Chapter - 4

HUMAN FEELINGS AND SENTIMENTS

Human relations are based on humanism and humanitarianism. The Reader’s Digest Universal Dictionary defines humanism as “concern with the interest and needs of human beings” and it defines humanitarianism as “the ideas, principles, methods of humanitarians” for governing relationship between the human beings for their welfare and well-being; man’s sole moral obligation is to work for the improved welfare of humanity.

In general terms, humanity is having regard, response and responsibility for the fellow human beings. A sense of service without expecting anything in return, and a sense of sacrifice which is giving something voluntarily in the interest of fellow human beings who are in need of it, and a sense of sharing without hiding for the common interest of fellow human beings, extending a helping hand to the helpless and disabled, raising voice for the voiceless are some of the principles of humanism and humanitarianism.

Tagore’s short stories reflect human relations from different angles. A story is a mirror for the existing social, cultural, educational and personal relationships, which all together form into human relations.

The intension of the writer is to show not only the social, cultural and human relations of the contemporary society, but also to show the short comings and missing values which are to be possessed by that society. By doing so, the writer becomes the conscience keeper for the society.
Tagore’s short stories are richly endowed with different variations of human relations. The short story “The Kabuliwallah” tells us a heart moving relationship of Mini, the little girl and the Kabuliwallah, who comes from the far away land. The humanism naturally grows in Kabuliwallah that he spares eatables to Mini free of cost and without expecting any return from her father. Thus, a strange and indefinable human relationship based on affection for one another develops between them on the basis of innocence, purity, affection, love and a little bit of sacrifice.

I saw my daughter sitting on a bench in front of the door, nattering unrestrainedly; and the Kabuliwallah was sitting at her feet listening – grinning broadly, and from time to time making comments in his hybrid sort of Bengali. In all her five years of life, Mini had never found so patient a listener, apart from her father. I also saw that the fold of her little sari was crammed with raisins and nuts. I said to the Kabuliwallah, ‘why have you given all these? Don’t give her anymore.’ I then took half-rupee out of my pocket and gave it to him. He unhesitatingly took the coin and put it in his bag. When I returned home, I found that this half-rupee has caused a full-scale row. Mini’s mother was holding up a round shining object and saying crossly to Mini, ‘where did you get this half-rupee from?’

‘The Kabuliwallah gave it to me’, said Mini.

‘Why did you take it from the Kabuliwallah?’ said her mother
‘I didn’t ask for it,’ said Mini tearfully. ‘He gave it to me himself.’

I rescued Mini from her mother’s wrath, and took her outside. I learnt that this was not just the second time that Mini and the Kabuliwallah had met: he had been coming nearly every day and, by bribing her eager little heart with pistachio-nuts, has quite won her over. I found that they now had certain fixed jokes and routines: for example as soon as Mini saw Rahamat, she giggled and asked, ‘Kabuliwallah, O Kabuliwallah, what have you got in your bag?’ Rahamat would laugh back and say – giving the word a peculiar nasal twang – ‘An elephant.’ The notion of an elephant in his bag was the source of immense hilarity; it might not be a very subtle joke, but they both seemed to find it very funny, and it gave me pleasure to see, on an autumn, a young child and a grown man laughing so heartily. (R.T.S. 114-115)

Mini’s father also has good sense and understanding for letting the relationship between Mini and Kabuliwallah grow on the basis of humanism and humanitarianism. He is such a cultured man. When Kabuliwallah returns from the jail after seven years and wants to see Mini, then a bride, her father allows him despite the protest from his wife and other kinsmen. The relation based on humanism and other such noble principles reaches its zenith in the story when tears roll down from the Kabuliwallah as he remembers his own daughter who is in the age group of Mini and who is ready to get married along
with Mini. Mini's father is moved by the pathetic and pitiable position of the Kabuliwallah. Now, he becomes emotionally attached with the Kabuliwallah. He gives money to the Kabuliwallah and asks him to go home for meeting his wife and beloved children.

He suddenly understood clearly that his own daughter would have grown up too since he last saw her, and with her too he would have to become re-acquainted: he would not find her exactly as she was before. Who knew what had happened to her these eight years? In the cool autumn morning sunshine the sanai went on playing, and Rahamat sat in a Calcutta lane and pictured to himself the barren mountains of Afghanistan. I took out a banknote and gave it to him. 'Rahamat,' I said, 'go back to you homeland and your daughter; by your blessed reunion, Mini will be blessed.' By giving him this money, I had to trim certain items from the wedding-festivities. I wasn't able to afford the electric illuminations I had planned, nor did the trumpet-and-drum band come. The womenfolk were very displeased at this; but for me, the ceremony was lit by a kinder, more gracious light.

(R.T.S. – 119-120)

The story strikes at the sensibility of the reader and elicits compassion for fellow human beings.

The line of positive impact studded with kindness and compassion continues in the short story “The Post Master” also. “The Post Master” is,
perhaps, Tagore’s finest study of a chance acquaintance developing into a relationship too deep and subtle to define. A Calcutta-bred young man as a postmaster employs a little orphan girl for his menial work. In the rain-clouded evenings, he is haunted by the memories of home and wistfully longs to talk to a kind soul, but finding none; he would light his little lamp and call out “Ratan.” In the presence of this simple girl, he recollects his memories aloud, and Ratan sitting near his feet relives many a scene from her faded past – her fond father coming home in the evening; her playing with her brother on a cloudy day… Thus they come close. Then, just to fill his leisure time with some meaningful activities, he starts teaching her to read and write. This tender touch brings her still closer to him. She finds in him somebody who cares for her, somebody whom she can call her own and serve to eternity.

Suddenly, the Postmaster is taken ill. Ratan ceases to be a little girl and nurses him back to health. Again she takes her former place outside the door waiting for a call. The call comes after a week and she is stunned to know that her master was to leave next day for Calcutta. She quietly goes to cook and when the Postmaster has finished his supper, she says, “Dada, will you take me home with you?” The Postmaster laughs and says, “What an Idea?” The whole night she could not sleep. The Postmaster’s reply haunts her. Next day before sunrise she keeps water ready for his bath, for she knew not when he was to go. Just before starting, the Postmaster offers Ratan some money and says he would ask his successor to take care of her. Clinging to his feet, Ratan cried, “Please, Dada, do not give me anything, do not ask anybody to take care of
me,” and ran out of sight. The Postmaster heaved a sigh and moved out towards the Ganges for journey.

The Postmaster is not hard-hearted; he was quite kind towards Ratan in his own way and even felt a feeling of remorse at leaving her behind. But what a world of difference between his kindly indifference and Ratan’s deep attachment and unquestioning dependence! Ratan’s dumb suffering, when her request to accompany him is lightly turned down, moves us to tears and in tears we say, “What a dear child!”

This simple unadorned story of two ordinary persons, in a remote village with its green slimy pond and flow of seasons, is one of the finest Tagore ever wrote. It shows what a real artist can achieve with a bare minimum. In suggestive stories like this, where a mood is evoked, Tagore is at his best. In it we find a mood of sadness and awe that gives a sense of the great in the small. On the screen, the story has come out very successful. The genesis of this famous story is found in the letters Tagore wrote from Shazadpur in February, 1891, “Some evenings the Postmaster comes up to have a chat with me. I enjoy listening to his yarns.”1 Again he talks about him in another letter, “there is a kind of bond between this Postmaster and me… I wrote my story of ‘Postmaster’… and when the story was out in the Hitabadi he came to me with a succession of bashful smiles, as he deprecatingly touched on the subject.”2

While Ratan has relative freedom to remain alone and nostalgic, Subha, is disturbed from her serenity and she is left in a state of confusion from which she could hardly come back. The short story “Subha” leaves a lasting
impression on the readers mind in the arena of human sentiments and feelings.

A feeling of sympathy immediately arises in the readers mind when it is said that she cannot speak. The feeling of affection is attached to Subha when the readers come to know that she has created her own world, which responds to the feelings of Subha. The feeling of purity and innocence emerge in the readers by looking at her playing friendship with the mild animals like cows. Her playful attitudes towards Nilakanta generate in the reader’s mind a feeling that the plain and clear relation between the two characters should contribute without any disturbance likely to be caused by the misinterpretations of the world between a boy and a girl.

The feelings of pity and fear rise for Subha in the readers mind when her parents plan her marriage:

The groom came himself, with a friend, to inspect the prospective bride. The girl’s parents grew anxious, worried, agitated, as if the deity himself had come to choose the animal for sacrifice. From behind the scenes, the mother redoubled the girl’s tears with rebukes, threats and reprimands and sent her out to face her examiner. (S.R.T. - 109)

The groom inspects her from all angles and remarks ‘not bad’ but the silent language of Subha could not be understood by either her parents or the proposed spouse.

The examiner, having conducted a lengthy inspection, pronounced, ‘Not bad.’ The girl’s tears in particular led him to
conclude that she had a heart, and he calculated that a heart which was now so grieved at the prospect of parting from her parents, could later be put to his own use. Like the pearl in the oyster, the girl's tears only increased her value; they spoke no further on her behalf.” (S.R.T. - 109)

As Subha moves from happiness to suffering, the reader's heart starts getting heavy. This is a natural response of a kind and compassionate human heart. The writer closes the story with a heavy heart as Subha is abandoned by her husband for no fault of her. Tagore stimulates human heart through his short stories of this kind. The readers of various ages with various levels of maturity respond positively towards the growth and development of healthy society filled with healthy human feelings and sentiments.

“The Castaway” is another such story of a neglected waif of a village theatrical troupe who finds a home and is soon cast away. Nilakanta was never treated like a human being before he met Kiran. Kiran's affection makes him a bright man, otherwise he would have spurned the idea of stealing. But soon when he feels neglected by Kiran and considers Satish to be the cause of it, he stoops to steal. There was no other way to take revenge upon Satish, who had robbed his only bliss in life. Tagore shows how thwarted yearnings for affection seek forbidden paths. However, Kiran's native kindness towards the homeless lad, seen especially when he is accused of stealing and above all when she keeps the stolen article quietly back in his box with a deep sigh as if she were the thief herself, leave an indelible impression upon us.
The saying “Blood is thicker than water” may be true. But in this story monitory values prove to be thicker than humanitarian values. Consequently misfortunes befall on the miser who passionately pursues the material wealth ignoring human values. In The short story “The Trust Property,” Tagore illustrates how greediness of man supersedes the human feelings and sentiments. In this short story, Yajnanath Kundu is a miser. He hoards wealth not for spending but just for hoarding only. The concept that currency, water and knowledge are meant for circulation not for stagnation is not known to Yajnanath Kundu. His misery brings him misfortune. The first misfortune is that despising his unbearable misery his son, Brindaban Kunda and his grandson, Gokulchandra leave the home. Even after the incident:

It is unlike that Yajnanath felt much distress at his son’s departure. It was a considerable financial saving, and furthermore it removed a dread that had plagued him constantly – that Brindaban might one day poison him: what little food he ate was tainted by this morbid notion. It lessened somewhat when his daughter-in-law died; and now that his son had left him felt much more relaxed. (R.T.S. - 77)

The second misfortune that comes upon Yajnanath Kundu’s is that he entombs his own grandson not knowing the fact that the child, Nitai Pal is the son of his own son. Here the misers striking quality is that Yajnanath Kundu finds the boy in the street. For unknown reasons he develops a strong liking for him. On hearing that the son’s father is searching for the child, he tries to hoard
the child at the place of his treasure thus entombing him. Later, he comes to
know the fact that the child is his own grandson, Gokulchandra.

Tagore becomes a prophet in foretelling that the money power that
would rule the world. The message in this story is very much relevant to the
contemporary society where in the human relations have turned out to be
almost commercial relations.

The short story, "Cloud and Sun" takes us to a village lane where we
see a petulant little girl moving up and down, demolishing one by one the black
plums tied in a corner of her striped sari, obviously with a design to attract the
young myopic scholar sitting on the bed, book in hand, behind the iron-grated
window. Her silent scorn being ineffective, she uses pellets of plum-stones
with desired effect. Soon after coming to the village to manage his small estate,
Sasibhushan found in the little Giribala a never-failing friend, always hovering
round his window showing annoyance one day and lavishing unbounded
affection on another, and in him she found her sole ally – teaching her to read
the Book of Tales. When Harkumar is humiliated by the Joint Magistrate for
not supplying four seers of ghee for his dogs, Sasibhushan comes to his rescue
and offers to defend his case, and day and night, he prepares for it to the
apparent neglect of sensitive Giribala. But soon, Harkumar makes a cowardly
compromise and it revives his old dislike for Sasibhushan with greater venom,
and no more we find Giribala moving about in the familiar lane.

One day, after another vain attempt to safeguard the interest of a poor
boatman against the high-handedness of the alien ruler, standing aloof on the
river-bank Sasibhushan watches a decorated boat carrying Giribala to her husband’s home. The only one tie for him in the village snaps and he leaves for Calcutta. On the way, defending the poor fishermen, he comes to blows with a superintendent of police and is thrown into jail for five years. When the term ends, he finds himself outside the prison-walls with no place to go. But a carriage waiting there takes him to a strange palatial house, the house of widowed Giribala, “one whose hopes of earthly happiness are blasted but who retains the memories of happy childhood and what might have been.”

Giribala provides the first part of the story with scenes of haunting beauty. Some evils of contemporary rural life and the high-handedness of the alien rule are focused through the idealist Sasibhushan, who tries to defend the rights of the villagers but miserably fails due to their cowardly compromises.

Tagore reserves vast area for paying attention to the child relations, which are part of human relations. The writer, consciously takes care to portray the characters of differentially able persons such as Subha, in addition to providing space to the child characters from human relations view point, also presents the other side of the human relations i.e. the trials and tribulations by the weak and frail not necessarily at the hands of the mighty and the wicked but in the traps of the traditions and customs.

Further, it is true that he has depicted mostly the joys and sorrows of middle-class life and drawn a large number of characters from this section of society, being closer to it, he is able to focus the problems of masses. The people from the lowest caste have received his equal sympathy.
Tagore had a deep love for the child and keen understanding of its mind. The secret of the ease with which he could probe into child's world lay in his capacity to turn back to his childhood.

Francis Bacon says "Child is the father of man." Tagore had a brilliant childhood. After growing into a mature writer, Tagore has given prominence to child characters in his short stories. Among his child characters, Subha, like Helen Keller, Stephen Hawking, Franklin Roosevelt, Louise Braille, who were with major disabilities outshines all other character in the story. Some of the brilliant children of Tagore are Subha, Pathik Chakravarthi, Mini, Uma, Tarapad and Ratan.

"Subha" seems to be a highly talented girl. By birth Subha is dumb. But she has forgotten her dumbness and created her own world and established her own communication channel with nature. She has also learnt to withstand the undeserving criticism by the society. Subha could demonstrate a convenient adaptability with her environment. The child could become a source of friendliness for the voiceless animals. She could listen to a language of nature and understand it, "which others with all abilities" could not do, with such a special ability, Subha could have planned her own life in tune with her ability and inconsonant with her environment. Human beings without any disabilities may have many shortcomings. The story says: "What we express in language has largely to be constructed by our own efforts, somewhat like translation; it is not always adequate, and through lack of skill may often be wrong" (S.R.T. 104).
But in Subha’s case, her eyes have the extra ability of speaking for herself with nature. “But dark eyes do not have to translate anything. The mind casts its own shadow upon them; sometimes shut up; sometimes it flares up brilliantly, sometimes it fades into dimness; sometimes it darts in all directions like the swift inconstant lightning” (S.R.T. - 104-105).

It is the meddlesome nature of the elders with all abilities and in the name of taking care of Subha’s life, Subha gets into troubles after a series of fast developments:

Meanwhile the parents, burdened with the duty of getting their daughter married, were becoming anxious. People were growing critical – there was even a rumour that they would be socially ostracized. Banikantha was well-off, able to afford fish and rice for his family at every meal, and so he had enemies. (S.R.T.-108)

Subha longs for her parental abode i.e. nature, but could not come back and reunite herself with it but Phatik, a lovelorn boy longs to come back home and finally after many hardships succeeds in reuniting himself with his mother and home.

In the short story, “The Home Coming” the character of the fourteen years old Phatik Chakravarthi appears to be simple at first glance. But if we re-read the story carefully we can realize what subtlety, Tagore has shown in sketching it. We find in Phatik an artistic blend of mischief and filial affection, of aggression and desire to be loved. “Phatik Chakrabarti, leader of the gang,
suddenly had a bright idea. Lying by the river was a huge sal-tree log, just waiting to be made into a mast” (R.T.S. - 107).

When we first see him at the riverbank, he is the ringleader of the mischievous boys. They look up to him as to a hero. He devises new escapades for them every day. He is a resourceful strategist. Rolling the log with Makhan on it shows not only his initiative and invention but also sense of humour.

At home, however, he does not shine. His mother shows a partiality for the younger Makhan. He suffers under a sense of neglect. That accounts for his violent handling of Makhan. There is deep unrest in his soul, which craves for the mother’s love. That is why when his uncle offers to take him to Calcutta, he readily agrees. He hopes to get in his uncle’s house what he has been sadly missing in his own village home. “When at last the day to leave came, he was moved to a joyous display of generosity. He bestowed on Makhan his fishing-rod, kite and reel, with permanent right of inheritance. (R.T.S. - 109)

Hopes, however, are often dupes. His aunt proves less affectionate than his mother. However partial his mother may be towards Makhan, Phatik loves her and wishes to be near her. But in Calcutta affection seems to be unavailable anywhere. The aunt abuses him on all pretexts. She always compares him unfavourably with her own three boys. His uncle does nothing to soften the edge of his wife’s hostility to him. “At school there was no one more stupid and inattentive than he. If asked a question he would just stare back vacantly. If the teacher cuffed him, he would silently bear it like a laden, exhausted ass” (R.T.S. - 110).
School also is a trial. The dry lessons do not interest the boy who has led a life of freedom in the open fields. His lack of progress in the class produces an inferiority complex in him. He has to put up with the teacher's caning and his cousins' mocking.

Phatik is very sensitive. So, when he feels he is going to get a spell of fever, he decides not to be a nuisance to his aunt. He braves the pouring rain and walks back to his mother. In the delirium, we find him uttering his mother's name. When he is a little conscious he asks whether the holidays have come for him to go back home. "'I was going to my mother,' said Phatik, weeping, 'but they brought me back'.” (R.T.S. - 112)

The mother does arrive at last. She pours on him words of affection. But now he is beyond the reach of all human affection. He goes to the source from which all of us came. The holidays have come for him once for all. It is a permanent home-coming. Through suffering he is purified.

For Phatik, it is home coming from a confinement. For Mini it is waiting from home for the Kabuliwallah. Her parents--loving mother and caring father in her home love her very much and groom her with care. Even then, Mini longs for the arrival of Kabuliwallah. The indefinable relation between a grownup stranger and a yet-to-grow child is a gift of nature.

In the short story, "Kabuliwallah" Mini, the five year old girl is inquisitive in nature. She is receptive as per as hospitality is concerned. Though she is afraid of meeting strangers initially, she has the ability of making friends.
She has the broad mind of sheltering the poor and entertaining them to their satisfaction. In her father’s own words her inquisitiveness is proved.

My five year old daughter Mini can’t stop taking for a minute. It only took her a year to learn to speak, after coming into the world, and ever since she has not wasted a minute of her waking hours by keeping silent. Her mother often scolds her and makes her shut up, but I can’t do that. When Mini is quiet, it is so unnatural that I cannot bear it. So she’s rather keen on chatting to me. (R.T.S. -113)

Her way of questioning for knowledge things reaffirms her inquisitiveness:

Before I had a chance to enlighten her about the multiplicity of languages in the world, she brought up another subject. ‘Guess what, Father; Bhola says it rains when an elephant in the sky squirts water through its trunk. What nonsense he talks! On and on, all the day.’ Without waiting for my opinion on this matter either, she suddenly asked, ‘Father, what relation is Mother to you?’ (R.T.S. -113)

Mini listens to the shouts of Kabuliwallah in the street. She rushes to the window and calls him. Though she is afraid of the Kabuliwallah initially, gradually, she could establish friendly relation with him.

Mini is receptive and hospitable. She has broad mind of sheltering the poor to their satisfaction. The attire of Kabuliwallah is not an eye feast.
“Dressed in dirty baggy clothes, pugree on his head, bag hanging from his shoulder, and with three or four boxes of grapes in his hands, a tall Kabuliwallah was ambling along the road” (R.T.S. - 113). With such untidy man Mini’s father found his daughter:

Sitting on a bench in front of the door, nattering unrestrainedly; and the Kabuliwallah was sitting at her feet listening – grinning broadly, and from time to time making comments in his hybrid sort of Bengali. In all her five years of life, Mini had never found so patient a listener, apart from her father. (R.T.S. - 114)

Mini has also a kind heart at a tender age. When Kabuliwallah was being taken by the police, Mini rushes to Kabuliwallah and asks “Are you going to your ‘Svasur-bary’?” this question also is an embodiment of the innocence of Mini. Mini is a pure evolution of childhood from the mind of Tagore.

Mini’s parents allow her to grow and blossom into a full human being by allowing her to befriend herself with such people as Kabuliwallah. But contrary to this, somewhere in society budding humans are crushed by nipping their feelings and sentiments at bud level.

Uma is a budding genius who grows into an intellectual. But she becomes a victim of male domination and her intellect is nipped at the bud level. The opening line of the short story explains the evolving maturity of Uma’s talent. “As soon as she learns to write, Uma causes tremendous trouble. She would write ‘Rain patters, leaves flutter’ on every wall of the house with a
piece of coal – in great, childish, curving letters. She finds the copy of “The Secret Adventures of Haridas” that her elder brother’s wife kept beneath her pillow and wrote in pencil, ‘Black water, red flower.’ Most of the stars and planets in the new almanac that everyone in the house used were, so to speak, eclipsed by her huge scribbles. In her father’s daily account-book, in the middle of his calculations, she wrote:

He who learns to write

Drives a horse and cart. (R.T.S. - Uma is deprived of her note-book – a loving souvenir of her short stay in her parental home – by her unfeeling egoistic husband. He has foolish notions of a woman’s place in life and his child-wife must live up to them. In an ironical vein, Tagore shows how Pyarimohan shared his ideals with his uncritical readers with the self-satisfaction of doing a great good to humanity.

Pyarimohan was most perturbed when he was told about what had seen. Reading and writing, once started, would lead to play and novel writing, and household norms would be endangered. As he thought further about the matter, he worked out a most subtle theory. Perfect marriage was produced by a combination of female and male power. But if through women’s education female power was weakened, then male power would prevail unchecked; and the clash between male and male would be so destructive that marriage would be annihilated, and women
would be widowed. As yet, no one had been able to challenge this theory.” (R.T.S. - 143)

There is a deep pathos in the helplessness of Uma, who pines for her parental home, where she could have her note-book and write in it. There is a tender filial touch in the mention of how her father often wished to bring her, but could not; for her brother Govindlal, a fellow-writer of her husband, thought it not prudent. There is a bitter satire on the inhuman custom that uprooted a child from the life-giving parental care and exposed her to the unsympathetic treatment of the in-laws. In the early part, we have a happy picture of Uma’s simple delight in playful scribbling.

Uma loves learning. She likes growing in talent. She enjoys spending her time in creativity. She looks for new horizons. “She had the exercise-book, she neatly wrote in it: ‘Birds are singing, Night is ending.’ She would sit on the floor of her bedroom embracing the exercise-book, chanting out loud and writing. She accumulated many snatches of prose and rhyme in this way” (R.T.S. - 141).

Tagore depicts two contradictory characters in the form of Uma and Tarapad. As Uma is deprived of minimum feelings and sentiments, Tarapad, as his name suggests travels with absolute freedom in the celestial streets.

Tarapad is an absolute character, born for absolute freedom. In reality absolute freedom is not in existence. It’s only relative freedom that makes society move in a systematic way. But Tarapad steals absolute freedom and move from one place to another place avoiding any settlement willfully. “He
was a good-looking boy: bright skin, large eyes, smiling lips, radiating a soft youthful charm. He wore a shabby dhoti; his bare upper body was lean and firm, free of any excess, like a sculpted model of perfection” (S.R.T. - 147).

Nature has cast a spell upon him and he has imbibed its detachment and generosity. Settled life is not for him. He is happiest when he is on the move from one temporary home to another. Though a pet of the village, he leaves it because he cannot resist the call of the mysterious outside world. Everything around him, the patter of heavy rains on the trees in full foliage, the roll of thunder, the moaning of the winds, the howling of jackal stirs him to his depths. Though dearly loved at home by his mother and brothers, he slips away to join the band of players, simply because the musical performance fascinated him. When the proprietor starts loving him like a son, he quietly leaves him to join a company of ballad singers. When the ballad-master begins to love him as a singing pet bird, he is seen traveling with a trader. Next he throws his lot with the acrobats. From them, he comes to Motibabu, the Zamindar of Katalia, with a request to give him a lift to Nandigram. Motibabu is simply fascinated by the free majestic demeanour of this strikingly handsome boy of fifteen or sixteen, and so is his affectionate wife. Only their little Charu seems to be displeased with him. “Whenever he saw these scenes, he grew restless for the freedom of the great unknown affectionless world beyond the village. After he had run away two or three times, his family and neighbours gave up on him at last” (S.R.T. 149-150).
Tarapad's curiosity is aroused by the strange behaviour of this little girl and he sticks to the family for an unusually long time. He finds the tantrums of Charu highly diverting. In the village his nature endears him to all. Charu's friend Sonmani, the widowed daughter of their cook, calls him Dada and he plays the flute for her. Charu seeing Tara so affectionate to Sonamani, is stung by jealousy. The way Charu breaks his flute, spoils his note-book and locks him to avoid his going to Sonamani, is highly amusing and indicative of Tara's spell on her. Just before Motibabu could bind him to Charu in marriage, he quietly slips away into the wide world.

It is an extremely good story. A roaming child of nature like Tarapad was dear to Tagore. Tarapad's sheer delight in all things and persons is simply infectious. The two little girls, Charu with her tantrums and Sonamani with her compromising timidity, enliven the story. Beautiful descriptions of nature and the sights and sounds associated with a reverie Bangal lend a rare charm and realism to the story.

Human feelings and sentiments grow naturally and without the knowledge of the persons themselves. But depending upon the civil society and its circumstances human beings either accept or reject such feelings from their minds. This is what happens to Ratan.

In "The Post Master" Tagore has creates a village orphan girl with immense self-respect. Her name is Ratan. She is the representative of Tagore's female characters with pride and humility filled together.
Ratan becomes the solo friend of postmaster in the hamlet. Without Ratan the postmaster could have left the village much earlier. Owing to the presence of Ratan only the postmaster could have social evenings by chatting about sweet nothings. Ratan becomes the soul of the postmaster in meeting his needs and getting his things done.

Ratan would be waiting at the door for this, but she did not come at the first call – she would call back, ‘What is it, Dadababu, what do you want?’

‘What are you doing?’ the postmaster would say.

‘I must go and light the kitchen fire -

‘You can do your kitchen work later. Get my hookah ready for me.’

Soon Ratan came in, puffing out her cheeks as she blew on the bowl of the hookah.” (R.T.S. – 42-43)

The postmaster forgets even his hunger while talking to Ratan; they go on talking to each other till midnight.

Sometimes these conversations went on late into the night, and the postmaster then felt too sleepy to cook. There would be some vegetable curry left over from midday, and Ratan would quickly light the fire and cook some chapatti: they made their supper out of that.” (R.T.S. - 43)

Ratan feels sad when the postmaster announces his decision of resignation and leaving the village forever. At the same time, Ratan stands her
dignity and rejects postmaster's help in favour of her continuing stay with his successor. Thus Ratan remains a child of pride and self-respect.

Thus, Tagore's every short story is a volume of human relations, feelings and sentiments.
References


2. Ibid., pp.83-84.