Conclusion

In my thesis, I have tried to show how three major tenets of ‘nationalism’ – the construction of new nationalist ‘self’, the interpellative programme for women during the colonial rule and projection of ‘nation’ for collective imaginings – are dialogised within the chronotopic plane of the Tagore's prose fiction; his major novels, his short stories and his writings for children. Mikhail Bakhtin's theories of the novel have been the main-stay for my study. So were the leading postcolonial theorists of present times. Walter Benjamin's concepts, on history, on literature, on culture, on modernity, on art and the like too have been immensely helpful for my research. Interestingly Benjamin, Bakhtin and Tagore were three contemporary thinkers, living in three different corners of the world, thinking about man and his destiny in the 'modern' world.

My contention all along has been that by appropriate method of analysis we can unravel dissenting, marginal voices in richly-textured texts like Chaturango, Gora, Ghare baire, Char adhyay, 'Hungry Stone' or Shey; a fact which can help us relativise ‘nationalism’ and thereby, help us see it in a truer perspective. But, these are, more appropriately, a sociologist’s or cultural historian’s concerns. In the realm of literary criticism, I am hopeful that my study will be able to show the autonomous status of literary texts; artistic constructs which do not always conform to the contemporary ‘dominant’ cultural formulations. We should remember the Bakhtinian maxim, “A man in art is not when he is in life and vice versa.” In a text, ‘centrifugal’ modes of thoughts can get encoded; thoughts which have not really grown out of conscious authorial intentions. This layer of the text is what Fredric Jameson would call the 'political unconscious' of the text. Bakhtinian approach to texts is one possible way to help a critic to bring this dimension of texts to light.

In the first chapter I have presented in detail the actual contours of the projected nationalist ‘self’ – the virile, ascetic figure who would lead the heterogeneous population of India in the anti-colonial struggles through a vigorous regeneration of the country’s rich heritage. I have then gone on to explore the nature of textual discursivity of such a ‘constructed self’ in Gora and Char adhyay; this is shown through a detailed textual analyses. My focus has been on the authorial intention of
showing the dialogical nature of the issue of the 'self'; through the presentation of exchanges of long dialogues between characters like Gora, Paresh Babu, Anandamoyi, Binoy in \textit{Gora} and Indranath Ela and Atin in \textit{Char adhyay}. These two texts can be called Tagore's attempt to write 'thesis novel'. I, however, discussed these novels in the light of Bakhtin's idea of 'salon chronotope'.

I have also shown how in these two texts the overt masculinity of Gora and Indranath is dialogised by the positive androgyny of Binoy and Atin. In the context of androgyny, Anandamoyi's character in \textit{Gora} offers a new possibility of outgrowing the rigidity of 'male/female' binary opposites. I have also tried to show that the masculinist 'self' projected through the character of Gora and Indranath is a construction largely based upon the western paradigm. At the level of the unconscious of the text it operates like a migratory signifier for the colonized's 'desire of the Other'. In the second part of this chapter, I have shown how masculinity, encoded in overt Hindu martial values, as it is represented in \textit{Gora}, written at the beginning of the twentieth century, is gradually blown out of all proportions in \textit{Char adhyay}, Tagore's last novel, due to its gradual entwinement with violence, brute, ruthless violence. The Extremists resorting to violence; violence for its own and their refusal to held accountable for violent acts as they tried to justify their actions by citing religious texts like \textit{Srimadbhagabatgita} deeply pained Tagore. In this text he shows how engagement with violence can dehumanise an individual; as Atin laments, can make him \textit{swadharmochyuto} and \textit{swabhavbhrosto}.

In the second chapter I have taken up the 'woman question'. I have tried to show that reforming women and the creation of a new subject-position for women – \textit{Bhadramahila} – was high on the list of agenda for the nationaqlist readers. Against the 'materialist' west 'woman' was used as the most important markar of the 'spiritual' India in the rising nationalist discourse. I have shown how ideas of 'female auspiciousness' and 'gendered spiritual' helped building the platform for the act of imagining the nation as 'organic community'. In this chapter too as I get on with the textual analysis of Tagore's major novels both the hegemonic voice and the dissenting voices – the 'centripetal' and the 'centrifugal' – are seen to be encoded in the texts. In my analysis I have classified Tagore's novels into two broad categories; 'domestic novels' and 'political novels'. In the attempt to develop the \textit{Bhadramahila}-construct, a form of synthetic femininity, a repression of female sexuality took place. The effect
this could be observed in the realm of conjugal relationship. In my study I have tried to show that Tagore's 'domestic novel's bear testimony to this fact.

In the 'political novels', with the help of Raymond Williams’ dynamic model of culture – ‘the dominant’, ‘the residual’ and ‘the emergent’ I tried to locate female characters who represent different tendencies of the culture of those times. In a text like Gora, the prescribed iconic representation of female subjectivity which was propagated by official ‘nationalism’ gets splintered by the presence of characters like Sucharita or Anandamoyi, who represent different kinds of 'idea-world'. The figure of Anandamoyi, as I have mention earlier in this essay, shapes up as a transgressive individual who rises up to an androgynous position, blending in her character qualities of both Bangali males and females.

Interestingly, it is the ‘absent consciousness’ of characters like Labonya or Sasimukhi present in Gora which articulates (by remaining silent) the ‘centrifugal’ traits present in the actual nature of female existence during the emergence of nationalist discourse. I have tried to show that however consciously the authorial intentions tried hard to supplant ‘dissenting’ voice of Lolita with the ‘mother-figure’ of Anandamoyi during the last movement of the novel, Sasimukhi’s and Labonya’s presence in the text open up the ‘split’ that existed between the ‘pedagogic’ and the ‘performative’ elements in the nationalist discourse with its ‘nation-building’ agenda.

In the last two sections of this chapter I take up a study of Bimala, the central female character in Ghare baire and Ela, the heroine of Char adhyay. I have tried show how Bimala's attempt to posit herself as a 'self-representing woman', a woman in total control over her sexuality, turns out to be disastrous in the end. The 'split' between the official figure of woman – the sanctum sanctorum of 'Indian culture' – and the actual position woman in Indian society becomes wide open in Char adhyay. Ela's attempt to prioritize her emotional and libidinal needs before the cause of the nation, her becoming a genuine female agency, becomes something impossible to handle for official nationalism. She has to be killed off in the end.

The same element of ‘split’ is explored in the last chapter in an attempt to analyse the natures of textual strategies involved in the project of 'narrating the nation'. Bharatbarsha – the ‘imagined community’ is perhaps the one idea that is most consistently dialogised in a novel like Gora. Gora’s India is juxtaposed with Paresh
Babu’s, Anandamoyi’s and Binoy’s India. Although the articulations of ‘India – the nation’ occur mainly on a discursive level, Gora’s journeys to the countryside open up another ‘India’ which is far away from the intellectual concerns of the educated, bilingual bourgeois class of the country. It is the marginal presence of subaltern classes in the text that really opens up the ‘fissures’ of the ‘constructed’ ideological projection of ‘India’ – the ‘pedagogic’ subject. This feature of the text once again proves the artistic autonomy of the 'literary' where traces of minority discourses get recorded, sometimes even the author of not being fully aware of it. On the other hand, my attempt is precisely to read the borderlines of the nation-space. This I find encoded in a text like Gora. I find in the presence of characters like Nanda or an unnamed village barber. A study of their characters, I am hopeful, can open up the discursive liminality of ‘official nationalism’ and its claims of comprehensive representation. Careful attention to the ‘centrifugal’ voices – be they of minor women characters or of nameless subaltern – in the multi-textured discursivity of texts like Gora may provoke a crisis within the process of signification and discursive address of dominant nationalist discourses of India during her colonial days and which still continue to hold sway over much of the intellectual perceptions of the present-day educated class about ‘India – the nation’.

We must also keep in mind that the ‘split’ in the act of ‘national imagining’ can be observed not only synchronously. It can also be traced in the way the nationalist discourses ‘re-member’ the nation. It involves ‘acts of forgetting’ which would result in repression. Tagore’s story ‘Hungry Stone’ is an artistic record of the effects of such repression. The cultural and political strategy of erasing the country's Muslim past in order foreground India's past glory in the light of an essentially Hindu heritage takes a strange turn of events in this story. The Muslim past comes back to haunt a bilingual western-educated subject as it takes him back to a 'gothic-chronotope' during his encounter with a deserted palace, with a Muslim past. The peculiar temporal nature of 'castle time' makes alive for the protagonist of the story all the things that his race was trying hard to forget.

In the very last section of my thesis I discuss Tagore’s Shey. I try to show during the very last phase of his artistic career; Tagore tries to seek refuge in the genre of fantasy literature. In the world of fantastic stories and pictures of Shey Tagore makes an attempt to outgrow the 'nationalist horizon' and, in the process, explore possible
other ways of enjoying our stay in the planet. For him the act of 'provincializing' the nation is like rediscovering 'reality' itself.

Coming back to my use of methodological tools in my research, I am sure that critical practices, empowered by Bakhtinian narratology, are capable of offering important and relevant insights, for a time like ours and country like ours, into the dialectical nature of relationship between literature, history and politics. My attempt, in my study of Tagore's fiction, has consistently been of such kind; trying to discover the polyphonic nature of Tagore's works. I want to humbly add that departments of literature of various universities of our country should be more enterprising in this respect as specialists from other fields are fast appropriating Bakhtin to study race, ethnicity or culture. (Two such cases immediately come to mind - Sumit Sarkar has used the idea of ‘chronotope’ in his book Writing Social History and Bhabha has developed his arguments with help from Bakhtin’s analysis of Goèthe in ‘DissemiNation’). But I strongly believe that it is the literary critics who are most able to use Bakhtin’s thoughts to uncover multi-nuanced literary texts, thereby offering fresher perspectives for studying society, history and culture.