The core Tagore's philosophy of life is Humanist Universalism. The novel *Four Chapters* (Char Adhyay) published in 1934 is a creative elaboration of Humanist realism. There has been a controversy over the theme of *Four Chapters*. Critics were apprehensive about the political and romantic concerns of the novel. Premised on the love relationship between Ela and Atindra, the nature and course of love determined by the circumstances is analytically evaluated. Tagore's sympathy Independence movement and his admiration for the young men and women who sacrificed their lives for the cause of Independence is expressed in a glowing tribute. At the same time the lurking pitfalls of bloody revolution are evaluated by Tagore's acute insight and far-reaching vision.

Tagore has provided the prefatory note to the theme of the novel to defuse the confusion in understanding the thematic concerns. Many of the critics of Tagore have emphasized on the significance of the background of revolutionary activities in perceiving the theme of the novel. Sisir Kumar Gosh in *Rabindranath Tagore* (1986) affirmed: "Four Chapters undoubtedly dealt with the extremist activities which had never appealed to Tagore. As in *Ghare Baire* Tagore has showed the dangers of under world. He called it the path of nightmare" (79). This finds confirmation in Sukumar Sen's contradictory observation. According to Sen analyzing the real motives of revolutionary activities goes against the conscience
of a genuine writer: "There is an attempt here to analyze the real motives and values of the revolutionary activities of violence in Bengal that followed the Non-Cooperation movement and Tagore shows that however exalted a patriotic or philanthropic motive there may be, it is never a man’s duty to follow it if it goes against his conscience or good sense" (History of Bengali Literature.286). These observations unfurl the thematic entanglements. Tagore made a passing reference in his preface to a personal meeting with Brahma Bandhav Upadhyay, one of the front rank leaders of early revolutionary movements. But he withdrew the preface after the first edition was sold out.

The theme of the novel revolves around the character Ela who is portrayed as beautiful and intelligent. Due to some incomprehensible circumstances, Ela is drawn to politics. She receives love and understanding only from her father. Her mother’s quarrelsome and suspicious nature discourages her and belittles her surging aspirations. Unable to withstand the unfriendly nature of her mother, she stays in the hostel to complete her studies. With her perseverance and hard work, Ela completes her master’s degree. The death of her father brings in uncontrollable sorrow and agony. She finds shelter in her uncle’s house but becomes a victim of the jealous of her aunt. Her aunt feels that the beauty of Ela comes in the way of her daughter’s marriage. She pursues her research and higher studies with sincerity. It is during the period of her research, Ela meets Indranath, the revolutionary leader. Attracted towards Indranath in the very beginning of her interaction, she asks him ‘To give her some of his work to do’.
Critics have often compared the character of Ela to Bimala of *The Home and the World*. Though Ela is portrayed as enthusiastic, matured, analytical as Bimala, she moves a step beyond Bimala. Her idealism, adventurism and sentimentalism get evaporated before the charm and enticement of Indranath. Portraying Indranath as the megalomaniacal leader of the terrorist organization, Tagore succeeds in offering a critique of violence stream of nationalism. Tagore dramatizes the tragic impact of militant nationalism on human lives. Caught up in the entanglements of political struggle Ela represents the sacrifice of human lives at the altar of violence and terrorism.

Led by deep sense of patriotism, Ela joins Indranath’s party on the condition that she never entangles in any social relationship. Dedicating her complete life for the service of nation, she takes the oath of celibacy. She takes up the mantle running the school for girls established by Indranath. Despite her willingness to work as a teacher, her objective is to attract the impressionable young boys into the revolutionary movement. She considers this as the purpose of the nation and she does it wholeheartedly. She exudes confidence in building the party and complaints that she is not given any revolutionary work. Indranath, a replica of Sandip of *Home and the World* with all his ethical sadism sees that woman is incapable of organizing revolutionary parties. In his usual manner, he retorts: “It is hardly possible for you yourself to know of the glory that lights up the hearts of the boys at the touch of your fingers... How can the fry rewards I have to offer evoke the same quality of work? Where sex works I put woman on a
pedestal” (13). He dislikes and disallows mutual attraction between man and woman. He distorts the cordial meetings of man and woman. At the very beginning of the novel, he instructs Ela not to get involved in any social relationship. He warns her that she is not for the society but for the country alone. Ela pledges and promises and kills her emotions and claims her life. In the process, she realizes that the conflict is not against injustice and cruelty, but against simple human emotions. She understands that Indranath’s objective is to expand his supremacy and network.

Ela serves the revolutionary camp of Indranath for almost five years. In the course of time, she meets Atindra a highly educated young man belonging to zamindari family in a ferry steamer while crossing the river Ganga, at Mokamals. At the very first sight, she feels a lifelong intimacy with Atindra and falls in love with him. She refrains from expressing her feelings towards Atin in order to keep her promise with Indranath. She affirms Atindranath: “I had already sworn to devote myself to my country, not keep anything form self alone. My betrothal was to my country” (31). The master minded calculations of Indranath prove right when Atindra joins the terrorist movement because of his love for Ela. After ensuring the admission of Atindra into his party, he warns Ela to be away from Atin or else she would be eliminated from the party out of trace. Indranath strongly believes that people who romantically fall in love forego their fighting temperament. Indranath tells Ela: “I have use either for ascetics who mortify their bodies with sackcloth and ashes or for sub-immolators who reduce to ashes their
natural passions. We want fire worshippers, but if any of these kindle the fire within themselves, they have to get rid of” (11). Here, Tagore makes an accurate portrayal of the ramifications of revolutionary organization to the situation of Bengal in the beginning of the century. The relations of Indranath with his followers intrude into their emotional and personal lives and surpass the claims of politics. He commands implicit obedience from his followers and is often referred as master. The character of Ela is in complete contrast to Indranath. She is wonderful creation of Tagore. She is of high individuality and refuses to yield to anyone. She is a brave outspoken person. Completely bowled by her individualism, Indranath is astonished to find her fall in love with Atindra: “You are not the girl to sink your pledge by over loading it with love affairs” (13). Realising Indranath’s attempt to scuttle the relationship with Atindra, she says: “You have done me a grievous wrong” (7). Almost on the similar tune, Indranath breaks the love of Uma and Sukumar. He fears that Uma might weaken the dedicating spirit of valiant nationalist Sukumar. On realizing the distorting role of Indranath Ela admonishes:

“Punishment for love is nonsense. You might as well talk of punishing a person for getting a small pox” (10). She expresses her concern at the way the youthful love is sacrificed by monstrous people: “Splendid boys are being sacrificed at the altar of some blind monstrous idol, its breaking my heart” (6). She determines to make her love successful and decides to resolve the conflict in her mind and frankly tells Indranath that her new love is overshadowing her love for all else.
After spending time in a loveless, joyless, fruitless barren path of violence, she realizes that her life is towards realizing the true love. Indranth plays foul and fixes Atindra in the sentimental trap of loyalty to the party. Ela fears to break the pledge that she gave to Indranath at the time of joining the party. She undergoes conflict between her love and her pledge. But Indranath spies on her and tries to eliminate her for violating the order of the party. Realising her mistake in joining Atindra in the party she pleads for liberating Atindra from the revolutionary party. She repents: “For heaven’s sake...I’ll never be able forgive myself for drawing you away from your own of living, uprooting you from your normal life” (56). Eventually, she loses her power of controlling emotions. She is over powered by her emotions. She craves for normal human life. She desperately tries to win unaccessible love. Unable to control her emotions, grief and passion, Ela cries: “Oh, my barbarian! You won’t have to snatch me- take me, take me! Oh look! ‘He’s there!’” (42).

Towards the end of the novel, Tagore tries to prove that love is barbarous caught in the web of revolutionary clumsy national circumstances. This perception has acquired special Tagorean recognition in Bengali literature. Critics like Buddhadev Bose and Nihiaranjan Roy opined that the main attraction of *Four Chapters* lies unhesitating and frank exposition of love as barbarous. B.C. Chakravorty another scholar of Tagore disagrees with this perception and opines that Tagore has delineated the nuances of physical passionate love in many of works. Especially his poem *Parishod*, written in his early life, transformed into
Shyama, a dance-drama has portrayed the similar shades of love. His work Chitrangada too has proved that Tagore is a realist who recognizes the physical appetite as part of human love. Tagore's visionary idealism takes a back seat in discovering the barbarism involved by the humans in realizing genuine love.

Nikhil is reincarnated as Atin in Four Chapters. Atindra is inexperienced, adventurist, reckless of life or death. He joins the terrorist party only because of his love for Ela. It can’t be denied that under Indranath’s leadership Atin becomes a competent revolutionary but loses his humanity. He repents with Ela for his inability to liberate himself: “Had you respected me for my own individuality you would have drawn me not to your group but to your heart” (40). He gains consciousness and complete understanding of the revolutionary movements. Despite his illusions, he retains the loyalty to the cause. He curses himself for his own folly and discusses the hopelessness of the situation with Ela. They feel that their togetherness is barred by their very presence in the party. Their conscience protests their blind obedience to a wrong leader for the wrong cause. Atin blames Ela for dragging him into the futile path of violence and making him even to forget his manhood. He repents for thousands of people are caught in the coils of the revolution and annoyed at innocent youth wasting the creativity for futile cause.

Indranath sets the stage to eliminate Ela by Atin’s own hands. He asks Ela if she is prepared to kill Atin in case he betrays the party. Ela evades the answer replying that such a situation will never arise. He asks Atin to kill Ela with the
fear that she may reveal the secrets of the party when arrested by the police. Atin feels deeply hurt over the cruel betrayal. He informs Ela: “The word has gone forth from your own band-your beloved, patriotic brothers, whom you’ve anointed with sandal paste on each Brother’s Day- that you’re not fit to live any longer” (84). In an astonishing way, Ela is given a twisting option to marry Batu, clench man of the leader so that she is saved. Unable to bear this, she decides to seek happy death in the hands of Atin: “Kill me, onto, kill me with your hands. I couldn’t wish for a happier end? Take me; don’t let their unclean hands touch my body, for this Body belongs to you!” (86). It is with the conscious death of Ela and Atindra, the novel ends in a moving note.

Four Chapters obviously look like four acts in a play. It has a soul of lyric and dialogue has a prominent place. Except the first chapter which is like exposition, the three chapters are full of lyrical outburst and the whole book is termed as a love song of Ela and Atindra. Ela and Atindra are compassionate human beings, lovers and true patriots. They are victims of blind obedience to a futile cause, misguided by the selfish revolutionaries. Their consciousness makes them to distinguish between true service and barbaric action subjected to tremendous conflict between conscience and commitment. They are in no way inferior to their leader who is by no means a patriot. On many similar grounds Gora and Four Chapters are heart rending introspection of misguided young patriots. Condemning political terrorism, Four Chapters successfully portrayed the poignance and the pain of love at the backdrop of terrorism.
Chaturnaga, claimed as another popular novel of Tagore stands out to be the most interesting experiment in the genre of novels. It is hailed as a work of art without blemish. It is a great novel with a compact and well knit plot embedded with music and poetry. Tagore tried to achieve a pattern of thought and feeling symphonic in structure and syncretic in import. There is a significant underlying musical note which orchestrates ideas, ideologies and emotions in the novel. Niharranjan Ray in An Artist in Life I (1967) says that Chaturanga is an exquisite and unforgettable work of art. Humayun Kabir in The Bengali Novel (46) regards it as a lengthy narration inept for a novel. S.C. Sengupta in The Great Sentinel (1948) proclaims that Chaturanga rivals English Gitanjali and Bengali Balaka.

After the success of his epic novel Gora, Tagore’s art underwent a significant change. The year before the publication of Chaturnaga Tagore’s tour of Europe has stimulated him to employ new techniques of narration which are in vogue in French literature. The influence of Frech on Tagore was so pervasive that he moved towards the dominance of theme over plot and other innovative strategies of narration. Chaturnaga and The Home and the World were published in the same year and were the products of the same renaissance in literature. Instead of three tier narration as is reflected in The Home and the World, Tagore executes singular narration in Chaturanga. Tagore makes a friend of the protagonist Sribilas to narrate the whole story as a participant.

Chaturanga exposes religious fanaticism that continues to ruin Indian culture under the mask of Hindu orthodoxy and Vaishnavism. The true path of
spirituality is marred by religious aberrations in India. The conflict between the spiritual and sensual desires is presented in an appreciable way. The novel confining to four chapters presents four major characters. The theme of the novel revolves around Sachis, a young man with boble principles, uncle Jagmohan, agnostic and an uncompromising humanist, Sibillas, caring and admirer of Sachis and the narrator and Damini an attractive widow. It is the presence of Damini that causes a conflict between divine quest and natural instincts. Leelananda Swami, a Vaishnava Guru who preaches salvation through renunciation also plays a vital role in the novel. Sachi’s father Harimohan does not play a major role in the novel. He believes in the meanness and cupidity of God. Jagmohan is an agnostic; he sees God in humans and believes in Humanism. His western education has inspired his belief in humanism. His humanism is the reflection of Jeremy Bentham’s Philosophy of “the greatest good of the greatest number”, Stuart Mill’s agnosticism and August Comte’s Positivism (to live for one’s neighbour). Jaganmohan’s concept of humanism is against the ancient Indian nature of humanism which spiritualistic in nature. Indian humanists give importance to the spiritual and ethical nature of man; whereas western humanists though don’t reject the importance of ethics for human beings, recognize the material nature of man than the spiritual. The opinion of Dr. Amiya Chakraborty justifies this perception. In Humanism and Indian Thought (1937), he says: “We notice that the history of Indian thought is the history of humanism with a bias towards spirituality… Indian Philosophy is a running commentary on the Text.
Thanks that I am a man” (27). Jagmohan believes in other world except man. He never goes to temple and never discriminates between permissible and prohibited food. He does not mind inter dining and freely mixing with the low castes. Jagmohan’s efforts to uplift the Muslims and Chamars bring him into conflict with his younger brother Harimohan. He loses his share of property from his family as he is not a true scion of the family. He never repents for the failure in inheriting the property. He says: “I can’t cheat a God whom, I don’t recognise”(21).

Sachis revolts against the religious orthodoxy of his father and becomes an ardent disciple of Jagmohan. He comes across a young girl, an orpah, Nanibala who had been seduced and impregnated by his own elder brother Purandar. Sachis takes the girl to his uncle’s house who gives her shelter and treats her as his daughter. Despite the protests of the family Sachis prepares to marry her. But Nanibala however prefers the seducer to her supposed deliverer and takes her own life. In her dying apology to Sachis’s uncle, she asks forgiveness and says with startling candour that she can’t forget Purnadar, the seducer. Soon after the city of Calcutta is affected by plague and as there are not enough hospitals in the city, the humanitarian uncle turns his own house into a hospital. Braving contamination, himself nursing the poor victims, he catches the dread disease and dies. In his final affirmation of his ideas on his death bed he tells Sachis: “I have lived to reap the last reward of my faith. I have no regrets” (36). This is understood to be a fitting end for an atheist. Sachis is overwhelmed by the death of his uncle who had been to him both father and friend. It is unbelievable how Sachis being such an atheist
Thyagil69
turns into an ascetic overnight. It can’t be denied that the death of Nanibala and uncle jagmohan not only shakes his faith in God denying humanism but also transforms him to such an extent that he totally renounces the worldly life to take solace in the company of an ascetic Leelananda Swami, the Guruji of Vaishnava group. Ironically, it is Sreebilas, who expressed dismay at Sachi’s sudden change, too joins him later as he admits, “I too was soon overpowered by his intoxication” (42). Questioned by Sribilas as to how he could give up the radicalism, he has imbibed from his uncle. Sachis replies: “Uncle while he lived had given me my freedom in life’s filed, as a child has his freedom on the playground. With his death he has given me my freedom in the sea of divine ecstasy, as a child feels free in its mother’s lap” (41). Now, Sachis launches his spiritual journey in an ecstasy of wild emotion. In a state of self delusion, he indulges himself in frenzied Kirtan singing, chanting, massaging of Guru’s feet.

While spending day and night discussing divine ecstasy in the company of Guru, Sachis suddenly finds a sudden flash piercing through his divine bliss. Sachis is happy in his escape from the worldly bonds till an assault in the shape of the irrepressible Damini is launched on his spiritual absorption: “Damini is like the lightning in the heart of the Sravana rain clouds, heaving with youth fullness to outward view, but flickering with restless fires within” (45). To Sribilas Babu, she is symbol of domestic bliss, the heaven of ecstasy more real than divine ecstasy. But to Sachis she is huntress, she is a nature’s spy. She is a passion poisoned obstacle in the way of his spiritual progress.
Apart from this, the theme whirls round the young, pretty widow Damini. She is introduced as a rebel against the excessive piety and submission to the Guru Lilananda. Damini is the daughter of Ananda Prasad, a prosperous jute merchant. He gives his son-in-law Sivatosh a house in Calcutta. But later he sustains great losses in the trade and is reduced to penury. Damini’s husband is a great devotee of his Vaishanava Guru, Leelananda Swami. But unlike Sivatosh, Damini has a natural instinct for material interests; she never accepts his religious eccentricities. She protests when her husband gives away her jewellery to the Guru and says that he has no right over it as it was a present from her father. Damini turns a rebel after the death of a non-complaisant husband who does not care to satisfy her psycho physical needs. During their brief conjugal interlude, he subjects her to the tyranny of devotion. Disregarding her sensibilities, he consigns her at death as part of his movable property to his Guru along with all his unmovable property.

Damini is vivacious young woman who attracts every one with her grace and glitter, as her name signifies. She is “so real that no reader having known her can ever forget her. Masti Venkatesa Iyengar in Rabindranath Tagore (1946) remarks that she interests us deeply, because she is extraordinary. Damini is against asceticism. Spiritual renunciation is her enemy. She is vibrant and forever filling herself with grace and fragrance like flowers in the spring (45). She is anxious to miss nothing and reluctant to admit the hermit in her home. She wishes to drink the honey of life to the last drop. In Sachi’s measured judgment as engraved in his diary she is the picture of hedonism. She is the one who refuses to
deny the pull of youth denies death, yearns to enjoy life to its dregs. She is an antipodal refraction to the ways of widowhood. Unlike Nanibala, who gave up her life for a sinner, Damini represents social change. She is against the defeatist philosophy of meek submissiveness of Nanibala. She stands like a rock and there is nothing forbidden and unattainable in her moral code. Neither the death of her husband, the sudden poverty of her father, nor the religious influence of Leelananda and his disciples change her mind. Leelananda Swami whom her husband worships is to her a dead stone. His precepts are lifeless and outdated to her and they do not hold relevance to contemporary reality. When large number of rich, learned and talented sits round guru’s feet regarding it as a rare privilege, Damini never bothers to escape feigning illness. Instead she goes to the theatre and helps the neighbour in preparing sweets. The other disciples of Swamin are taken aback at her defiant behaviour and call her ‘hussy’. Damini is kite in a cage, fettered by spiritual chains. Repression of her bodily needs by an attempt at forceful initiation to devotional ways keeps them temporarily subdued but after her husband’s death, she bluntly refuses to drown herself in the ‘wave of devotion’ : 'Am I here of my own accord? Haven’t you people put chains round my feet and flung this woman without faith into the prison of devotion? Have you left any way out for me? (64). But her repressed desires do not thrust her into destructive behavioural mould. Damini who is starved of love, starved of bodily needs, when she senses the possibility of love relationship with Sachis, she tears of her rebel mask and assumes the graceful persona of self surrender. The rebel Damini
mellows and becomes Stable Soudamini and when her devotional attitude takes an about turn, the rebel suddenly becomes a pliant devotee. Here, her graceful mask is only to catch the attention of Sachis, but Sachis sees only her grace but not Damini. His platonic love frustrates her which is neatly expressed by the broken photographs of Leelananda Swami in a meditation posture. Sachis’ callous attitude gives her a sense of anguish and helplessness. She knocks her head on the floor and mutters: ‘Stone, o you stone have pity on me, have pity kill me’ (49).

Damini loves Sachis but he does not reciprocate her love. She adopts a new strategy of paying obeisance to Guruji as his follower to the inaccessible caves, because Sachis too is his follower with Sribilas. Damini’s frustrated love takes the shape of a passionate form. When Sachis is lying down on a blanket in a dark cave, the darkness takes on the shape of a primordial block beast with neither eyes nor ears but only insatiable hunger. But Sachish is not fully aware that it is Damini who received his kick and refusal in his semi awakened and semi drowsy state. In Sachish experience in the cave in he twilight region of trance and semiconscious wakfulness the reality of Damini appears as a sort of Jungian ‘shadow’, the shadow of the ‘mass of hunger’, which perplexes his mind. Biman Behari Majumdar in *Heroines of Tagore* (1968) says that the imagery of the primordial beast depicted in this context has “Scarcely anything in symbolist literature that is more moving than this... further it has got hardly any parallel in the literature of any country in the world” (245).
In the next stage, Damini’s overt partiality for Sribilas is nothing but an expression of her indirect protest to Sachi’s stolid indifference to her. Sachis and Sribilas are friends like Gora and Binoy. Like Binoy, though Sribilas at first is an admirer and follower of Sachis, he comes under the influence of Damini. By pretending to be intimate with Sribilas, Damini succeeds in attracting the attention of Sachis. She begins the struggle between spirituality and sensuality, attraction and repulsion, natural instinct and divine commitment. Just as it is true that Damini’s interest now lies in arousing jealousy in Sachis, it is equally true that in Sachis’s mind has arisen a new restlessness: “Sachis was hardly himself these days. He was a like a paper kite whose tow string has snapped-still afloat in the air” (65). It is Sribilas who never fails to watch the violent emotions of Sachis. However he is convinced with the belief that the true spirit of spiritual discipline is to acknowledge nature and rise above it. But Sachis considers Damini as an object of passion and tries to send her away and fails in his attempt. Unable to control his aesthetic sensibilities, in order to hide his sense of spiritual lapses he goes again to sea-side solitude and returns with a battered body and exhausted mind. He acknowledges his mistake in asking Damini to leave and invites her to join them.

It is a test of fortitude as much for Damini as for Sachis who goes through the contrary processes for distancing from and remaining close to Damini to see which method suits him best to starve off his desire and keep his steadfastness in his devotional path. However, Damini is a victim of Sachis’s fluctuating sense of attraction and repulsion. Sachis’s open arm invitation to Damini to join the
spiritual discourses doubles her revolt. Damini becomes an embodiment of devotion in her dress and demeanors. But under the guise of devotee, Sribilas observes a glint of searing fire in the corner of her eye in her dealings with Guruji.

Damini is obviously double dealing in her approach. She bows Sachis whom she adores, protests Guruji whom she hosts, and disturbs Sribilas in order to divert the attention of Sachis. She plays the role of devotee with a vengeance. Her presence creates ripples in the disciple’s spiritual life. She seeks to demolish the heaven of ecstasy to which Guruji sought Sachis and Sribilas to hold past. It is Leelananda Swamin who was able to bag two formidable scholars and atheists like Sachis and Sreebilas. He fails in his attempt to change the rebel of ascetic but hopes a divine miracle will bring about the change he desires in Damini. Damini procures pornographic novels through Sribilas to read them. When Guruji objects she defiantly replies that there is nothing wrong in it since he himself once read them. She questions Guruji: “You are free to indulge your needs while I am supposed to need nothing at all” (68). Interestingly it is Damini who would have read the books by herself but she deliberately seeks Sribilas’s help to read them in order to provoke jealousy in Sachis. Sribilas too knows that all her deliberate actions are oriented towards Sachis’s attention. Here, Damini’s to Sribilas at this point of her life is tangentially correlative to a sort of ‘passivity’ in respect of Sachis. Sribilas does her errands and gravitates towards Damini, but her relationship with him is at best peripheral, for inspite of the bruise on her breast that Sachis has inflicted in the cave her passion for the latter still remains
undiminished. Sribilas’s analysis of women’s nature in general “what little I have seen from the surface, from outside has convinced me that women are ready to give their hearts where they are sure to get suffering in return” (58) is very appropriate in this context. Helene Deutsch in *The Psychology of Women* (1947) considers this attitude as a masochistic pleasure which makes the ‘attraction of suffering’ a prime urge for giving themselves up to men in a spirit of love surrender. However, by spending lot of time with Sribilas, channelising her love to domestic pets, Damini succeeds in dragging Sachis into their midst. Now she points out the emptiness of self abandoned asceticism through the episode of the suicide of Nabin’s wife. Nabin, a member of the Kirtanparty marries his wife’s guardian less sister after a brief spell of illicit romance. She pours out her anguish, her frustration and hellessness for being in the custody of Leelananda Swamy: “Your Guru has given me nothing at all. He has not been able to give even a moment’s calm to my troubled soul... I beg of you please don’t throw me to that demon, save me” (73).

Sachis realizes that the ‘Guru Way leads only to the Guru’s court’. One had to perish by one’s own creed than adopt another’s. One can borrow everything else, but one’s creed must be one’s own’ (83). In this perception, Damini is an eye opener to Sachis. To Damini the change in Sachis is welcome but not sufficient. In the first phase his preceptor is an atheist. In the second phase his preceptor is an ascetic. Damini turns out to be a Domestic. But neither an atheist, nor an ascetic, nor even a domestic seems to have given him desired result
in his quest for truth. Once again he changes his track. Like Gora, Sachis never does anything half heartedly. Sachis stands out to be an eternal quester.

In the evolution of mental delusion, it is Sachis who had been once loudest in his denunciation of caste and religion. Later, he transformed himself as the strong defender of rites, rituals and prayers. Surprisingly, again he throws all his beliefs over board and set off his journey into his own world. Totally abandoining atheism and asceticism, he engages in such a battle within to know himself. Now Sachi’s quest for the realization of God leads him to renounce all human bonds and takes to solitary contemplation. He becomes an abstracted from his surroundings that Sribilas and Damini are worried about this very survival and persuade him to allow them to accompany him to riverside retreat.

Damini is a vivacious widow. She is an epitome of sacrifice. She shakes of her reble mask and becomes a sacrificial devotee. She has elevated her love for Sachis to the level of reference oriented love through a process of mental evolution. She takes the critical role of true devotee to bring him into a way ward life. There are many days when she carries a plate of food for Schis, wading through knee-deep water and in the process, sometimes remains without food for the whole day. But Sachish who has transcended the reuirements of flesh and bolld seems to need neither food nor sleep even unmindful of himself grows thinner and thinner. The more Damini requests, the more and more Sachis resists to eat and only seeks solace in isolation. Damini is not a dew drop on the lotus leaf. However, she says that the body is wholly our creation and so our heart cries out
in anguish when we see it suffer (85). After several days of intense meditation, Sachis believes that he has seen the light at last and expounds a philosophy of progress through contradiction: “I shall meet Him only if I went in the opposite direction” (87). Elsewhere he says: “You limit yourself in me while I try to seek the limitless in you” (88). Damini who cannot understand the metaphysics of this is only devoted to his welfare. She realizes that his sense of asceticism only develops callous disregard for her problems. It is proved when she attempts to protect him in the storm, she is misconstrued by Sachis. He begs her: “I desperately need Him whom I am seeking. I have need for nothing else. Have pity on me, Damini, leave me alone” (90). However, Damini who has transformed her love for Sachis into a devotional love erects a secret temple to her pain like Charulatha. Though her feminine instinct no longer permits her separation from Sachis, she leaves him only to honour the advice of Sachis.

Sachis’s heartless rejection of Damini who loves and adores him reveals his lack of understanding of woman’s heart. In the beginning of the novel, he proposes to marry Nanibala without knowing what is in her heart. In the later part of the novel, he cruelly rejects Damini considering her merely an object of passion. This attitude signifies his immaturity. If Damini is only a passionate widow, she would have let her fire of desire on Sribilas too. But so long as she has the hope of Sachis’s love, the role of Sribilas is strictly limited to be her companion only to drive away her loneliness. On the other hand, Sachis is not a genuine ascetic at all. If she is genuine ascetic, he would not have minded her
intimacy with Sribilas. His conflicting sense between desire and divine only troubled her soul a lot. Bhabatosh Chatterjee in *Rabindranath Tagore and Modern Sensibility* (1996) observes that Sachis failure as a human being is a failure of discernment. Paradoxically, the limitation of his vision brings Sachis down to the level of humanity and holds back his advance into true saintliness.

The most complete human character is Sribilas. He marries Damini, completely knowing that she has surrendered her mind and soul to Sachis. He is completely ignorant of the consequences of marrying a widow. He is also blind predicting the response of the society to marry outside his caste. Exhibiting courage to face the impending consequences, he confides in Damini that he will not worse off by marrying her. Damini spontaneously recognizes the worth of Sribilas and recognizes the extraordinariness of his quality. It is from this perception, Damini and Sribilas’s characters are evaluated. They are neither ascetics nor atheists. They simply represent what is human in human beings. They begin and pursue their humanitarian principle “The greatest good to the greatest members”. Sachi is scared by the perseverance and commitment of Damini and Sribilas and absconds with the pretext: ‘No, I am afraid my work lies elsewhere’ (97).

In all its usual evaluation and comparison, Damini is often compared with Binodini. Damini is perceived as more mature, more courageous and outrageous than Binodini. Damini and Binodini are passionate widows. They are sensual, sympathetic, loyal in the beginning of their lives. Later, they resist and rebel
against the traditional and obnoxious practices of the society. Damini possesses a
definite mindset and knows what she wants. She meticulously resists the
psychological conflicts. Almost on the similar love relationship of Binodini,
Damini loves Sachis with all her sincerity and commitment. As Binodini sacrifices
her love owing the burden of tradition, Damini faces the cruel rejection of Sachis.
She forcefully transforms her love into devotion and half heartedly marries
Sribilas. But her wholehearted participation in the humanitarian work provides her
consolation and psychological compensation. Despite Damini’s interaction with
minorities, Chamars and lowcastes, she overcomes the psychological drift towards
embracing death. Damini overcomes the oscillation between her sense of desire
and sense of revolt. She subscribes to inevitable compromising philosophy of life
by marrying Sribilas.

The novel *Chaturanga* is a ground breaking and a land mark in ushering
feminist consciousness. Tagore has registered a bold and decisive assault on the
age old conservative and obnoxious tradition by bringing about a marriage
between Sribilas and widowed Damini. But he has accorded due importance to the
individuality of woman by prioritizing Sachis as the object of true love over
Sribilas in the heart of Damini. Damini remains undeterred before the
unquestioned burden of the society and proves her conviction from the path of
marriage. The proposal of marriage comes from her as a future prediction of
radical feminist consciousness: “I (Sribilas) what according to you is the real
thing?, Say what would happen to you if you marry me?” (93). Most of the post
colonial feminist propositions are reflected in the thematic concerns of the novel and they still hold their strong relevance to the contemporary contradictions into which women are drawn.

The novel is also remarkable among Tagore’s novels for its innovation in novelistic techniques. The narration is from the point of Sribilas, the mouth piece of Tagore. Tagore’s admiration for the protagonism of Sribilas is obvious throughout the novel. The fluctuations and the changing paradigms in the characterization of Sribilas convey the absence of spiritual vision. G. V. Raju in *Tagore the Novelist (1983)* is of the view that Sachis’s shifting postures are perplexing. The motivations for such shifting are not adequately depicted. His divine frenzy though can be understood as freedom of choice, it is still intriguing. His advancement remains indiscernible to the reader. This is almost reiterated by Srikumar Banerjee in the essay ‘Rabindranath’s novels’. He opines that it is extremely difficult to discover any psychological norm in Sachis’s wayward dilettantism and sudden spurts of eccentric behaviour. The attempts of Sachis’s in attaining selfhood are more endearing than those of dilettanate. However, this remains as a strong evidence for comprehending and appreciating Sachis’s character. This makes us to understand that Tagore chose to symbolize the divine yearning of Ramkrishna or Vivekananda towards a mystic union with God. But Sachis fails to attain the kind of transcendence that these saints had acquired. His experiences exemplify to achieve a quest towards active consciousness subject to the pulls of enticement and entrapment of spiritual and sensual. It can’t reject
completely that Sachis remains an eternal quester and a traveler. His attempts of exploring different channels, treading the labyrinths of spirituality and his surge towards spirituality prove neither can he attain divine heights nor enjoys domestic bliss. But he remains as unsuccessful aspirant of God creating problems for himself and others. By portraying Sachis as an unsuccessful aspirant of God and Sreebilas as a successful humanist Tagore seems to have overlooked God over man. He seems to have advanced towards the promotion of human values rather than divine values. From this perspective, Chaturanga runs parallel to ‘Gitanjali’ in which he clearly points out: “Deliverance is not for me in renunciation... He is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground where the path maker is breaking stones” (27). According to Tagore Salvation is neither non-wordly existence nor complete absorption with God. It is to be in absolute dedication to Humanity. He never wishes to attain freedom by the process which negates what is human in human beings. This finds justified reflection in Tagore’s Manusuer Dharma: “If freedom of man is to be attained by blotting out man then why are we human beings” (612). From a different perception, Chaturanga explores the fundamental difference between the ancient Indian nature of spiritual humanism oriented towards God and the 14th century innovation of renaissance humanism oriented towards man.

The two novels Four Chapters & Chaturanga exemplify Tagore’s Humanist Universalism. These are remarkable for their intensity of gaze and ruthlessness in thinking through to judgements. The focus is on political violence
in conflict with human values. The historical context is, of course, the militant nationalist programme of activity through secret societies and acts of individual violence in Bengal and in India at large in the early decades of twentieth century.

The protagonists in these novels are the brilliant evil genius of a secret society of militant nationalist youths who believe in violent means towards attaining the country’s independence. The idealistic young men who took to the violent path are destined to tragic end. Tagore presents the characters of these novels in a web of lies, base shoddiness, mutual mistrust, lust for power, espionage etc. He drags the characters to the depth of absement. The characters believe in thundering false message and believe in bringing life to the country’s soul.

There was huge outcry in Bengal against Tagore’s depiction of the militant nationalists. The reaction against these novels might have been in part a reaction against Tagore’s treatment of sexuality in this novel. Perhaps for the first time in Tagore’s prose writings the woman’s body appears in a manner unknown till then. The interaction of the characters Ela and Atin trivialized the holy relationship of the comrades and defamed the militant nationalists. Tagore was compelled to write a critical explanation which was printed in the appendix to the novel *Four Chapters* from the second edition onwards: “From the point of view of literature it is irrelevant whether CharAdhyay contains any message or judgement. It is plainly about the love of the hero and the heroine for each other in a story situated in modern Bengal. The dramatic element in the love story comes from the militant nationalists’ endeavours in Bengal. The stormy atmosphere of that turmoil, the
intensity and the pain that it caused, that is what literature is about. Debates and sage advice belong to the domain of newspapers". As regards the theme of these novels, Tagore thought apart from the tragic end to the love between the characters there was a poignant tragedy in the failure of the characters to keep true to themselves. The political path chosen by Tagore was found to be contradicted by the characters in these novels.

In the event of the critical reception to these novels, Tagore spoke up against the Government's policy of incarceration without trial and he protested against torture suffered by militant activities in the hands of the police and jail authorities. At the same time, Tagore was keenly aware of the futility of militant acts of individual heroism—acts which attracted popular admiration. However, Tagore's agonizing dilemma, his admiration for heroism and his consciousness of its futility, does not explain the emotional energy at work in writing these novels.

When *Four Chapters* in 1934, Tagore's stock in political circles fell drastically. The revolutionary militants were deeply offended. In the years leading to the publication of the novel Tagore's warm sympathy and admiration was demonstrated on many occasions. Tagore spoke at a mass meeting in Calcutta in September in 1931 to protests against police atrocities, particularly the plight of prisoners in jail. In May 1931 on the occasion of Tagore's seventieth birthday the political prisoners at Buxa Fort sent him their felicitations and in reply Tagore wrote a memorable poem addressing them: "Your song to the Sun Shames the dark night around you/they can cage the bird, but they cannot cage the song"
(Parishesh. Vol.viii. 143). Few months before the publication of *Four Chapters* Tagore issued a political statement on the imprisonment of militant activists without trial: “Will the British in India claim ‘dignity which is based on its claim to appreciation of human values and not on mere assertion of power’”? (Sahanovis.op.cit. 73). All these incidents manifest Tagore’s empathy with the militant nationalists. Tagore’s heart was with them but his mind was against the means they were wont to use to attain undoubtedly noble ends- hence the relentless trajectory of Humanist Universalism in *Four Chapters* and *Chaturanga*. The tragedy continues to be relevant in the absence of Humanist Universalism. It is perceived in Tagore’s unfortunate country the protagonists of these novels reincarnate time and again till our times.