Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

“In the works of man as in those of nature, it is the intention which is chiefly worth studying”. - GOethe

Indo-Anglian literature with its original beauty emerged by the end of the nineteenth century in India. Rabindranath Tagore who belonged to this era of national awakening with its roots in Bengal proved himself the most successful writer in finding a new path for the world outside. He was the first Indian to receive the Noble Prize for the world literary achievement in 1916 and he was acclaimed the ‘Spiritual Guru’ for India. He was essentially a poet of modern vision and, also, a gifted novelist with a message for the rebirth of the Indian nation.

Tagore’s competence to be the cultural ambassador of India to the world at large was universally acknowledged. India’s culture in terms of its traditional past was well discerned by him. He developed it in the context of his study of Western culture and its eventual entry into India. The result was that he came with his thesis that the East, steeped in its cultural sanctions, had much to offer to Western culture.
According to the Thesaurus, dichotomy means, “being twofold, a classification into two opposed parts of sub-classes: The dichotomy between Eastern and Western Culture”. Dichotomy is a choice to be made between two perspectives which are diametrically opposed. Tagore in his novels shows how his characters are essentially human. Those characters may choose a concept like modernity and in a matter of revision of thought, they may swing over to the opposite pole, tradition. The characters exhibit their loyalty to the one or the other or in some cases to both.

To appreciate a writer’s work, an understanding of the social, cultural, historical and literary background of the age is necessary. Such milieu involves the people, physical and social conditions and events, which provide a background in which some one acts or lives.

Bengal was the first state which came under the rule of the East India Company in 1757. The western education which entered in its wake, which changed the outlook of Bengali youth. It paved the way for social and religious reforms. Tagore’s novels portray the resultant major change in the social, religious, cultural and political beliefs.

Tagore’s father Maharishi Debendranath Tagore was a Brahmo and a religious reformer. But he never allowed his children to choose their partners
from outside the Brahmin caste. But Tagore’s outlook on religion was persistently non-sectarian although he did not believe in violating the tradition that ensured harmony in the family.

The impact of western education made the Indians realize the value of their rich heritage and the sublimity of Indian culture which they had failed to follow for a long period. The emergence of Indian culture is evident in all the novels of Tagore.

The policy of discrimination was adopted by the British and as a result the Sepoy Mutiny aroused the national and patriotic spirit among Indians. Tagore’s literary creations especially the novels portray the effects of Post-Mutiny period. Tagore’s participation in the Swadeshi Movement in 1905 is depicted through his novel “The Home and the World”. He disliked terrorism and the last novel “Four Chapters” is the example for his aversion to political fanaticism.

Tagore chose Bankim Chandra Chatterjee as his Guru for his novels. But he developed a style of his own for dealing with the psychological, social, religious and political issues of his days.
The Contemporary India of Tagore imbibed modernism from the culture of the West. As an original thinker, he believed that Indian tradition and the modernity of the West were complementary. For him, this traditionality of India and the modernity of the West formed a dichotomy. He advocated the intelligent balancing of these two social forces at work. As a result India would benefit both in the present and in the future. Excited by the profundity of this theory of dichotomy he composed his hymns of divine dedication in his mother tongue Bengali. He brought out the English translation of his *Gitanjali* which earned him The Nobel Prize in 1913.

Tagore’s theory of dichotomy was established through his novels. He wrote twelve novels in Bengali language and nine of them were translated into English, each serving as an illustration of a cross-section of his contemporary Bengali society. All his novels were to satisfy the basic norms of any work of art—form, content, and technique. He brought into dramatic interplay of his variegated characters and his effective technique. His characters speak on the existing problems of his times. They are portrayed with their emotional loyalty to the age-long traditions of spiritual temperament and the spirit of tolerance. Thus Tagore saw the entire world through India.
Tagore’s predecessor in the world of letters was Bankim Chandra Chatterjee who was called ‘the Scott of Bengal’. Bankim’s serialised novels in ‘Banga Darshan’ served Tagore as a pathfinder. However, Tagore surpassed Bankim in producing works of classical graduation. The impulses of crucial patriotism from the writings of Bankim were sublimated into certain ideological framework by Tagore.

The eminent novelist Mulk Raj Anand declared that the birth of Tagore synchronized with the beginning of Modern Age. For Anand ‘he is one of the few writers of India whose personal history has become the mental and emotional history of our own epoch’. To him, ‘understanding Tagore is tantamount to the study of East and West and the dichotomy of the two: (Mulk Raj Anand. ‘Tagore, Reconciler of East and West’.63). Bengal was presented with the wild scenario of divisions among the rank and file. The British Government on the saddle of power formed the first division. Social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy formed the second division influenced by the Westerners. There were the nationalists who formed the third camp. Terrorists also belonged to this category. The fourth division consisted of conservatives among the Indians and they wanted to set the clock back.
Tagore belonged to none of these sectors which competed for the loyalty of all people. Tagore formed the fifth sector with the salient features of each division. He assumed the mantle of the Shakespearan Duke to find 'good in everything'. He began exerting his creative talents and achieved much as an artist of high calibers.

Tagore had real human greatness both as a leader in the realms of philosophic thought and as an activist in the field of arts including poetry, music, painting, drama and education. The formation of Shantinekatan in Bengal followed this. The critic K.R.S. Iyengar calls Tagore 'a many splendidoured genius' with an ever-inspiring versatility of being a poet, dramatist, actor, producer, musician and painter; he was an educationist, a practical idealist who turned his dreams into reality at Shantiniketan; he was a reformer, philosopher, prophet, a novelist, a short story writer and a critic of life and literature....he was essentially an internationalist....he was an integral whole, the Rishi, the Gurudev' (K.R.S. Iyengar, Indian Writing in English, 99).

Significantly, Tagore was at his best as a novelist. The novel as the dependable medium offered him wide scope and manoeuvrability for making fuller exposing the complexities of social environment. Tagore's intellectual personality found its perfection in being a novelist. His novels
in general deal with reactions of Indian men and women to the impact of Western education and thought. Much to his credit, he had an inborn talent for story telling against the romantic backdrop of the complexity of plots and subplots. Attitudes, situations the methods of indigenous mood and atmosphere as adopted by Tagore gained him a strong position among other contemporary novelists. D.V.K. Raghavacharyulu observes, "The life around him flowed with him and was transferred into art. His life was a continuous essay in experience into things of beauty. In doing so he put himself consciously and deliberately in touch with the long submerged culture and the Indian tradition, ancient medieval and the folk employing them in creative contexts where they could interact and harmonise with the East and West collaborative agents". (Raghavacharyulu, D.V.K. Tagore and Sri Aurobindo. Prophets of the Awakened Consciousness. Essays in criticism on Indian literature in English. 23.)

There was a drastic change in the outlook of the Bengali youth. They had the Western type of education. They shunned tradition in preference to the modernity in their words and deeds. They rebelled against empty rituals, social taboos, superstitions and human degradation. The ideas of Destiny, Karma and fate failed to impress them. Widowhood, child-marriage, racist pride, casteism, untouchability and dishonour to womenfolk were frowned upon and discredited. Precisely, man and not the
society was to get primacy in the value system. This work of eliminating the ills of the society was to expedite the reformation movement already set on the wheels of progress.

Tagore found out that Indian culture was in peril. In the wake of Western infiltration, the roots of Indian civilization and culture were about to be uprooted. At this critical hour Tagore was to defend the diseased Indian tradition. The dead leaves of social ills were to be swept off as by Shelley’s ‘Westwind’. Tagore invited such a Shelleyian spring of regeneration in India. This was not inconsistent with the logic of growth. Such a rejuvenation was to be breathed into life and, that too, not by denouncing the Western culture. Rather, the intention was to decry the Indian infatuation with the West and its culture. Tagore attempted a constructive approach for dealing with this social crisis. No wonder he chose the novel as a powerful medium to convey this message with artistic refinement.

Tagore was the first to produce the novel of ideas according to Viswanath S. Naravane. He is of the opinion that Tagore ‘used description and narration for the purpose of presenting a central idea’. (Viswanath S. Naravane, Introduction to Rabindranath Tagore. 115) Realism is the basic element in his novels as S. K. Banerjee writes. ‘His
realism consists indeed in a close detailed study of life. the slow changes of feeling and attitude working themselves out from day-to-day in place of the swift intuitions and deviations of Bankim Chandra. (Banerjee S.K. Tagore Birthday Number Visva Bharathi Quarterly. 43)

Tagore was deeply inspired by the major trends in the political, cultural and religious movements of India. The strong stones of his literary foundation were laid by the Renaissance movement. He was the child of the Indian Renaissance. In his lecture titled ‘The Voice of Humanity’ he declared thus ‘I speak with my surroundings and not to my surroundings’. His identification of himself with conceptual realism was complete when he chose not to lift himself up into the areas of fantasy but to get himself grounded in day-to-day reality. His frequent foreign tours gave him broader horizons of personal knowledge of such surroundings on a global scale. As a consequence, he channelised his sense of realism into instinctive understanding of man. Man as the ‘social animal’ formulated the social doctrines that he wished to abide by. It was for ensuring peace for all, mutual understanding and compassion. This gave rise to a system of ethical codes commanding uniform social behaviour. No socially conscious man or woman is to the observance of such codes of social ethics. Such a social description is time-tested and it passes for being the Tradition. Tagore admired the values of tradition with its dynamics.
The Indian tradition believes in the filial bond. Joint family system with its strict adherence to moral ethics is its taproot. All the members in the family perform their ‘Karma’ with no anticipation of final reward. Tagore’s heroes and heroines shook up this monolithic unit of family taproot and argued against traditional orthodoxy. This unenviable but natural situation brought certain estrangement from the conservative lot. Such an emotional conflict is clearly evident in all the novels of Tagore. Characters with no maturity of soul and mind were not able to strike a compromise between tradition and modernity. They are a wandering lot, rather the lost-souls.

Tagore portrayed many characters in his novels as Indian by heart but influenced by European by head. He offers his well-meditated solution to the cultural impasse. To quote the best example in his novels, Sachis in *Chaturanga* begins his life as an atheist and finally ends up in becoming a self-willing seer of spiritual vision in terms of inward growth. Tagore pleaded for reconciliation between the votaries of the West and the Orientalists. It was not difficult for Tagore to bridge these two segmentary units. A scion of the Brahminical zamindari class, he has the nobility of spirit to develop critical perceptions on the East and the West. He declared once: ‘We must recognize that it is providential that the West has come to
India. yet some one must show the East to the West and convince the West that the East has her contribution to make to the history of civilization.
India is no beggar to the West.... Let us have a deep association!
(K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar. “A Many splendoured Genius’ Rabindranah Tagore. 10)

Bengal was deeply influenced by the Western thoughts and P.C. Majumdar, the famous historian, rightly comments on this that ‘our educated young men... belong to the 19th century but their homes belong to the first century’. The battle of Waterloo was won at the playgrounds of Eton. Likewise modern India was created in the campus of the Hindu college of Calcutta’ (Sarada M., Rabindranath Tagore: A Study Of Women Characters In His Novels. 2).

Tagore’s novels attempted to reconcile the physical and metaphysical, the near and the far, the orient and the occident, the concord and the discord at various levels. He chose the best in the East and the West. He visualized a modern India with a synthesis of East and the West. He was eager to entertain new ideas in response to fresh situation. Positively, he wished every Indian to keep the windows of his mind open to new ideas floating around. As an ardent admirer of Brahmo Samaj he
encouraged women’s education, widow remarriage and pleaded for equality among men and women.

Tagore’s maiden attempt at the novel started with *Bau Thakuranir Hat*, *(The Queen Consort’s Fair)* in 1882 and *Rajarishi* in 1885 and *Yogayog* in his mother tongue Bengali. After a break of seventeen years his fourth novel *Eyesore* (*Binodini* in English translation) appeared in 1902. The critic Ananda Sankar Ray explains the theme of Tagore’s novels as follows: ‘When Bankim wrote, the chief question was how to restore the national self-respect. In Rabindranath’s time it was how to bridge the East and the West’ (K.R.S. Iyengar 31).

Of the twelve novels Tagore wrote, nine were translated into English excluding *Bau Thakuranir Hat*, *Rajarishi* and *Yogayog*, which were written in the later decades of the 19th century. His first social novel *Binodini* *(Originally Choker Bali)* was translated by Krishna Kripalani. *Naukadubi* appeared as *The Wreck* (1905) and *Gora*, the social novel was published in 1910 with the same title in the original. *Ghaire Bhaire* (1916) was retitled as *The Home and The World*.

*Chaturanga* was translated by Asok Nitra. Tagore’s nephew Surendranath Tagore gave the title *Broken Ties* to his English translation of the novel *Chaturanga. Farewell, My Friend* was the translation of
Shesher Kabita (1929). Two Sisters of Duibon (1933), Malancha became The Garden (1934) and Char Adhyay was titled as Four Chapters (1934).

The present study of cultural dichotomy in the novels of Rabindranath Tagore attempts to make a modest study of the nine novels with reference to Tagore’s times and the prevailing social conditions. There was a conflict because of the East-West encounter and the dichotomy of tradition and modernity. The major characters in the novels are sketched to delineate the clash and the combination of tradition and modernity. The Indian tradition by itself is a framework of habitual faith in religious doctrines and tolerance of all. It demanded emotional intelligence in terms of being sincere to all the social ties. Modernity, on the other hand, welcomes the new ideas, negation of social taboos and the enthronement of wealth. The focal point of this thesis is a modest attempt to bring forth how traditional themes are dealt with a modern outlook.

Tagore’s novel Binodini is a deep psychological study of a young Hindu widow by name Binodini. She is a village girl with knowledge of the English language. She is allowed a free will in the novel along with her varied talents. The theme of widowhood is dealt with the minute
details of human psychology. The novel is in the dialogue form and her feelings of humiliation and frustration are graphically brought out. Being the only daughter to her parents, Binodini was taught by an English governess. Due to her parent’s inability to procure a large dowry, she marries a sickly person and becomes a widow soon.

Binodini leads a secluded life in the remote village. Mahendra, the medical student from Calcutta, marries the uneducated, simple and innocent Asha, who is almost an orphan. Mahendra’s mother Rajlakshmi is not for this marriage and getting estranged from her son, she goes to her village to ease her mental tension. There she meets Binodini, whom Mahendra rejected once because of her English study. Rajlakshmi brings Binodini to the Calcutta house. The situation gets complicated when Mahendra feels amorously agitated in the company of Binodini, an inspiring personality of wit and wisdom. He falls head over heels in love with her. Binodini is warned against this probable public ignominy by Bihari, a frequent visitor and bosom friend of Mahendra. Bihari’s personality is like that of an apostle of subdued greatness, commanding all alike in all the confidence of a messiah. Respecting the views of Bihari, Binodini withdraws from the mansion and goes back to her village house. Nevertheless, Mahendra goes in pursuit of Binodini and persuades her to elope with him to Calcutta.
Binodini has much respect for Bihari’s words. She loves Bihari but he turns it down. However she continues to venerate him. She feels gratified when obeying him. Bihari cares more for Asha. Mahendra’s wife. Mahendra’s infatuation for Binodini is to run its natural course. She is advised by Bihari to oblige Mahendra. Their elopement takes place but not with any physical desire for fulfilment. Mahendra is an adolescent hero with no force of character. At long last, he gets back home, making Asha regain her status as a wife. All is well as per the wish and design of Bihari. Binodini satisfies her love-oriented veneration for Bihari by turning herself into an ardent admirer of his altruistic projects. While Bihari proposes to her, she replies, ‘Religion and society would never tolerate it’ (Binodini 218). This decision of hers is momentous and illustrative of Tagore’s conceptual discernment of the dichotomy of tradition and modernity. This is evident when she in her own words turns down Bihari's proposal for marrying her. Tagore makes this modern spirited heroine. Binodini, swing back from the modernity of free reign of emotions to the tradition of spiritual conviction. Apparently it looks incongruous. But Tagore tells this story with a convincing ‘denouement’.

*The Wreck* his second novel, gives a new dimension to the theme of orthodox religion. The boats of two marriage parties meet with an accident
in the storm. The male survivor Ramesh, the bridegroom, takes a female survivor Kamala to his home mistaking her for his bride. The whole story is about the hero struggling with this mistaken identity. The latter part of the story deals with Kamala’s search for her real husband, Dr. Nalinaksha. Here Tagore’s first woman with formal education, Hemnalini makes her appearance. Heroes and heroines of this novel suffer on account of the system of arranged marriages. Here the novelist votes for modernity, as seen in the free selection of one’s life partner.

*Gora* is the masterpiece of Tagore. The novel pinpoints the clash between orthodox religion and the liberalism of the reformist Brahmo Samaj. Gora, the hero of this novel, was a half-caste boy born to an ‘Irish fugitive’ during the tumultuous days of the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857. ‘Six feet tall and fair-complexioned, Gora emerges as a stormy personality with dynamic spirit and critical speech. He exhibits a fierce loyalty to the Hindu ideology. Eventually he comes to know of his real identity—a ‘mlecha’ by birth. Gora’s strong faith in ‘Karma’ and ‘Fate’ redeems him from the clutches of racial disparity. He turns into a real Brahmo and makes a rediscovery of India and its tradition for universal love and tolerance. Consequently, he gives up his pride. He accepts the imperative need for redefining Hinduism. It has its relevance to the changing society. Thus he identifies the social value and purpose of the Hindu Renaissance
Movement. He realizes that tolerance for all religious principles is the basic norm of Indian tradition. Gora’s foster mother Anandamoyi is the personification of ‘Mother India’ and she stands for the sublimation of secular values in the traditional concept of Universal love.

*The Home and The World* has its roots in the Swadeshi movement. Three major characters Bimala, Nikhil, and Sandip express their mental agony and emotional conflict throughout the novel. Bimala, the educated noble lady of Bengali zamindari family is a victim in the hands of ‘fanatic patriots’. She is oscillating between her husband in the *home*, and the sly patriot Sandip in the *world*. Bimala, steps out of her palace decorum and thereby she disturbs the balance of emotional peace at home. Archetypally, she is like the epic heroine Sita, violating ‘Lakshman’s Rekha’ and thereby bringing disaster to herself and to her husband. Bimala makes a victorious retreat. But it is too late. The damage is already done with her husband leaving her so as to have his tryst with destiny outside. Thus the picture is complete with her home being wrecked as a price for trying to understand the fast changing outside world.

*Chaturanga* is the study of religious fanaticism and its futility. The influence of French techniques in this novel denotes the modernity of approach to a traditional theme. The story revolves around Sachis who
begins his life as an atheist and, later on, becomes the devotee of the Vaishnava cult. The sudden demise of Jagmohan, Uncle of Sachis, rendered Sachis emotionally bankrupt. The Vaishnava Guru replaces his atheistic uncle. His spiritual journey is foreshadowed by Damini, the young widow in the band of Vaishanvites. Once the rationalist Sachis wishes to marry a pregnant widow Nanibala, who has been seduced by his own brother. But now he declines the courtship of Damini, the young widow. The unassuming Damini though unnerved dies with cardiac arrest. The story ends on a tragic note. The novel is a story of young Hindu widow Damini and her quest for a new lease of life, under the influence of Western ideas. She is impressive as a modern minded young lady building up her pragmatic emotions into a crescendo as from the foursome strain (Chaturanga) of music from the Santal drum of self-search.

*Farewell, My Friend* is a romantic love story. It presents a new awareness of female identiﬁcations in a social and emotional context. The self-chosen identity of woman is portrayed in the character of Labanya, the heroine of the novel. She is the only daughter of a college Principal. She is drawn towards Amit who is an Oxford educated barrister living in Calcutta. They love each other more as a fashion. She ﬁnds out by instinct that Amit is an idealist, unﬁt to be a husband. She bids farewell to her lover as a friend because she does not want to give up her individuality for
the sake of having a prudish husband like Amit. The story concludes with the marriage of Amit with his former fiance Ketaki. Labanya marries Sobhanlal, the old student of her father. Sobhanlal was a habitual admirer of hers since their college days. According to Tagore, a young lady seeking a life partner should be true to herself in exercising her independent power of judgement.

**Two Sisters** is a story about Sarmila, the ailing wife of Sasanka, the government Engineer. Her sister Urmimala, comes to attend on her. Her husband is fascinated by Urmi’s smartness. It ruffles his equanimity. In Sasanka’s eyes while Sarmila is ‘motherly’, Urmimala appears a ‘beloved’. He finds in Urmimala what is found missing in Sarmila. The latter loves her fastidious husband as a matter of duty. She is ready to permit her sister to marry Sasanka and to share her conjugal rights. But Urmimala gets out of this wrangle. She flies to Europe for higher studies in fulfilment of her father’s wish. Thus she brings peace to Sarmala’s house. The marriage is thus saved. Urmimala gives respects to her family honour the most. She silently gives an effective blow to neutralize male chauvinism. The novel is suggestive of the woman’s empowerment that is arise from within her.

**The Garden** has the theme of extramarital love-affair. Aditya, is a florist and his wife Niraja is bed-ridden. Aditya brings his cousin Sarala to help him in gardening. Having no child Aditya finds his married life
incomplete and cheerless. Niraja becomes jealous, when she finds Sarala working inspiringly with Aditya. Niraja is cast in the ordinary mould of Indian womanhood honouring the erring Aditya. It is mostly out of traditional submissiveness. She is torn between her loyalty to her obstinate husband and her personal sentiments. The result is that she meets in self-pity. It takes her nowhere except to the disorientation of her spirit. The key note is defined by the translator of this story with the meaningful words, “No misfortune is greater than the poverty of spirit which deprives a human being of the capacity to live and to forgive.”

*Four Chapters* is the last novel which exposes the evils of political terrorism. The theme subsists of the tragic love story of Ėla and Atin. Both of them are drawn towards the glamour of patriotic extremism. They lose their personal identities even as lovers. The stern discipline of their terrorist outfit dehumanizes them to the extent of accepting the high commands order for self-exterrmination. Tagore’s sense of humanism is highlighted in this novel which deals with the subject of patriotism in the form of weird terrorism. The leader of terrorism is a disgruntled academic research scientist by name Indranath. He weilds limitless authority over the members of his team. Ėla is a good girl with more of normal emotions than revolutionary zeal. Ėla makes the fateful choice of seeking amorous intimacy with Atin in violation of Indranath’s commandments. Atin is
ordered to kill Ela. That is a supreme sacrifice. The novel deals with a few
events indicating how terrorism with an agenda of organized and mindless
violence was counter-productive.

Tagore’s novel attracted many eminent critics. Some of the
outstanding critics of Tagore’s novels are K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, Krishna
Kripalani, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Humayun Kabir, G. V. Raj, Niharranjan
Ray, Anita S. Kumar, Sisirkumar Ghosh, Harish Raizada, Viswanath S.
Naravane, T. Padma and C. Vijayalakshmi and M. Sarada. Some of their
critical remarks are to be recalled as follows:

K. R. S. Iyengar introduces Tagore as a ‘many splendoured genius’
in his special volume on ‘Rabindranath Tagore. He has devoted a separate
chapter on Indian writing in English with particular reference to Tagore,
the novelist. In the separate volume entitled Rabindranath Tagore, the
same critic covers Tagore’s literary career from ‘Life’ to the separate
chapter on ‘A many splendoured genius’. It is comprehensive with
classical brilliance. Also, this learned critic sums up Tagore’s
achievements ‘as a poet, dramatist, novelist, short story writer, musician,
painter, critic, philosopher, educationist and a patriot’. The chapter on
‘The novels’ deals with all the novels elaborately with special reference to
a comparative study of *The Home and the world* and *Four Chapters.*
Anita S. Kumar in *A Study of Gora* and *The Wreck* evaluate the literary forms and brings out the artistic features of Tagore’s novels. Bhabani Bhattacharya in his article on ‘Tagore as a Novelist’ in *A Centenary Volume Rabindranath Tagore (1861 -1961)* outlines Tagore’s creative role both as poet and a novelist. His studies on *Gora, Farewell, My Friend* and *Four Chapters* are scholarly. Comparative sketch of the heroines Labanya in Farewell, My Friend and Ela in Four Chapters is realistic.

Vivek Ranjan Bhattacharya in ‘Tagore’s vision of a Global Family’ has dedicated a chapter on Tagore’s best novel *Shesher Kabita (Farewell, My Friend)*. According to him Tagore’s novels are ‘unique in contents. Presentations vary. Characters are few so that the reader does not get lost in the jungle as in the modern novels.’

Sisirkumar Ghosh in his article on Tagore’s Char Adhyaya *Extremism Vs Grande Passion* outlines the extremist psychology in detail. Tagore’s disapproval of terrorism is analysed by Ghosh by branding Indranath the leader of the extremist ‘as a deluded sadist and megalomaniac’.

Humayun Kabir in his ‘Social And Political Ideas of Tagore’s explains how Tagore’s ideas of social life ‘were deeply influenced by his
view of man and his place in the universe’. Caste system, untouchability and injustice to women were the dark side of our society according to Tagore. In Kabir’s view ‘India’s decline began when she lost the spirit of adventure in quest of the new and the unknown’. Kabir appreciates Tagore’s dream of industrialized India endowed with the spiritual strength and cultural abundance.

Swapon Majumdar in his ‘The East West Colloquy’ speaks on Tagore’s views for Western culture. Tagore dreamt of a cultural dichotomy of the profound thought of Eastern countries and the active thought of the Western countries. His essay ‘The East and the West, contains a quotation from Tagore as ‘the torch of Europe is burning bright now. We are to light up our lamps from it and begin our travel …’. Majumdar highlights Tagore’s cosmopolitan view on the oneness of the world.

Viswanath S. Naravane in his comments on the early novels of Tagore speaks on the liking of Indian in story telling and how Tagore did it so successfully in his writings. Acknowledging Tagore’s novels as ‘novels of ideas’ he says that Tagore stands aloof from his contemporaries in his unique presentation of ‘philosophic dimension and cosmic vision’
Harish Raizada in his ‘Humanism in the novels of Rabindranath Tagore’ compares Tagore with Goethe and Victor Hugo. This critic says that ‘Tagore was a staunch humanist because he was a profound spiritualist.

G. V. Raj in his ‘Tagore – The Novelist’ analyses each novel with its central theme. This work on Tagore is so elaborate, detailed and wholesome. For him, Tagore is the ‘reconciler of indigenous and foreign tradition.

T. Padma in her critical treatise on ‘women as character and symbol; An approach to Tagore’s Two Sisters’ analyses the dichotomy of ‘reality’ and illusion’. Her essay ‘Binodini: A Reappraisal’ brings out the young widow’s revolutionary ideas against society in her psychological perspective.

C. Vijayalakshmi in her essay on the ‘Heroines of Tagore’ (Chitra and The Home and The World) talks on how Tagore classifies his heroines in two typicalities: ‘Lakshmi’ and ‘Urvashi’. The former stands for feminine grace, serene in her self-assurance and radiating a tranquil charm and quite power over the human heart and the latter stands for ‘feminine charm, ravishing, tantalizing sensual and ethereal with a disturbingly creative outpouring of personality’.
M. Sarada’s monograph on the female characters in *Rabindranath Tagore. A Study of Women Characters in his Novels* speaks elaborately on each novel with an intimate analysis of all women characters in all their individual profiles and idiosyncrasies.

Tagore’s characters in all his social novels are either too traditional or too modern. Some are seemingly for both but only to swing towards either of these two in the end of delineation. They are intellectual and imaginative in their attitude towards the realities of life. Our Indian tradition of ageless grandeur is of the beliefs of attaining Divinity not by intellectual conviction alone but by the spiritual search also. Tagore was a promoter of this Indian tradition and culture. In the same vein, he had a genuine admiration for the Western thought. He was not prejudiced against the foreign culture, which stood, in his contemporary world, discredited for its political overtones.

To him, welfare of all men and women as free individuals was to be the goal of all human achievement. All his novels were a direct study of complexity of human emotions. It was in all simplicity of aesthetic evaluation. As a master craftsman he uses the subtle technique of making the major character in every novel to follow the path of Indian Tradition while a counterfoil gets attracted towards the concept of Modernity.
past is projected into the present as of Tradition. The present so fertilized is conditioned for the future as of Modernity. The characters of each novel are cast in different moulds but in consistent relevance to their individual taste, training and temperament. Thus they are with their self-chosen affinities either for tradition or for Modernity. Sometimes they are drifting from Tradition to Modernity and vice versa. As a gifted novelist Tagore brings out the dichotomy of Tradition and Modernity into the matrix of plot structure vis a vis characterization. Precisely this dichotomy of Tradition with Modernity is well brought out in the endearing details of human drama and it is exhibited in the manifestation of wills and ideas of the characters who speak for themselves. This is the focal point of this thesis.
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<td>III.</td>
<td>Gora (1910)</td>
<td>Harimohini</td>
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<td>IV.</td>
<td>The Home and The World (1916)</td>
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<td>V.</td>
<td>Chaturanga (1916)</td>
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<td>VI.</td>
<td>Farewell, My Friend (1929)</td>
<td>Yogamaya</td>
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<td>VII.</td>
<td>Two Sisters (1933)</td>
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<td>VIII.</td>
<td>The Garden (1934)</td>
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<td>IX.</td>
<td>Four Chapters (1934)</td>
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