CHAPTER 1

OUR TRADITIONAL CONCEPTS OF WOMAN AND THE REFLECTION OF THESE
CONCEPTS ON OUR LITERATURE. UPTO TARASANKAR

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In the creation of every art and literature we find two factors play prominently in the mind of creator. Firstly—the life-long experiences of the creator and secondly—an independent creative-spirit of him. This independent creative-spirit of the creator wreathes all his sensible experiences round his creations and thereby produces the great work of art and literature. The similar thing we find also in the case of Tarasankar. He was superbly sensitive to every worldly matter and had got the vast experiences of life. But whenever he framed these experiences into literary frame his creative-intellect moulded them in the design of its own pattern. As regard the pattern of women of his literature it appears to us that, as if an image of an ideal-woman was impressed upon his poetic mind and he was pressed forward by an inner urge to remember this image while drawing the women in his literature. Now this image of ideal-woman of his poetic mind on thorough looking seems to be a link of Indian thoughts and concepts of women who through the paths of gradual Transformation assumed particular form in Bengalee culture and literature, and was developed much in the literature of Bankim Chandra, Rabindranath and Saratchandra by their thoughts and ideas. So, before go-

ing into the women of Tarasankar's novels we should have a short
look to the Indian concepts of women with its reflection on our
literature and at the women of Bankim's Rabindranath's and Sart's
literature, as because the women in Tarasankar's novels are some-
times found to run with the similar ideas of that of Bankimchandra
Rabindranath and Saratchandra.

(2)

In Indian concepts it is found that, "pra-
kriti" is consisting of there attributes (Tri-Gunas), whereas "pu-
ruṣa" is inert and indifferent. Hence, the mystery of all creati-
ons go after this wavering "prakriti". But this "prakriti" how mu-
ch energetic may be is completely impasse till and untill the iner-
t "puruṣa" adds the awakening touch to her attributes. Now the
resemblance of this Devine mystery we find also in the mankind,wh-
ere man like inert "puruṣa" is indifferent and cannot maintain the
rhythm of his life alone and hence depend on woman at every step.
In the mediaeval age this idea of "puruṣa-prakriti" was adopted in
the character of "Hara-Pūrabti" of "Mangal-Kābya" where "Pūrabti"
was much harassed with her self-forgetful husband whom she could
ever move away inspite of all harassement. This is the fundamen-

Calcutta. 1357. P.121.
tal nature of men and women in our conception. In our everyday's life also men are generally self-forgetful and indifferent by nature, whereas the women are sensible, gentle and motherly to their back-bone. With unbounded tenderness they protect the men from all evil-doers even at the cost of their lives, and hence, they are motherly by nature. This innate motherliness of woman is highly appreciated in our culture and is considered as the ideals of Hindu-Womanhood.

But it is not so that, this motherliness is all of a woman. Though it is very prominent in women and adequately suits to their variable social and environmental condition, yet the real womanly nature is something more than this. In fact from the ancient time the women were cast in the mould of social needs and the women too manifested themselves as the society wished for. In the Bengalee society the men are generally indolent and emotional. They hanker more for peaceful homestead than to run after the fickle sense-enjoyment. So, they moulded their women not mainly as confidantes of sensuality but emphasised on their motherly, sisterly and daughterly qualities which engaged the women of our country in a path of tenderness and sacrifice. Of course, the women of this country also possess normal thirst for sensuality which is best satisfied in this country through their

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*7. ibid. P. 69.
conjugal relation. But the great zeal of it, if found in any cases is satisfied either through the path of adoration or such women are excluded from the society. We know — how great the position of a mother is in our society that that of a wife. This is because — the motherly qualities of woman were highly elevated in our society from ancient time, and the wives were moulded in a way to besiege their erotic sentiments and perform a penance, so that they can over-power their lower propensities with the flow of motherly feeling.

The development of such motherhood in our women was not caused from the Hindu-Custom only, but a particular form of Bengalee culture too was added with, to cast the women in such a mould. Many religious views, the ways and means of many "Tantras" that passed off the country year after year mortgaged our women to these attributes which still we prefer. The result is that, in our country the normal thirst of love of women develops an unnatural feeling of motherly affection even in their conjugal relation. It is unnatural in the sense, in this society the wifehood of a woman completely based on their motherhood. Our social set-up was also so that, here the ladies could fully manifest their this feeling which dominates over everywhere in their behaviour, and even in the relation between husband and wife it subdues the sensualities and put the woman in a way of tenderness and dedication. This is why a woman of our society can never leave

aside her husband, even if she is much oppressed or neglected.

The Bengalee ladies inherited the ideals of chastity and devotion, the marked specialities of Indian womanhood as a right of succession. Regarding these qualities of Indian women Rabindranath once mentioned, a Hindu-wife always finds the reflection of an "Ideal" in her husband and bestows her best love and respect to that "Ideal" whatever the real husband may be. They need no extra-performance to reach at such higher realisation, because it is an inborn capacity to them. The prolonged symbol-worshipping which is main part of our spiritual custom automatically enable our women to think their husband as emblem of a great ideal. To non-Hindus this symbol-worshipping may seems to be idolatory, but, in fact, it is nothing but a way to realise the greater Truth in easier way. Similarly, through their devotion the women of this country follow an easier process of realising that greater Truth, though they knew it well that all husbands do not possess what their hearts demand or how they imagine their husbands.

Womanly love in our conception is an illusion which possesses unbounded charm and mysteries. But behind all the charm and mysteries of love, there also stand some custom which is rooted so deeply in the womanly minds that they observe it like religious austerities. Every woman, we know, brights wonderf-

ully in the light of love. But such humble gleam of love that we find in the women of our country is hardly found in the case of others. The whole of Vaishnaba literature is moist with such sweet appeal of womanly love and the Vaishnaba-Mahajanas sometimes considered it as spiritual or Heavenly. But, in the concepts of Rabindranath—love is complete in itself without any theological or spiritual aspect of it, and it can gleam fully only within the flesh and blood of womanly body though the Vaishnaba-Mahajanas mainly ascribe religious interpretations of it. The advent love moistens the hearts of our women with an unspeakable joyous feeling which causes an extra-gracious beauty in their body and mind. This unspeakable emotions or joyous feeling of the loving ladies is called "Lila" in Vaishnaba literature and it is the essence of womanly love in Vaishnabic conception. The loving-feeling of women in our country is considered as the sweet accord of the Moon which brings the message of peace and happiness to the possessor and to the acceptor, and it is that unspeakable "Rasa" or "Lilā" which brings such sweetness to the women of our country. This special kind of sweetness is the marked specialities of the love of Bengalee ladies.

(3)

So long we have tried to follow shortly the Indian concepts of women and womanly-love and the reflection of these concepts on our literature. But to the outstanding writings

of Bankimchandra, Rabindranath and Saratchandra the previous concepts seem to be variegated with the addition of new thoughts and ideas. Now we find, the women of Tarasankar's novels sometimes ran with the similar ideas of that of above three writers. So, here we shall try to follow in brief the women of above three writers for better understanding of the women of Tarasankar's novels.

In the conception of Bankimchandra women are the vibrant rays of that universal "Prakriti" which continually repeats its game differently in different circumstances and vibrates the manly hearts with different feeling. The womanly beauty in his literature is a snare of illusion to catch a man with his fate. The men of strong personalities though could come across this illusion at the extreme sufferings, but frail persons had to render their everything under this illusion and finally met the terrible results of fate. In most of his novels the women always initiated a conflict in the mind of man between their posessions and moralities, or in otherwords the women of Bankim's literature added fuel to the fire of instinctive behaviour of men. In Kapalkundala, Nabakumar who could easily overcome the plea of Matibibi was caught in the snare of Kapalkundala's illusive beauty which languished all his manliness. The thoughts of Bankim is more clear in Bisabriksma where Kunda, Surjamukhi, Surjimukhi.


Hira and Kamal represented four characteristics of womanly nature. The men in the book suffered much in the conflicts between their passions and renunciation, and the women appeared as to measure their personalities or manliness.

For every kind of accomplishment the women of Bankim's literature necessarily based on their organic-body which produces love and lust equally in them. So, leaving the lust aside he could not count only their loving feeling which alone can hardly reveal the real nature of women. In this respect he mainly concerned with two types of women — loveful and lustful. Besides a third type also he presented to show that, womanly conscience is inseparably related to bodily-feeling. He never encouraged such type of performances where the women tried to get rid of their organic feeling and engaged in a path of higher realisation.

In the literature of Rabindranath the women are quiet, decent, well-mannared, mitigated by earnest humanitarianism, self-devoted and standing firmly on the way of every evil forces. Thus Hemalini of Yogā-Yoga, Sucarita of Gorā, Labanya of Șeșer Kabiță diffused a sense of dignity around them and were brightened with an extra-gracious beauty in the novels. From the study of his literary women it appears that, he was mainly concerned with two types of women of which the motherly-type comes first and the beloved-type to the second. In order to express

their nature best he compared both the type with seasons. The motherly-type is like the rainy season which sprinkles water over the thirsty world and maintains the vitality of the life-cycle. Whereas the beloved type is just as spring, which is said to be the queen of all seasons for its mysterious beauty and appeal.

Anandamayi of Gorā best represented the nature of motherly type of his conception. The parallel of motherhood of Anandamayi is really rare in the Bengali literature. Though a lady of orthodox family she could easily washout all the orthodoxies by her motherly feeling. This ideal of motherhood we find again and again in his literature in various forms. But we knew, the intellect of Rabindranath would simultaneously flutter on the trifling matters of reality and the vast sky of infinity. Hence, Anandamayii was also associated with the touch of reality and great ideals at the same time. When she happened to receive an Irish-Orphan, Gora, her orthodoxies could not stand on the way of her motherly affection as the Indian soil did not show persimony to supply him with light and air. When Gora came to know all about his birth, he realised that, Anandamoyii is his mother in the real sense though she did not conceive him, and similarly India is his actual motherland though she was born of Irish parents. Thus Anandamoyii symbolised the benovelent soul of

India.

Everywhere in Rabindranath, the women extended their tenderness even up to the lower creatures and out of this tenderness and feeling of motherhood they put up with all sufferings in their life. In Yoga-Yoga we find, Kumudini overcame all her mental agitations and self-vanity as soon as she was going to be a mother. Thus the feeling of motherhood played a vital roll in the women of Rabindra literature as it did in the case of that of Tarasankar.

The beloved type of ladies of Rabindranath did not represent the lady-love of reality only but also were rigidly framed of his poetic fancies. He added all soft sentiments of men in them. This type of women of his literature never went round mere sensualities. Because, being a devotee of Upanisadas Rabindranath believed that, the truce in life comes only through relinquishment and never by the luxurious enjoyments. In his conception happiness and sorrows are sure to follow our lives and a life is rightly measured by the sorrows that it can come across. Similar is the case with love also. It attains the best of its form when it can come across all the pangs and sorrows resulted from it. Still than, Rabindranath was sympathetic to our everyday pangs which leave tragic marks on our lives and causes to shed tears. His literature was softened with such tears of men and women. Labanya of Seser Kabitanicely expressed

author's conception of love in her last letter to Amit, and she expressed— love does not mean the only coalescence of lovers, but when it develops in full bloom, the lovers maintain the glory of it by sacrifice.

Above all, Rabindranath interposed a sense of self-vanity in women. He noticed the qualities of Indian women and rightly utilised these qualities along with his own poetic fancies in framing the women of his literature.

Saratchandra is said to be most sympathetic to women in his writings. Going to introduce his practical experiences in the literature he himself was charmed at the qualities of our women and hence, offered a very important place to women in his novels. Women in his conception are the unique combination of various oppositely feelings and their loving-feeling consists of passivity and relinquishment at the same time. In Srikanta the same lady as piyari represented the lady-love and as Rajlakshmi displayed her motherliness which could check her all erotic sentiments. The ladies of Sarat's literature always offered their all tenderness for the sake of society and lovers, because the women of our society are affectionate, by nature and

*20. OP. Cit.
*21. Piyari Baizi, the heroine of Srikanta.
inherit the qualities of preserving the child, serving the husband and taking care of all arround them. Love between man and woman in the writings of Saratchandra is only but the attraction and repulsion of universal "Puruṣa-Prakriti" who reflect themselves in earthly creations. He never presented only the sex-centered women, because in his conception, the moralities of women can always overpower their eroticaism. It is often in his novels where women stood in the way of men's sensualities and could make them to realise the greater value of life. Of course, in the writings of Saratchandra the women are living representation of love and aman is natural to bewilder and lost his conscience in their contact. But the women being conservative cannot easily deny their society and religious customs as men can do. This orthodoxy does not only acts superficially in women but also very closely associates with their self at every event and happenings.

With his keen intuition Saratchandra went into the recesses of womanly heart and observed the conflicts that always turn round in women's mind between their various oppositely feelings. We think, the women got so importance in his literature not only for their loving nature but also for their endurance, affection and sacrifice which are also the marked specialities of the women of Tarasankar.

It appears that, the women of Sarat's literature absorbed much of the "Bātsalya-rasa" of Śākta and
Vaishnava padabali. Bankimchandra brought the women in many cases of his literature to measure the personalities of men, un-restrained persons in Bankim's literature were brought to hell under the illusive beauty of women. But the women in Sarat's literature sympathetically extended their love and affection even to neglected and sinful persons. As he was aimed at the real nature of women, so any sense of good or evil could not divert him from the path of revelation. We think, this revelation of women is the most radiant rays of his literature.

*23. ibid P. 330.

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