an Honorary Magistrate. The enmity between Harakumar and Sashibhushan continues. Harakumar restricts Giribala to go to Sahibhushan's house. He even vows to himself that he will drive Sashibhushan out of the village.

Giribala's wedding has been fixed. On the day of the wedding, Sashibhushan starts for Calcutta by boat. During his journey, an incident has occurred for which Sashibhushan has to return to his village. At that time a new steamer line has been opened up. A steamer carrying the young Manager Sahib of the new line and a few passengers comes noisily puffing along against the current. Amongst the passengers some people are there of Sashibhushan's village. At that moment a money-lender's country-boat tries to race the steamer from a little distance. The race has been watched by the Manager Sahib. The Sahib gets angry and raising a revolver fires a shot at the swollen sail of the boat. Consequently, the sail bursts and the boat sinks. After that Sashibhushan rescues the boatman. After that he returns to his village with the boatman whom he has rescued. Next, he tries to persuade the boatman to bring a police-case against the Manager Sahib. He agrees at his proposal but the other villagers who were present in the steamer on that day refuse to be the witness. So Sashibhushan alone conducts the case before the Magistrate. But he becomes unsuccessful in his attempt for the second time too.

Again, when Sashibhushan starts his journey for the second time, another event occurs for which he has been sent to the jail. His father appoints pleaders and barristers but everything has gone against him and he has to remain in the jail.
Man-bhanjan (Fury Appeased) and Pratihingsa (The Revenge) had been written in the year 1895. Both these stories centre round Tagore's new approach to the freedom of women and the freedom of love. Tagore had a great respect for women. In one of his essays Women and Home, he wrote:

Creative expressions attain their perfect form through emotions modulated. Woman has that expression natural to her — a cadence of restraint in her behaviour, producing poetry of life. She has been an inspiration to man, guiding, most often unconsciously, his restless energy into an immense variety of creations in literature, art, music and religion. This is why, in India, woman has been described as the symbol of Shakti, the creative power.

So woman had always been a great source of inspiration for Tagore. Under the influence of Renaissance, Tagore thought that woman should take her place in the outside world on her own. In one of his celebrated poems Sabala (Woman Empowered), the poet writes:

নারীকে আপন ভাষা জয় করিবার
কেন নাহি দিবে অধিকার
হে বিধাতা?
নত করি মাখা
পথগাতে কেন রব জাগি
ক্লাস্টের্য প্রতাশার পুরনের লাগি
দৈবগত দিনে।
গুহু শুনে চেয়ে রব? কেন নিজে নাহি লব চিনে
সাধ্যের পথ।
কেন না ফূঁটাই তেজো সন্তানের রথ
দুর্লভ অথেরে বাধি দৃঢ় বল্গাপাশে।
Why should you not let woman empowered be
With right to conquer her own destiny,
O lord?

Why must I sit and watch beside the road
With lowered head, in tired patient wait
For the day ordained by fate
To grant my hopes? Why should I gaze in space?
Why should I not by my own powers trace
Fulfilment's path?

My questing chariot why should I not drive forth,
Checking the turbulent horses with firm rein?
Why should I not win
With faith invincible
From the fortress of the inaccessible
The prize of my endeavour, with my life
Staked in the strife?)

The theme of some of his writings therefore is to project the values of women in the society. In *Man-bhanjan (Fury Appeased)* and *Pratihingsa (The Revenge)*, one can notice this approach of Tagore. *Urvasi* from *Chitra* that was written in 1895 also has the same effect.

In *Man-bhanjan (Fury Appeased)*, Giribala is devoid of her husband's love and attraction. Her husband does not have the time to look at her beauty. His attraction for the outer world makes Giribala unhappy. But what hurts
her most is that her husband feels attraction for actress Labanga. Heart-broken Giribala takes a vow that if she gets an opportunity to perform on the stage, she will prove her value. She gets an opportunity in a different circumstances and her wish has been fulfilled. Giribala wanted to be the dearest wife of Gopinath. But, in reality, it does not happen. To prove herself, she breaks the image of housewife and takes her place in the outer world and starts working for herself.

In the story *Pratihingsa (The Revenge)*, the protagonist Indrani takes a sweet revenge on her husband's employer's wife. Indrani's grandfather, Gaurikanta, had been the dewan of Zaminder Mukunda Babu. They had a very close relationship. Mukunda Babu admired Gaurikanta for his honesty and sincerity. In fact, for Gaurikanta's effort he could establish himself as a dignified Zaminder. When Gaurikanta took retirement, he appointed his grandson-in-law Ambikacharan as the Manager of the estate.

After Mukunda Babu's death, his adopted son Binod Behari becomes the Zaminder. The relationship between the two families is not so close as it was in the past. One day in the afternoon Indrani goes to their house to attend the marriage ceremony of their grandson. She has been insulted by Nayantara, Binod Behari's wife.

The high pride of pedigree has run in the blood of Indrani's family for so many generations. So, when she is asked to take some food, she refuses considering the low pedigree of the Zaminders. Nayantara does not like her audacity because she is her employee's wife. She seeks an opportunity to insult her. She finds out so many faults in her manners:
First, she came to their house well-dressed wearing out so many ornaments. It was not necessary to maintain the equal status with the employers showing off wealth.

Second, Indrani's pride of physical beauty. Indrani had the physical beauty no doubt about that, and a person working in a lower post should not have such beauty which may be unnecessary and uncalled for, but her sense of pride was the imagination of Nayantara. Nobody can blame one for one's physical beauty, therefore, if someone is to be blamed, a question must be raised about one's pride.

Third, the arrogance of Indrani — what is known as vanity in colloquial language. Indrani had a natural gravity in her character. She could not form an intimacy with people except a most beloved person. Moreover, she did not have the habit of making a meaningless noise, or to go forward to interfere into every affairs, it was not natural for her.

So, she becomes angry with her and starts introducing Indrani with other invitees unnecessarily saying every time, 'Our Manager's wife' and 'Our former Dewan's grand-daughter'. She has even instigated one of her maid-servants
to disturb Indrani asking amazing questions about her ornaments. She also asks Indrani to keep food on the board of the *palki* of Haatkhola. She feels insulted but does not react. Few days after she gets an opportunity to take the revenge on Nayantara. Binod Behari has been over head and ears in debt. He begs to his wife for her ornaments but to no avail. Ambikacharan thinks to take out money keeping his property mortgage to repay his employer's loan. But Indrani prevents him from doing that. Ambikacharan sitting there starts thinking what to do. He tries to make Indrani understand the situation but Indrani does not allow him to talk anything more. Ultimately, in a helpless condition he sits there silently. Then Indrani takes out all her ornaments from the iron chest and keeps these in a big plate. Bringing the plate full of ornaments, she keeps it in front of her husband's feet. All the ornaments had been given to her by her grand-father.Keeping the plate she tells her husband:

...“আমার এই গহনাগুলি দিয়া আমার পিতামহের দত্ত দান উদ্ধার করিয়া আমি পুনরায় তাঁহার প্রভূকে দান করিব।”

(..."With these ornaments I want to recover my grand-father's contribution and then I shall again contribute the property to his employers' family.")

In this way she takes the revenge.

Tagore has created two different images of woman in two of his short stories — *Man-bhanjan (Fury Appeased)* and *Pratihingsa (The Revenge).* Giribala in *Man-bhanjan (Fury Appeased)* clearly reveals the image of wife only, while Indrani in *Pratihingsa (The Revenge)* reveals the image of both the mother and the wife.

But Urvashi in the poem *Urvasi* reveals a different image of woman — the image of *Eternal Woman.* She has been identified as the 'World's desired' through the ages. In the *Parana* Urvashi has been identified as the
beautiful dancing woman of heaven who rose from the sea of mystery. She lives in heaven and entertains the hearts of the gods through dancing and singing. She even has distracted several gods from their activities. She is responsible for breaking the meditation of several risis. She is not a mother, not a daughter and not a housewife. She is different from them. The question is why Tagore has paid a rich compliment to her through this poem. Tagore has given his view on this topic. In a letter written on 18th March 1896, Tagore writes to Prabhatkumar Mukhopadhyay:

Rising from the same primordial sea of mystery from which the gods churned all the nectar and poison in this world, from those very deeps affording no father, mother or home, this ever-youthful apsara arose and, to this day, is shattering the meditation of monks, inspiring poets with verse, and delighting the hearts of the gods. She dances, sings and gives pleasure, and dwells in heaven, the ultimate pilgrimage-point of our desire ... She to whom I have paid a compliment under the name of the mythological Urvashi. Urvashi has been paid compliments by many poets through many ages. She whom Goethe calls The Eternal Woman: Ewige Weibliche, she, it is whom I have set up in the image of Urvashi and worshipped with flowers.56

In many of Tagore’s poems, two categories of women can be noticed — one is a beloved and the another one is a mother. Indrani in Pratihingsa (The Revenge) belongs to the second category, while Urvashi and Giribala belong to the first category. But there is a difference between Giribala and Urvashi. Giribala lives in the mortal world and Urvashi lives in heaven. Giribala belongs to the poet’s real world, while Urvashi belongs to the world of mystery:
(NEITHER MOTHER nor daughter are you, nor bride Urvashi. Woman you are, to ravish the soul of Paradise.

When weary-footed evening comes down to the folds whither the cattle have returned, you never trim the house lamps nor walk to the bridal bed

with a tremulous heart and a wavering smile on your lips, glad that the dark hours are so secret.

Like the dawn you are without veil,
Urvashi, and without shame...)

Tagore's new approach to the freedom of women and freedom of love have been expressed in a beautiful fashion. Urvashi is free from household activities. She does not walk to the bridal bed with the excitement to unite with her beloved. She does not have any shame and that's why she is unveiled.
(...I couldn't see any one. But I seemed to feel someone gently pushing me. I sat up; whoever it was said nothing, but five ring-studded fingers pressed me firmly to follow.

'I stood up gingerly. Although there was not a soul but me in that palace with its hundreds of rooms and immense emptiness, where sound slept and only echoes were awake, I still walked in fear of waking someone. Most of the rooms in the palace were kept closed, and I had never been in them before; so I cannot say where and by which route I went that night, following with soundless steps and bated breath that urgent, unseen guide! I couldn't keep track of the narrow dark passages, the long verandahs, the huge solemn audience-chambers, the airless and obscure cells.

'Although I could not see my guide with my eyes, I had an image of her in my mind. She was an Arab woman, whose marble-white hands emerged from voluminous sleeves — hard and flawless hands. A fine veil hung down from her head-dress; a curved knife was tied to her waist. It was as if a night had come floating from One Thousand and One Nights. I felt I was making my way through the narrow unlit alleyways of sleeping Baghdad, towards some dangerous assignation.'

Again, the presence of the mysterious woman can be noticed in the poem— Sindhupare (Beside the Sea). The hero of the poem also rises from his sleep with a sudden start because he has heard that someone is calling
his name. He comes out of the room and stands outside the door. Then
suddenly, he feels the presence of the mysterious woman:

Beside the door a woman's form, wrapped in a drape, Sat mounted on a black
horse, like a painted shape. Another horse
stood by — its tail the ground did stroke
— Ashen — coloured, as if formed of
charnel smoke. It eyed me with a sidelong glance but did not stir: I started trembling, my whole body shook with fear. In a tawny sky, a broken frost-pale moon arose, The ancient leafless peepal shook its naked boughs. The female shape with speechless finger signed my course: With spellbound motion, as in trance, I mounted the horse. Like lightning rushed my mount. A backward glance I threw: My house, my dooryard seemed like vapour, all untrue. A helpless weeping rose and spread across my heart, Until a fierce grip blocked its passage at my throat. Tall houses with barred doors on either side I passed, where men and women in their warm beds slumbered fast. Nowhere a sound: like a painted scene the lonely road, The very guards at the king's palace drowsed and snored. Only a dog barked far away from time to time, The deep-voiced bells on palace tower the hours chimed.62

The mysterious veiled woman in both the compositions invites both the heroes with a hypnotizing effect. Consequently, both of them follow her. Their journey has been stopped in the same fashion. In the prose:
At last my guide stopped before a dark blue curtain and seemed to point to something underneath. There was nothing there, but the blood in my chest froze with fear. In front of the curtain a fearsome African eunuch sat with drawn sword in his lap, legs sprawled out, dozing. The guide tiptoed over his legs and lifted a corner of the curtain...

Again, in the poem:

The moon had set, although the night still lingered on. The laggard eyes of the east now bloodied with the dawn. The horses halted by an empty ocean-shore: A black
mountain pierced with a cavern stood before. The ocean made no sound: no song of morning birds, No murmuring dawn breeze filled with forest scents I heard. The woman now dismounted; I too left my horse, And followed her into the cavern's gaping jaws.)

In the story Meher Ali's loud voice brings the hero back to the real world. But in the poem, the poet remains in the unreal world till he identifies the woman as the Lord of his life (jivandevata). He asks her, 'Are you here too, lord of my life!' At once the poet identifies her, the big hall is filled with the laughter of the woman.

In the story the woman has been identified as the Arab woman. The woman has made the hero mad. He knows that she is an illusion but he loves such an illusion at his youth. But in the poem the poet feels that the woman produces in his mind the emotion which is creative and, therefore, he identifies the woman as his jivandevata. He understands that it is a wake up call for him. The woman's laughter wakes him out of the dream. He comes back to the real world because '... the poet in man knows that reality is a creation, and human reality has to be called forth from its obscure depth by man's faith which is creative. ...

What we have observed here is that many more stories and poems of Tagore are similar in nature. The similarity has been traced out in terms of the underlying ideas of the stories and the poems.
NOTES AND REFERENCES

2. William Radice (Tr.): *Rabindranath Tagore Selected Short Stories*, p. 6.
5. Ibid, p. 81.
13. Translation, mine.
15. Idea has been taken from the book written by Promathanath Bisi: *Rabindranather Chotogalpa*, p. 30.
19. Rabindranath Tagore: *The Fugitive II*, poem no. 10, it has been included in Sisir Kumar Das (Ed.): *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*. Vol. One, Poems, p. 264.


25. Translation, mine.

26. Idea has been taken from the book written by Promathanath Bisi: *Rabindranather Chotogalpa*, p. 31.

27. Ibid, p. 31.


32. Idea has been taken from the book written by Promathanath Bisi: *Rabindranather Chotogalpa*, p. 32.


34. Translation, mine.

36. Rabindranath Tagore: *The Fugitive III*, poem no. 7, it has been included in Sisir Kumar Das (Ed.): *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, Vol. One, Poems, p. 287.

37. Idea has been taken from the book written by Promathanath Bisi: *Rabindranather Chotogalpa*, p. 33.


43. Sukanta Chaudhuri (Ed.): *Rabindranath Tagore Selected Poems*, p. 95-96.


51. Translation, mine.


53. Translation, mine.

54. As has been stated by Tagore in a letter written to Prabhatkumar Mukhopadhyay. This has been quoted from Sukanta Chaudhuri (Ed.): *Rabindranath Tagore Selected Poems*, p. 388.
55. The phrase has been taken from the translated version of *Urvashi*, composed in Sukanta Chaudhuri (Ed.) : *Rabindranath Tagore Selected Poems*, p. 108.


58. Rabindranath Tagore, *The Fugitive I*, poem no. 11, it has been included in Sisir Kumar Das (Ed.) : *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, Vol. One, Poems, p. 249.


64. William Radice (Tr.) : *Rabindranath Tagore Selected Short Stories*, p. 238.


67. Ibid, p. 117.