Chapter- 1

Introduction: Exploring New Possibilities

This world appears to us as an individual, and not merely as a bundle of invisible forces. For this, as everybody knows, it is greatly indebted to our senses and our mind. This apparent world is man’s world. It has taken its special features of shape, colour and movement from the peculiar range and qualities of our perception. It is what our sense limits have specially acquired and built for us and walled up……This world, which takes its form in the mould of man’s perception, still remains only as the partial world of his senses and mind. It is like a guest and not like a kinsman. It becomes completely our own when it comes within the range of our emotions. With our love and hatred, pleasure and pain, fear and wonder, continually working upon it, this world becomes a part of our personality.¹

‘Self’ is a reference by an individual to the same individual person. It constitutes a person's uniqueness that creates a consciousness in him/her. This consciousness helps to constitute the thoughts and emotions. It works behind one’s motivation, action, social behaviour and experiences. ‘Self’ is shaped by the social interactions and the physical environment. It is an essential being that not only keeps a physical existence but is a culmination of the cognitive, emotional and rational existence. It evolves with communion to the external world. It is not limited only to the inner working of the body
but it gets its projection with external selves and circumstances. It gets manifested with society as how anyone behaves with others in external environment. So, the ‘self’ is not what we are or feel but what others give estimate of us. It comes into ‘being’ with the interfacing of the internal humanly processes with the socio-cultural environment. Culture plays an important part in exploring the evolution and change in ‘Self’. If one grows up in a certain culture, one joins with the specific standards of that culture. The ideology of one’s culture puts its effect on shaping one’s personality.

Literature is determined by its environment. Any literary work is seen as an exact reproduction of its times because according to the determined aspects by society, literature cannot be better or different. Thus, the characters, the voices or the attributes of a work present the full and final picture of the society. George mead, the American sociologist, stated that

The self is something which has a development; it is not initially there, at birth, but arises in the process of social experience and activity, that is, develops in the given individual as a result of his relations to that process as a whole and to other individuals within that process.²

‘Self’ and ‘Society’ are complementary to one-another. The spontaneous self-expression of individual benefits the life of the community and the combination with community life adds to fulfillment of the individual’s expression. An individual's self develops with the self-consciousness and experiences with the people. The human
individual is a member of society and his actions must be viewed in context of the society.

By incorporating estimates of how the generalized ‘other’ would respond to certain action, the individual acquires a source of internal regulation that serves to guide and stabilize his behaviour in the absence of the external pressures.³

Human-beings perceive through senses but perception does not mean as an empty receptacle but to concentrate on the objective reality, to try to reach to the immanent and clear philosophical, behavioural or cultural issues that can be taken as a central tenet or inclusion of thinking, creed or a belief. ‘Self-perception’ is the projection of one’s character, mind and personality. What applies to life also applies to our experience or work of art. A perspective is formed when an individual maintains relationship with the world in reference to an event. A human being deals with multiple situations of life. Dealing with such many situations, many perspectives are formed. ‘Society's perception’ refers to know how people feel about others and what inference they make of other people. Any text in the form of the story or novel is not only a text but it also presents the writer’s outlook.

Rabindranath Tagore wrote the stories with a view to create an awareness of the spirit of period. He perceived the society according to his notion that is subjective in itself. ‘Society’s self- perception’ indicates that his stories are the reflectors of the ways how the society actually functioned or what actually contributed to constitute them. The stories are not the life-narrations of the specific persons as characters but they relate to
the collective whole. They present the idea or the reflection of the society and social realities of the time when the stories were written. This idea is visualized as the stories act as constructing the past and provide a sharp awareness and understanding of the life-processes of the time when these were produced. It is a true fact that the perceptionist is not exclusionist but an overt observer who scrutinizes the issues with a special insight and minute observation.

As a writer, Tagore, in his stories, seems to try to interpret almost every related social and cultural phenomenon and focuses on such questions as -- does literature refer or correspond to an external reality? What sort of 'truth' does literature aim at? What psychological processes contribute to the readers’ understanding or enjoyment of literary texts? What are literature's links with history? What are the explored ways and means to present the feelings impersonally? While doing so, the stories also focus upon the aspect of change to life. As Tagore’s stories are a committed writing, the change aspect in them indicates the relevance of his positive thought and interaction with a humanitarian outlook in society. If anyone thinks on the different dimensions of a work, one has to, exclusively, stress upon the social background to reach to the proper conclusion.

The present study is a revelation of the situations that existed in Indian society in nineteenth and twentieth century in India that have been reflected in the short stories of Rabindranath Tagore. This work for study centres on Tagore’s thirty-five short-stories that are included in three volumes--

Of Cards”, “The Devotee”, “Vision”, “The Babus of Nayanjore”, “Living or Dead?”,
“We Crown Thee King”, “The Renunciation”, “The Cabuliwala”.

“Old Man's Ghost”, “Great News” and

Castaway”, “Saved”, “My Fair Neighbour”.

But the research work also explores some more powerful stories of Tagore as
“The Woman Unknown”, “The Wife’s Letter” and “The Laboratory” and some others.
for they appropriately deal with the theme of this research work and are beneficial to
understand the assumed hypothesis and to reach to the possible expected conclusions.
Before analysis of the undertaken stories, it is necessary to have a consideration on
Tagore life, his literary works and the circumstances that contributed in the making of the
stories.

Rabindranath Tagore was born in Jorasanko in Calcutta in 1861. He was a
Bengali poet, Brahmo philosopher, and scholar. He was the son of Debendranath Tagore
and Sarada Devi. Debendranath Tagore had formulated the Brahmo faith propagated by
his friend, the reformer, Raja Ram Mohan Roy. Debendranath became the central figure
in Brahmo society after Ray’s death. He was addressed out of respect by his followers as
‘maharishi’. He continued to lead the Adi Brahmo Samaj until his death. Rabindranath
was the youngest of fourteen children. As a child, he lived in such an artistic atmosphere
where literary magazines were published, musical recitals were held, and theatres were performed. Tagores held a special and central place in a large art loving social group. Tagore's oldest brother, Dwijendranath, was a respected philosopher and poet. Another brother, Satyendranath, was the first ethnically Indian member appointed to the elite and formerly all-white Indian Civil Service. Yet another brother, Jyotirindranath Tagore, was a talented musician, composer, and playwright. Among his sisters, Swarnakumari Devi earned fame as a novelist in her own right. Jyotirindranath's wife, Kadambari – who was slightly older than Tagore– was a dear friend and powerful influence on Tagore. Her abrupt suicide in 1884 left him distraught for years, and left a profound mark on the emotional timbre of his literary life.

The life of Rabindranath Tagore (1861- 1901) covers the first, four decades of his life; that can be considered as formative for his artistic and political thinking. Women who married into Tagore's family were from the villages of East Bengal (now Bangladesh). Tagore grew up exposed to the publication of the literary magazines, in – home musical recitals, and theatrical performances. In early October 1878, Tagore travelled to England with the intent of becoming a barrister. He first stayed for some months at a house that the Tagore family owned near Brighton and Hove, in Medina Villas; there, he attended a Brighton school. But he could not complete his education there. He left the England after one year's stay. But his exposure to English culture acted as a filtration in his later life. He did not follow one culture fully; He followed the way choosing from both-Hindu religion and English Culture-the best of them with his experience.
In 1890, Tagore started to manage his family's estates in Shelaidaha. He known then as "Zamindar Babu", often travelled dozens of miles across the vast estate. His dealings with his tenants included the annual collection of rents and the blessings of villagers; in exchange for his generosity. In this decade, he produced literary works and founded a new genre of Bengali writing- the short story. Tagore wrote some fifty-nine of them in 1891-1901; many had ironic elements or had emotional appeal while they dealt with a wide range of Bengali lifestyles. Examples include *Sonar Tari* (1894), *Chitra* (1896), and *Kahini* (1900); his essays, poems and plays of the times also touched on village life.

Tagore's "Sadhana" period, that comprised the four years (1891 to 1895), was named for one of his magazines. This period was among Tagore's most fruitful periods that provided more than half of the stories contained in the volume- *Galpaguchchha*, is a collection of eighty-four stories. The stories written by him showcase his reflections upon his surroundings and day to day life complications in the lives of the simple people. His characters are full of vital emotions and have been given shape with spontaneous and refined manner. These characters were intimately connected with his connection to the common villages of Patisar, Shajadpur, and Shelaidaha when he managed his family's vast landholdings. He presents the lives of India's poor and common people as he examined their lives with a penetrative insight and feelings.

The life of Rabindrantah Tagore (1901-1924) concerns his life in Santiniketan and extensive travels throughout Asia, Europe, and Japan. In 1901, Tagore left Shelaidaha and moved to Shantiniketan, an experimental school with trees, greens and library about one hundred miles to Calcutta. In 1912, he went to England while carrying a sheaf of his
translated works. At readings there, these works impressed a number of Englishmen, including English missionary and Gandhi protege Charles F. Andrews, Anglo-Irish poet William Butler Yeats, Ezra pound, Robert Bridges, Ernest Rhys, and Thomas Sturge Moor. Indeed, the famous Irish poet, W.B. Yeats later wrote the preface to the English translation of *Gitanjali*.

In 1912, he travelled to the United States, speaking at Unitarian church in Urbana, Illinois. In that year, he toured the United Kingdom also. In 1913, he won the Nobel Prize in Literature for *Gitanjali*. In this last decade, he compiled fifteen volumes of writings, including works of prose-poems such as *Punashcha* (1932) *Shessaptak* (1935), and *Patraput* (1936). He continued his experimentation by developing prose-songs and dance–dramas. He wrote the novels also as *Dui Bon* (1933), *Malancha* (1934), and *Char Adhyay* (1934). He also took an interest in science in his last years, writing *Visva-Parichay* (a collection of essays) in 1937. He wrote on topics ranging from biology to physics, and astronomy; meanwhile; his poetry-containing extensive naturalism underscored his respect for scientific laws. His last four years (1937-1941) were marked by chronic pain and illness. He died in 1941.

Tagore's journey as a writer can be observed in the context of the journey of the nation. Any writer does not write the text according to his/her own specific ideology but the external factors also influence upon his/her literary creations. Tagore’s perspective on different situations also underwent a change with the passage of time. The literary qualities were present in him even from his childhood as he wrote his first poem when he was only of eight years and wrote the first story when he was only of sixteen years. He grew up in a time when India was passing through many critical situations as the people
were struggling to get freedom of the nation. He though was not a political leader but he supported the Indian nationalists through his writings. He dreamt India to be free from the British rule which he reflects in the poem- *Where the Mind is Free from Fear*. He was against colonialism, this he reflects in the stories-“The Supreme Night” and “Cloud and Sun”. He was reshaped and directed by his personal experiences, knowledge in the society, his tours to different nations and the political conditions of India. The sentiments of social reforms aroused in him the feeling of the betterment of women in society. The woman in the stories of Tagore became a centre of the happenings of the incidents. In the third stage of his literary career (1913-41), he created such female characters in stories who boldly protested against the sufferings of patriarchy. He created such women characters which even match to twenty first century when women have ‘Right to Vote’ and ‘Right to Education’ etc.

Tagore with his writings had such a force that he quickened the spirit of the people to accept the social change. In 1914, Pramadha Choudhary, a revolutionary woman, established a journal-*Sabuj Patra* (Green leaves) in which the writers gave expression to their literary creativity with social criticism of Hindu Orthodoxy. They wrote articles in it in Bengali not in English. Tagore also associated with this journal and showed his revolutionary ideas it. After 1913, he became more radical in his stories-*Haimanti, The Wife's Letter, Aprichita* (The Woman Unknown) and *Tapasvini* and critically exposed the life of traditional Hindu family. This effect of his revolutionary outlook can be traced even in the novels, *Home and the World* (1916) and *Chaturanga* (1916). He established a school- 'Visva Bharati' in 1921. His international travels also sharpened his opinion that human divisions were shallow. He created the character of
Sohini, belonging to the future world that could not be acceptable to the then prevailing conservative society. In the short story, *The Laboratory* he has depicted a new age in which there is no more patriarchal oppression. There is the reversal of role to that of matriarchal force where women gain the upper hand. Beyond physical charm and chastity, a man attempts to perceive the intelligence and spiritual beauty of a woman. A woman has the choice of selecting her man. A mother and a daughter break all the social conventions and values with regard to sexuality. Sohini, the protagonist, is a rare woman character with a social consciousness that violated all traditional values for her idealism. As a widow, she regains her right to the property of her husband through a legal battle. In uniting individualism and idealism, Sohini is the ‘New Woman’ of Tagore. Considering the fact that it was Tagore’s last short story just a few months before his demise, it is obvious that Tagore has envisioned the advent of feminist thought in society by the creation of such a bold woman with a futuristic outlook. She challenges the conservative society with the unconventional marriage, with her open views on women’s sexuality and by her untraditional devotion to her husband in carrying out his scientific temperament. In creating Sohini, Tagore’s experimentation and ideas for women come to a complete shape.

Further, his fiery speeches and lectures gave a momentum to the national movement for Independence. His life and teachings are still a source of inspiration for the youth of the country. He renounced his knighthood as a protest to the Jallianwala Bagh massacre in 1919. In his story, *Sanskar*, he wrote about non-co-operation boycott of foreign goods, freedom of the depressed class among the Hindus and so on. He felt that if the countrymen followed these ideals, the liberty of the country would be attained very
soon. The heroine of this story, Kalika had her initiation in the ‘Ahimsa’ movement. Although she was inspired by the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi yet she could not rise above her limitations and her prejudice about untouchability. It was she who opposed her husband’s proposal to lift the tortured scavenger in the car, and in doing so, she instantly forgot all her former principles - her generosity and liberality to these small people.

Rabindranath cited this as an instance of artificiality in a section of people who lived a comfortable life and a life of affluence in society. The heroine of another short story, Namanjur like Kalika in Sanskar, also indulged in politics and had a fancy to move on a political platform to earn chief fame. Rabindranath depicted such characters with his characteristic humour and ridicule that outwardly posed or pretended to be brave, yet at heart were extremely narrow and superstitious. The stories as Sanskar, Namanjur etc. are the examples how he did not approve of participation in movement with the peolpe who could not overcome such limitations as narrowness in thinking, jealousy, cruelty, prejudices and so on. The realistic writer, Tagore regretted and condemned the ideas of war and the ruin and devastations it brings upon mankind, the worst victims of such mad pursuits. This feeling is expressed by Tagore in his short story, Dhangsha in which the writer’s eagerness for peace has also been revealed in a cautious and disciplined manner. In another short story, Badnam, its heroine, Saudamini has rendered active help to its revolutionary hero. The main idea of this short story is that a revolutionary does not only fight for the freedom of his country, but also brings to his countrymen a genuine hope and message for freedom.

Tagore's Gora' (1910) is set in undivided Bengal around 1880 in which he mentions such situations that signify his idea of the fate of the rural people. In this novel,
the protagonist, Gora's love for nation is betrayed when he is found that he belonged to British parentage while he had a strong faith in Hinduism. His construction of Indian self-identity gets fractured when he is even not allowed to enter in a Hindu temple. The story projects a paradoxical situation between 'self' and 'other'.

The novel, *Home and World* (1916), is written with the backdrop of Bengal partition and was encompassed with the revolutionary processions. The poem in *Gitanjali- Where the Mind is Free From Fear* expresses the desired assertion. The poem-*Ekla Chalo Re* also strengthened the national marches. The social consciousness in Tagore always accompanied to his artistic consciousness. The man of action was never far from the contemplative man. He wrote novels, short stories, songs, dance-dramas, and essays on political and personal topics. *Gitanjali* (Song Offerings), *Gora* (Fair-Faced), and *Ghare-Baire* (The Home and the World) are among his best-known works. His verse, short stories, and novels, which often exhibited rhythmic lyricism, colloquial language, meditative naturalism and philosophical contemplation received worldwide acclaim. His literary reputation is disproportionately lies for his poetry; but the prose- his short stories are also regarded as masterpiece. Indeed, he is credited with originating the Bengali-language version of the genre. His works are frequently noted for their rhythmic, optimistic and lyrical nature. The stories mostly borrow from simple subject matter: the lives of ordinary people.


In the 1980s and 1990s, Indian writing in English witnessed a spurt in the realist literary works. A character does not know that s/he is not only playing a part in the fiction, yet s/he articulates an understanding and interpretation of a literary experience as an emancipation of notions and habits which are peculiar to an age. The twentieth century was an age of social realism and was concerned on social issues. ‘Realism’ suggests that the characters that it presents find the reason for their actions and decisions inside themselves because the human aspect is always present in the society of every era. In the realistic literary works, the characters exhibit their social and economic situations because they do not attempt to hide anything. The social realists depicted social reality in its true colours. Rabindranath Tagore, Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan, Raja Rao and many other writers dealt with social issues. The Indian society had been suffering from many social injustices but the creative mind of the writers reacted sympathetically to the woes of the downtrodden and the marginalized. They showed the real life facts in a true way, without omitting anything that was ugly and painful, and idealizing nothing. These Indian writers showed a passionate concern for the existing conditions of India. They showed the impulse of social awakening about women’s problems, their struggle to find a coherent identity, their anger at the bondage of outgrowing stereotypes and hard struggle to obtain personal integrity, the poverty and hunger of the peasants, the various dimensions of the struggle for independence, the tragedy of partition, social and political changes along with the inner life of the sensitive and suffering individuals.
In shaping the emotional world of an artist, the social milieu is one of the determining factors. As he reflects on the basic tendencies of society deeply and is sensitive to its processes and his works are significant. Tagore, as a social realist, is a sensitive artist who has used ‘realism’ so as to present the social and political realities of contemporary Indian life and his humanistic vision of life. He explores the depth of the realities of life. He has a sensitive understanding of the problems of contemporary Indian society. His intimate knowledge of rural Indian life is an outcome of his minute observation of life. His main concern is-- man and reality. He seems to try to make the people socially and economically conscious. In his literary writings, he transcends the ideological boundary of the world and presenting the real picture of society covers the humanity. Through his characters, he portrays the people objectively in relation to the society without making them a mouthpiece of any pre-conceived ideology. He neither uses his art for allowed propaganda, nor professes indulgence in ‘art for art's sake’. His angle of vision is shaped by his devotion to human interest. His works indicate his enduring faith in the values of love and humanity and assert the dignity of the individuals and present the societal conditions that needed a rapid change. Writing the stories with a female psyche and thinking like just a woman is an amazing quality of Tagore as a writer.

Why do people remember these stories for years? It is undoubtedly because the masses see in the short-stories that something narrates deeply of their own lives- their hopes, dreams, doubts and anxieties. Tagore also examines Hindu-Muslim tensions in the story, *Musalmani Didi*, which in many ways embodies the essence of Tagore's humanism. This story mirrors the image of woman in search the self-identity. In the story, Kamala a beautiful girl was an orphan. Her parents were dead. She was brought up by her uncle. A
marriage proposal came for her. The bridegroom was the second son of a wealthy family. After marriage ceremony, the marriage party set out with the bride through the infamous field of Taltori. The leader of the thieves with his band attacked on the wedding party with his gang. Kamala rushed from the palanquin and was about to hide in a bush, then a Muslim who was regarded as ‘paigamber’ came there and ordered the gang to move from there. The thieves had to quit. The Muslim said to her not to be afraid. She was as a daughter to him. He offered her to go with him. She became embarrassed. The Muslim understood that she was a Hindu daughter and was hesitant in going to a Muslim’s house. He assured her that the true Muslim knew very well to give respect to a holy Brahmin. She should stay there. He would keep her safe. She went with him as she had no other option to take shelter at that time. After that she went to her uncle but she was not welcomed there as she had lived in a Muslim’s house. She returned to the Muslim’s house where she received a kind treatment from him. After some time, she began to love with his second son and married to him. She became a family member of that Muslim family and was renamed as Meharjan. In the mean while, her uncle’s daughter was also married. And on the way back, the marriage party was also attacked by the gang. This time, Kamala saved her sister and handed over to her uncle. She assured her that if she had any trouble in her life ever, she could remember that she had a Muslim elder sister to protect her.

The story, Darpaharan exhibits Tagore's self-consciousness in describing a young man harboring literary ambitions. Though he loves his wife, he wishes to crush her literary career. He thinks it unfeminine to read and write. The story depicts man's shortcomings but with his acceptance of his wife's talent.
Behaviour patterns are observed by the attitude, observations, action and the inner feelings and can be traced even by oneself or by an outside observer who relies or observes the inferences of the individual's inner states. The two prepositions—as a character and as an observer constitute the heart of the author's self-perception. The characters, in Tagore’s stories, not only exhibit the characteristically or behavioral traits but they also supply the prevalent traits or features to represent the contemporary era. If we critically examine the stories, we realize that they are not simply-knitted themes of some characters but need to be analyzed in a wider perspective-sociological, psychological and behavioural.

History and human-life are interrelated. The ‘self’ and ‘history’ are not lost in postmodernist fiction, but newly problematized. This self conscious problematization of the making of fiction and history is a prime characteristic of the postmodern. A productive inter textuality is used that neither simply repudiates the past nor reproduces it as nostalgia. Postmodernist irony and paradox, in this view, signal a critical response within the world of representations, raising questions about the ideological and discursive construction of the past in the narrative constructions. Postmodernists discover themes, techniques and attitudes in literary works and explore their newer implications. They realize that the past must be revisited but with irony. Jean Baudrillard, a postmodernism philosopher, in his book, *Simulations* (1983) theorized the ‘loss of the real’. According to him, the ‘real’ is now defined in terms of the media in which it moves. The pervasive influence of images from television and advertising has led to a loss of the distinction between the real and the imagined. The same is true of the distinction between reality and illusion and between surface and depth which have also disappeared. Postmodernism
rejected the temporal and spatial, the notion of the past, present or future or the
distinctness of behavior-patterns in different cultures. The truth lies in the individual’s
apprehension of a phenomenal that would mean something different to another
individual. In terms of chronology, moreover, we do not expect these stories to deal with
meta-fictional narrative modes and postmodernist ambiguity because their setting
remains limited to the experiences of Bengali men and women under British rule.
However, Tagore anticipates these postmodern emphases on the permutations and
combinations governing character-structure today, especially in the open-ended ‘closure’
of narration as in the stories—“The Hungry Stones”, “Once There Was a King”, “The
Victory” and “Vision” etc. As a postmodernist, he takes interest in 'mini-narratives' that
explain small practices, local events rather than large-scale universal or global concepts.
Mini-narratives are always situation based contingent, fluid and virtual making no claim
to universality, truth, reason, or stability. He deals with many polemical issues like
conflict in tradition and modernity, internal and external, male-female conflicts etc. His
stories are embedded with the postmodernism-elements such as in “The Hungry Stones”,
two kinsmen meet a man in a train, who claims to have, among so many other things,
complete knowledge of Russian and English policies. This new acquaintance informs
them with a smile that

There happen more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are
reported in your newspapers

The inclusion of Hamlet’s speech, to suit “The Hungry Stones”, indicates the
extent of the speaker’s knowledge and Tagore’s deliberate attempt to evoke an inter-
textual resonance to anticipate a story with supernatural presence as in Shakespeare’s
Hamlet. The new speaker, apparently a worldly-wise, widely travelled man knowing everything from the Vedas and Persian poems to the price of cotton and administration of native states spins a tale about his own experience of a ghostly beauty in a haunted palace in Barich, his erstwhile residence. Just as he brings alive the haunting tale of a captive lady 250 years ago and her yearning for freedom transmitted to the modern listeners through his own words of yearning for her unseen presence, the connecting train is announced and an English gentleman hails the narrator of the ghost-story and takes him away in a first class compartment while the two kinsmen in their second class carriage begin to discuss their lost acquaintance and their own insatiate hunger to know the end of his story. The theosophist kinsman opines that the gentleman was special. The story ends with the following sentence:

The discussion that followed ended in a lifelong rupture between
my theosophist kinsman and myself.5

The author destines the readers to get the conclusion themselves. There are so many possibilities. The teller of tales was truthful; he was a complete fraud; he was merely whiling away the empty hours before the connecting train arrived-all these possibilities could have been true. Presence of such multiple possible endings indicates that Tagore had anticipated the postmodern, meta-fictional mode of narration long before it had been studied.

In “Once There Was a King”, the story begins with the sentence “once upon a time there was a king” and the narration continues with that. The narrator tells that though a very young child does not differentiate between one king and another. So long
as there is a king in the story, modern readers are more perceptive and exact, critical and suspicious. They ask the name of the king and if, for example, the answer is Ajatsatru, the next series of questions flow freely as to which of the Ajatsatus of different historical periods was being referred to. Only when the storyteller makes a proper reference to history does the modern audience accept the story as one that is instructive. Continuing with the reference to childhood love of stories and a willing suspension of disbelief, the narrator says that an appeal to his mother had given him respite from his tutor for a day. The comment that follows is interesting because it reads:

I hope no child will be allowed to read this story, and I sincerely trust it will not be used in text-books or primers for schools.6

Dispelling the illusion of the autonomy and integrity of the world of his narration deliberately, Tagore permits real life to impinge upon fictional construction generally presented as a complete world. This is definitely an anticipation of meta-fictional narrative strategies used extensively with full consciousness of the significance of such authorial stance in late twentieth century fiction. Again, as the story continues, the grandmother telling the tale tells her audience that the king had left behind the queen and princess in an attempt to pray alone in the woods so that he could be blessed with a son. When he returned to the palace after twelve years and decided to marry his beautiful daughter to the first man he came across next morning, she was married off to a Brahmin boy of seven or eight years. The story is interrupted again:

If my grandmother were an author how many explanations she would have to offer for this little story! ….This would be regarded
as absurd. Even if she could have got so far without a quarrel, still there would have been a great hue and cry about the marriage itself. First, it never happened. Second, how could there be a marriage between a princess of the warrior caste and a boy of the priestly Brahman caste? Here readers would have imagined at once that the writer was preaching against our social customs in an underhand way. 7

A mere telling of a fairy tale by a grandmother is turned by Tagore into a truly postmodern narrative where gaps, questions, puzzles and multiple possibilities in audience-response are interweaved with a subversion of social and moral norms and the propensity of the intelligentsia to politicize everything. Deliberately breaking off, dismantling the fictional edifice and introducing the author’s own figure in the middle of a story about kings and princesses are strategic narrative decisions that anticipate the meta-fictional writing of today. Tagore, as evident in these examples, had experimented freely and openly with narrative and structure of short stories in the nineteenth century but the world was unaware of his trail blazer efforts in this genre. It is the existence of traces of a superbly postmodern consciousness that does not try to offer facile simplistic solutions to insoluble problems and puzzles in the human experience of ‘being and nothingness’ posits Tagore as our contemporary.

“Great News” is a story of Kusmi and her Dadamshay, who narrates to her story of the sail and the oars and tells the importance of oars (small things than the sail but are hard-workers). He concludes—“True news appears small, like the seeds. And then comes the tree with its branches and foliage. Do you understand now?” At this the girl replies—
“So I do”. She pretends that she has understood everything. Here the writer leaves the end on the reader’s imagination about what happened next, a postmodern trait.

The short story, "The Victory" explores the theme of destiny. Tagore presents the difference between outward appearance and reality and victory and defeat with the message that you must never give up as you do not know what is hidden in your fate. Tagore narrates in the story how Shekhar, a court poet impressed everyone including the king's daughter with the outpouring of the feelings of his heart. Everyone feels a kind of personal connection with what he says. One day, he is challenged for his position by the "mighty" Pundarik whose reputation makes him uneasy and who has come to the palace to "ask for war," challenging the humble Shekhar. Pundarik is eloquent and has defeated the people in the arena with his ability of words. Shekhar was so much in awe of him that he could not compete with Pundarik adequately and his words seemed inferior and even childlike in comparison to him despite the fact that he knew that the king and the princess loved his poetry.

Tagore intelligently presents the glimpse of culture and combines this with subtle suitable references and suggests that the power of the ‘word’ (according to Pundarik) is contradictory; appearances can be deceiving. The story explores intentions and perceptions, and reminds us that giving up should never be an option. The narrator reminds the readers that "truth and falsehood mingle in life- and to what God builds man adds his own decoration." In other words, man tries to govern his own destiny but it is not within his control. Shekhar, out of depressed feelings in defeat, eats the poison and dies. But the princess whom, he had never seen but only felt, visits to him to put crown on his
head as his victory but it gets too late. If only he had not tried to interfere and to take his future into his own hands, he would have realized that the princess already loved him.

The story, “The Kingdom of Cards” is a mockery of the Indian lack of initiative of human lives that is guided by a set of idiotic activities and by illogical obedience to rules without understanding them. The colonizers, namely the Prince, the son of Merchant and son of Kotwal intervene into the fixed and formulized societal structure of the kingdom of cards. With the arrival of these three, the things begin to change. The story provides the aesthetic angle of romanticism and imagination and provides the glimpse of the story, Alice in the Wonderland. It illuminates the way how the colonizers, namely the Prince, the son of Merchant and the son of Kotwal bring a change by doing every work according to their ‘ichchha’, breaking every regulation.

Tagore was keenly interested in ghosts. From his childhood, he had witnessed the deaths of many near and dear ones, beginning with his mother when he was of nine years. Over the course of his long life, he lost many people, including a sister-in-law, Kadambari who haunted Tagore’s writing as his muse, and three of his children who died tragically young. His songs and poems deal with the subject of the afterlife from a more philosophical angle. To appreciate Tagore’s hold on human psychology, we just have to look at stories like “Old Man’s Ghost”, “The Skeleton”, “The Hungry Stones” and “Living or Dead?” etc. In the story, “Old Man’s Ghost” at the time of Old Man Leader’s death, people wailed-what will be our lot when you go? Hearing this, the Old Man himself felt sad. Gods took pity and let the ghost of the Old Man to go on sitting on their shoulders. So, everything went on peacefully. As they were dependent on the ghost, they did not work. Now the problem was without doing work and without learning how to pay
the taxes. The invaders also entered in their country. The young people got impertinent and shouted to drive the ghost. The fact was-- the Old Man was neither alive nor dead, but was a ghost. He neither stirred the country up nor ever relaxed his grip. The ghost entered where they were afraid of. In this way, Tagore wants to say that no external power can dominate the human being untils they themselves allow it to enter, and without work, life becomes dull and monotonous.

Tagore's stories display the human sentiments as the story, “Raja and Rani” is based on the theme of jealously. In it, Bipin Kishore who was adept in music but fool in business, came to Raja Chittaranjan who intended upon to organize an Amateur Theatre party by the prepossessing looks of Bipin Kishore and his musical qualities, Raja gladly ‘admitted him into his crew’. To see Raja’s inordinate liking for Bipin Kishore, Rani Basanta Kumari became angry at her husband. She said that he was wasting his time on him. When the opera of Subhadraharan was ready after due rehearsal, Raja acted the part of ‘Krishna’ and Bipin that of ‘Arjuna’. He sang very sweetly and looked very beautiful. When the play was over, Raja asked to Rani how she liked it. She replied that Bipin acted the part of Arjun gloriously. His voice was rare. Raja asked how he looked. Rani replied that his was a different case. And after that she again started to praise the abilities of Bipin Kishore. Raja felt jealously at this. As Rani’s favour for Bipin increased, Raja dismissed him. Bipin could not understand the cause of this removal. He thought that everything was caused by fate. But behind all this, he was unaware of the real cause- ‘jealously’ in the royal couple.

The story, “The Babus of Nayanjore”, portrays the picture of an old simple-hearted, kind and sympathetic, jovial as well as sociable in temperament man, but having
one shortcoming—the vanity of belonging to an illustrious family of Nayanjore. The external attachments like family traditions are of no use when one is confronted with the deepest emotions of the heart. Tagore not only portrays the character of Kalidas Babu but also the character of Kusum. We see the impoverished representative of the zamindars of Nayanjore clinging to the illusion of past greatness and subjecting himself to the ridicule and practical jokes of heartless young man. The granddaughter tries to support her grandfather and shows her resentment and sorrow at the attempts to make fun of him, but the tone is, on the whole, light and the happy ending is not jarring. Such an ending is however unusual but the theme is unified and well-knit.

Rabindranath Tagore’s conception of the short stories is the exquisite co-mingling of character with environment. One can’t imagine the survival of his characters without their environment. Nature depicted in his stories fulfills various functions. It plays an animate role in the progression of the stories. Tagore, after his marriage, was sent by his father to Shelaidaha to manage the estates there. From this, he toured widely in many villages, going about mostly in house boats, surveying the expanse of water that is the Padma River. After years of city life, he was now in the bounties of nature, with plenty of opportunities of admiring natural scenes and surveying the panorama of rural life. Living here, the poet was impressed by the wide expanse of water and by the unknown human beings who had inhabited the villages for generations and centuries. That is why in most of his stories, he establishes an internal link in man and nature. He could feel subtle nuances of the beauty of nature and link it with human life. He uses nature for the creation of a particular mood. In order to convey a mood in a better way, he takes a support of either similar or dissimilar phenomena of nature. Human feelings get
depth and completeness as Tagore reveals them through the interface of nature. He is realistic in the depiction of nature. He preferred lighter colours. Glaring colours like red, black, yellow were not used in his stories.

An interesting short story, depicting both human relationship and environment, is "The Postmaster". In it, the postmaster, a city bred man, "felt like a fish out of water in this remote village" when he was transferred to a village. There, he comes in association with Ratan, an orphan girl. When he is ill, she nurses him with care to recover to him to health. While he revolts to the environment of Ulapur, the only source of his peace is she. The Postmaster wants to make his transfer. On his application being refused, resigns his post and will go back to Calcutta. When he breaks this news to the child, she wants to accompany him, a request, this, which the postmaster can not comply with. When he leaves her and the boat carrying the postmaster moves on the river, he intensely feels the relationship between the nature and the human being-

When he got in and the boat was under way, and the rain-swollen river, like a stream of tears welling up from the earth, swirled and sobbed at her bows, then he felt a sort of pain at heart; the grief-stricken face of a girl seemed to represent for him the great unspoken pervading grief of Mother Earth herself.8

Within the brief space of the story, Tagore is able to achieve super harmony of character and environment. Characters like Subha in the story, “Subha” and Kanti's bride in "The Auspicious Vision" are a part of the very rhythm of the natural life. Once the character is exposed to an alien environment, there is breakdown of communication.
Subha in the short story, “Subha” and the dumb girl in "The Auspicious Vision" bring out the closeness of the human world with the natural. In both the short stories, Tagore tries to show how the characters are out of tune when they are away from their natural environment.

The Story of "Subha" rendered in omniscient narration, fully brings out the fusion of character and environment. In the environment of her own family, the dumb Subha feels out of place. She makes her move away from her people and lives most of time in her own private world, Nature. The conclusion of the story- remarrying of her husband with someone other does not bring any surprise to the readers. On the contrary, it enhances the feeling that Subha, the dumb companion of the cow, the goats, and the kitten, cannot, after all fit into the artificial world of the city-bred man and she should remain the darling of Nature, a part of Nature's eternal loneliness.

In the story,"The Auspicious Vision", a dumb village girl is confronted by a sophisticated young man, Kantichandra. This story like "Subha" depicts character in relation to environment and the tension or absence of it as consequence upon reversal of situation. Kantichandra goes for hunting and notices a village maiden whose Beauty and a rare freshness as if she had just come from Vishwakarma's workshop.⁹

Having been captivated by the beauty of the girl, he goes to the house of her father, Nabin Banerji and asks the old Brahmin to give Sudha in marriage to him. By an accident, Kantichandra mistakes the dumb girl for Sudha, her sister and finds himself married to the sister instead. He realizes the deception as the "Auspicious Vision" in the
course of the wedding ceremony. However, on knowing that he really has not married the
dumb girl for whom he approached Nabin, he feels "a sigh of intense relief, as of escape
from calamity". Thus, kantichandra suddenly removes her from his mind. The blissful
vision of beauty vanishes from his mind. But the beauty of the dumb girl is a part of the
eternal beauty of Nature. She is but "The companion of all the animals and birds of the
locality". Hence she has to remain a part of her environment.

Tagore felt a profound intimacy (nigudha atmiyata) with nature’s abundant
expression. Nature beautifully becomes a mouth-piece of expression of inner feelings of
characters. Paragraphs on nature are very well-knitted in the theme of the narration and it
appears as if nature plays an important part in presenting the happenings. Nature is ‘an
animate being’ that furnishes the purpose of the writer. It plays a terrifying role in, “The
Hungry Stones”-

Not a sound was in the valley, in the river, or in the palace, to
break the silence, but I distinctly heard the maiden’s gay and
mirthful laugh, like the gurgle of a spring gushing forth in a
hundred cascades, as they ran past me, in quick playful pursuit of
each other, towards the river, without noticing me at all. As they
were invisible to me, so I was, as it were, invisible to them. The
river was perfectly calm, but I felt that its still, shallow, and clear
waters were stirred suddenly by the splash of many an arm
jingling with bracelets, that the girls laughed and dashed and
spattered water at one another, that the feet of the fair swimmers
tossed the tiny waves up in showers of pearl.10
“Ek Ratri” (The Supreme Night) is a story of a schoolmaster’s love for his old playmate, Surabala, now the wife of a rich lawyer. With all ambitions frustrated, he can only think of what might have been until Nature, in her fury, arranges for their short reunion. The torrential rains causing floods seem to be the precursor of a cataclysm and on the one sheltering islet these two human beings stand close to each other, silent, gazing at the enveloping dark pall, listening to the roar of the water currents. But the night approaches its end, the winds lessen their violence, the waters recede and Surabala goes home without saying a word and the schoolmaster does the same, thinking of this one night which would stand out significant in his life of frustration.

The story, “The Parrot’s Training” (1918) is a satire on western and now-a-days modern education. Tagore, being an educational activist observed and prejudiced the dangers of western civilization as East imitated the Western system either by choice or through enforced educational ideals. The story, “The Parrot's Training” depicts how a king forced ‘education’ to a parrot. It is a deadly satire on how the education system of the colonizers paid no heed to the cultural traits inherent in the Indians which had taken its roots over hundreds of years. They forced such an educational system which destroyed their very soul and degraded the nation.

The story, “The Trial of the Horse” is based on the cruelty of man towards nature. When Brahma, the creator created the horse, he endowed it with the elements of air and ether to give it the capacity to run like a fast wind. Because of its speed to run, He kept it in an open meadow. But Man who is very clever, when he saw this new creature, pursuing the wind and kicking at the sky, he said to himself;
If only I can bind and secure this Horse, I can use his broad back for carrying my loads.\textsuperscript{11}

So, he puts the high walls round the horse so that it might not escape. In this way, Horse, the animal of deliverance was bound up in bondage by Man. It tried to make it free by kicking on the wall but it applied on it the vigorously winning method that it lost its power to kick. After that, it gave vent to its feelings by neighing. It disturbed to man. So, he invented devices to shut its mouth. But as the voice cannot be suppressed altogether as long as breath is in the body, so, it produced moaning sound. One day, this noise reached to Brahma’s ears. He frowned in anger and asked the man to set the horse free. Man said that the horse is not fit to be set free. It was for his eternal good that he built stable for it. But Brahma remained obdur ate. Man added that after seven days, He will think that the stable is better for it than meadow. The man was clever. He made the horse set free but hobbled its front legs. It distorted the gait of the horse. Brahma, from the height of the heaven could see the comic gait of the horse but not the tragic rope which hobbled it. He was mortified to see his creature openly exposing its divine maker to ridicule. He felt that he had done blunder to create it. Then he cried to take it back to its stable. He muttered it was the burden on humanity. In this way, man, with his cleverness, deceived even to Brahma.

Both the stories, “The Parrot’s Training” and “The Trial of the Horse” are satirical in tone but they reveal Tagore’s far-sighted and deep vision. In these stories, he presents a critical idea of the civilized people. Through the stories, he demands from the readers to draw a line between civilization and barbarism. In allegorical themes, producing humour and pathos, he exposes the hypocrisy of the civilized people. The stories also contain an
appeal for humanistic values. Through the story, 'The Parrot's Training', Tagore shows that the cultural dynamics has taken its vast shape in the form of western education to oriental learning but its too much reception erasing the cultural values of the self-culture proves harmful. The bird and beast both are caged and captured. They present the states of being colonized that are suppressed at the hand of the colonizers.

Tagore's stories deal with mainly with the lives of the women. Woman is viewed as Men’s ‘other’ rather than as an independent human being, with her own rights and needs. She has remained under subjugation of the power-relations of men and women that prevailed in patriarchy. Tagore has thought-provokingly presented the feminine voices articulating the surrounding experiences in a society that ignore their right of their existence. Women suffer betrayals from man and are often victims of patriarchy in manifold ways. However, it can be said that they do not constitute a muted group, the boundaries of whose culture and reality overlap, but are not wholly contained by the dominant (Male) group.12

Since they have come forward asserting their identity and seeking equal opportunities.

His short-stories range from emancipation of women, dismal lifelessness of widows because of marriage at early age, their suppressed desires because of social taboos, innocent behaviour of girl-child at her father’s home and very soon are given the responsibility of a family at the early age when she is too young to understand the marriage system, unmatched marriages, no concern for girls’ education, facing hardships of life but whenever they are in a situation to take decision, they appear as pure, strong-
willed and self-sacrificing. In some stories, he presents them though as helpless victims of society but with the feelings of devotion and sacrifice. His short stories are significant in bringing out cultural criticism and social change, a change in which women find their individual identities and respect. He adopts artistic devices to build a culture that is of resistance and forbearance. He unravels the inner most feelings of characters and provides self-exploration on breaking the stereotype roles of being submission and docile i.e. gender-discrimination. He boldly expressed the social restrictions and cultural taboos existing in the contemporary society. Women show the tone of truth and fidelity. The social upheaval got expression through the stories and became a projection that needed a change. Many of the stories project the women as a subaltern in her victim position. This research work investigates the male-female relationships, reveals gender-biases and presents the true picture of society with the intention of protest against patriarchal system.

Any event presented in the narration is not only a simple theme or thought but a projection of the hidden influences of the author’s past, intentions, his thinking, behaviour, interest, symbolic meaning in an unconscious mind and his/her writing style also. In the literary work, the writer articulates the desires, need and demand as an individual (self) and as a unit of society (social self) through the developed characters in literary work. Following the psychoanalytic methods, this work tries to unravel the unconscious elements in the mind of the writer and the characters in the stories selected for study. Tagore gives new and powerful ways of looking at human thought and behaviour. This work attempts to look into the psyche of the author as well as the characters as a male or a female or a child, and probes how the psychological instincts influence the human behaviour.
A deconstructionist reading of his stories opens up new meanings. Deconstruction as a theory attacks on the notion of one meaning, primary discourses or purpose as so many subjective responses to a world which according to it (deconstruction) had no centre. Instead of talking about the presences, emphases or assertions in a text, it talks of absence, gaps and lapses. It hints at the creative intention of the author who gives a definite shape to his work in accordance with her/his perception or bias. Since the motive of the deconstructionist is to attack the subjectivity of the author and pave the way for his or her (deconstructionist’s) own reading of the text, it becomes necessary to posit multiplicity of meaning in a text. In other words, it can be said that deconstruction investigates those areas in the text which remain hidden from view. The reader investigates the gaps in the text and works towards a different construction, an alternative to the one that the original author had affected. In this sense, every reader sees in a literary text what he or she wishes to see in it and reorganizes the already organized material in consonance with one’s own perception of the phenomenon. Put simply, every reader constructs one’s own version of a text by questioning and rejecting (deconstructing) the author’s construction. The characters in his stories are not distinguished men but they create a lasting impression on the readers’ mind. Like all the classical works of art, Tagore’s stories demand a deeper study from the readers. In the story, “Manbhanjan” (Giribala), Giribala breaks the traditional passivity of wifehood. She challenges the identification of women as restricted to only to house on and dependent on her husband. She becomes self-dependent and self-defender in spite of being a wife. In the story, “The Women Unknown”, Tagore presents Kalyani as a bold, revolting and strong determined character and Anupam as a submissive and obedient character. In the
story, he deconstructs the pre-established identities of masculine and feminine constructed by the society. In the story, “The Laboratory” (1940-41), Nandkishore gives his ring to Sohini to wear with marriage intention. He saves her grandmother from selling the house. Tagore seems to advocate a simple marriage of contract and a marriage for which the bridegroom gives the dowry to the bride. Through Nandakishore, Tagore suggests that women should not be humiliated for their economic dependence on men. Nandakishore makes an unconventional marriage with Sohini, by breaking all the norms and strictures of the society. This is the only story in Tagore’s short stories, where the woman selects her man. The man is not the suitor. Tagore makes Sohini to reject the Hindu ritual of 'Shraddha'-a ceremony that is performed to pacify and remember the departed ones of the family. Through Sohini, he shows his thoughts that he did not believe in superstitious rituals. Rather spending money on such a ritual, she believed to develop the scientific interest of the young people.

The short stories, “The Post Master”, “Kabuliwala” and “My Lord, the Baby” stem from the emotive strength. These stories have world-wide appeal. In Tagore’s literary structure, all the fused elements are inter-related and interdependent. There is nothing in it that can be seen and studied in isolation. Each single element has a function through which it is related to work as a whole. The structuralism counted that any text in which orientation and accompanying ‘dominant’ function is, allows the text to be flexible. The whole text functions as a coherent whole, kept together by its ‘dominant’. In it all elements, whether they defamiliarized or not, are inter-related and interdependent.

Tagore’s stories contain the elements of cultural studies also that involves race, gender, ideological and identity based readings of the composition of society, with post-
modernism and post-structuralism, furthering these readings into the artistic, psychological and philosophical realms. His short stories can be viewed with the perspective of cultural studies and analyzed with how socially organized people conduct and participate in the construction of their everyday lives.

Marxist theory can also be employed with whose help, we can raise pertinent questions about the actual practice of an author, when we examine his/her ideology to find out how much of it is real, rational and, therefore, acceptable. Marx’s ‘concept of action’ separates Marxism from all earlier philosophies, which only interpret the world, “while the point is to change it”. Tagore’s stories can be studied as a source of collective social action and behaviour in social life that intend to bring a change in Indian society.

The effect of colonialism can be observed in the story, "The Woman Unknown" where the station master ordered to Kalyani and Anupam's family to vacate the compartment and Kalyani had to argue for it that the compartment was not reserved from the boarding point and it was not necessary to vacate, so an extra coach was added to accommodate the uniformed English officials. It shows that women not only suffered in patriarchal system but also at hands of colonialism.

Women’s desire to seek freedom has been depicted in the stories – "Khata" and “The Wife's Letter”. In both these stories, the female protagonists give voice to their protest and inner conflicts through writing. Woman can shine her fate and become famous in the outer world without the help of her husband has been shown by the story-‘Giribala’ (1895). In it, Giribala's maid, Sudha praises her beauty and awakens a feeling of pride in her. She helps her to revolt against her husband for his oppressive attitude of
being a male. Tagore perhaps through the character of Sudha wants to propagate that if women support each-other, man cannot torture them and through Giribala that if a woman wants to rise from her worse conditions, it is necessary for her to create a space for herself with her self-will. Their desired survival is possible only when they give voice to their own individuality. A real life incident happened in Tagore's family as Tagore's sister-in-law, Kadambari Debi, wife of Jyotindranath Tagore, committed suicide in 1884 due to neglect of his brother's not fulfilling the marital responsibility and lack of women's support in the house. In the story, “The Woman Unknown” even through Kalyani's character, he emphasized that the dowry problem can be eradicated through female's rejection. The story also highlights the need to educate the women.

Tagore belonged to such a family which was influenced by the western culture. Women of Tagore's family were all educated. When he stayed in London from 1877 to 1880, he became aware of the women's freedom, with this effect; he sent a letter to his brother, Dwejendranath Tagore who was the editor of the family journal, 'Bharathi'. But his brother did not accept his radical ideas on the freedom of women as they were living in an orthodox society. But after the period of winning the Nobel Prize for literature in 1913, he got chances to visit the different western countries for delivering lectures. During this time, he observed a liberal attitude of western society for women. This new liberation-seeking women’s conception found its place in his fictional works. In India, Pandita Ramabai Saraswati and Cornelia Sorabji with their writings ignited the spirit of women for liberation. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru writes for Tagore:
Contrary to the usual course of development, as he grew older, he became more radical in his outlook and views.\textsuperscript{13}

Kalyani's decision of celibacy to remain unmarried for forever was also a strong decision in such a society where marriage was considered as an important part of life. This shows Tagore's advocacy in woman's self-liberation, a radical step, posited by Tagore.

Tagore also presents the point in his stories where the female characters transform from the status of a traditional wife to that of a freedom seeking wife. They as a protest leave their homes. As in the story, "The Wife's Letter", Mrinal leaves the home for Puri, a religious place leaving behind the repeated atrocities of family life. And in the story, "The Devotee", the protagonist leaves the home for unknown place when she is not to reconcile with the compulsion from her husband to meet to the defiled Guru.

The inter-caste marriage which is not acceptable even in the present society to a large extent was delineated in the story, "The Renunciation". Tagore's harsh attitude towards the belief in caste system is reflected through the protagonist- Hemanta in the story, "The Renunciation". He produces a clarion call against the feudal superstitions.

Tagore includes the concept of 'Widow Remarriage' also in his stories. In the story, "My Fair Neighbour", he reflects that the widow female-protagonist agrees to marry again. In the novel, \textit{Binodini} (Chokerbali)(1902), Damini, a young widow, protests to the rigid life determined for a widow. She rejects the fears of social taboos and succeeds to remarry. The novel, \textit{Chaturanga} (1915) is also based on the theme of widow remarriage. Tagore also presents the themes of extra marital love as in the novella, \textit{The
Broken Nest (1901), he depicts Charulata who falls in love with her brother-in-law. The extra marital affair takes place because of less attention and love from husband.

Andrinne Rich, a Radical feminist suggests that the patriarchal oppression against women is massive but it also includes social and economic dependence, sexual subjugation and denial of female sexuality. This happens in the story, “The River Stairs” where the husband becomes an ascetic. When he again meets her, he comes to know of her female sexual desires but he leaves the place. Damini in the novel, Binodini also suffers the same patriarchal oppression as has been described by Andrinne Rich. She is also denied of marital happiness by her husband who denounces the worldly responsibilities under the influence of a Guru to be abstained from the worldly pleasures. Tagore very vividly portrays the complex issue of spiritual versus sensual as is found in the stories- “The Skeleton”, “The River Stairs” and in the novel, Binodini.

Throughout life, Tagore's perception for society changed with the change of time. The political conditions of India also left its footprints in his literary writings. National freedom movement and the spirit of social awareness prevalent in the country left its tracings on the prevalent contemporary literature. Rabindranath Tagore, Saratchandra Chattopradhay, Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan and Munshi Prem Chand were the popular figures who delineated the contemporary Indian situations in their literature with their own perspectives.

Rabindranath Tagore's writings mainly focused on the female conditions. In that existing patriarchal setup, society was not liberal in giving the women any right. At the time, to raise the questions of women's dignity and to attempt to provide women equal
rights in the suffocating conservative patriarchal system was a very bold endeavour from his side. His stories invited protest from such a social setup.

If we think on the role of males in the construction of the stories, we find that most of the depicted male characters are the representatives of the patriarchy. They betray their wives with one or the other manner. As in the story, *Giribala*, the husband leaves the wife-Giribala and elopes with a stage-actress. In the story, “The Women Unknown”, the male figure- Anupam remains silent at the time of his marriage when his maternal uncle demands to check the purity and weight of gold that was being given as a dowry. As a result the marriage is broken by the girl's family. In the story, “The Elder Sister”, the husband becomes greedy for her father's property that was entitled to her younger brother for it she had to fight against her husband. In the story, “Vision”, the husband also becomes disloyal to his wife for her becoming blind and tries to remarry though her blindness was caused by her husband as an experiment as a doctor. In the story, “The Skeleton” after her becoming widow, when the female protagonist matures, she dreams of her life with a doctor but not getting love from him, she eats poison. The story, “The Auspicious Vision” reflects the male protagonist as a selfish person who after finding escaped himself from the calamity to be married to a deaf and dumb girl, finds relief to get a wife who is defectless. The story, “The Postmaster” portrays the post master as a selfish person who uses the service of a small orphan girl, but when the girl is attached to him emotionally and wants to go with him, he refuses. He keeps in mind the society’s ideology and restrictions. In the story, “The Rivers Stairs”, the male character becomes a cause of suffering for his wife for not fulfilling his family responsibility and becoming an ascetic.
So Tagore's Stories show his favour for women to present them as pure, meek, submissive, obedient, sacrificing, and suffering at the hands of patriarchy but he males cause troubles in their lives. Through the male-female conflicts, Tagore wants to indicate that the society cannot do progress only with males but the women status will also be uplifted. They will have to be given an equal position in society. Gender-equality and to understand the inner feelings of each other (Husband and wife) is a pre-requisite necessity to build up a society that will be based on faith and mutual understanding.

Derrida, a French philosopher, opines that meaning never knows any closure and is forever 'deferred' (or pushed away) and dependent on difference. With the open-ending conclusions, Tagore liberates and democratizes the text for the free play of the imagination and breaks the limits of the meaning. So, the chapter deals with Tagore's biographic sketch, his formation as a writer with the journey of the nation, his radical views to change the fixed outdated ideology and his progressive outlook to support the women to rise from submission to assertion, exploitation to emancipation. It is important to take in to account the voices, recorded by the past writers because they provide a comprehensive perception of the past. Tagore has immersed in the language, the text and the material culture of the contemporary era to produce the remarkable fiction. His representations act as filters through which one can interpret the traces of the past and form the notion of the socio-cultural constructs of the milieu. The present research work, in later chapters, will try to explore new meanings and interpretation taking in view multiple critical theories that will be useful to find out new insights and reflections. It will unfold different strands of meaning at various levels such as social, humanistic, philosophical, psychological, realistic, mystical, literal and symbolic.
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