



WOMEN CHATACTERS IN TAGORE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY FROM HIS NOVELS AND STORIES

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ABSTRACT

Tagore's contribution to the body of Indian writing in English is extraordinary. He was a poet, dramatist, novelist, short story writer, actor, producer, musician, painter, educationist, reformer, philosopher, prophet and a critic of life and literature. He is a prolific writer and a versatile genius the range and variety of his achievement are quite astonishing. His active literary life extended over a period of sixty-five years. He wrote primarily in Bengali. Most of his works later came into English either through the translation by the author himself or by others. His works consist of thirty plays, twelve novels, two thousand poems, two thousand essays and hundreds of letters, lectures on a variety of subjects. His works reflect social, political, cultural and religious conditions of his time. Tagore wrote about women in most of his works – whether it is a poem, novel or play or a story. Women have a significant role to play in almost all his novels and in his short stories.

INTRODUCTION

Except *GORA* all his novels have women protagonists. 'Love' is the fundamental theme of all the novels of Tagore. *Binodini* and *Chaturanga* deal with the love of windows. While *Two sisters*, *The Garden* and *Home and the World* deal with extramarital love. *Farewell My Friend* and *Four Chapters* deal with the theme of unfulfilled love. *The Wreck* is not an exceptional one is this line. Though the main interest in the novel *GORA* is *GORA*, it centres on the love theme of the major characters.

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Binodini is the first novel of Tagore and it is the first psychological novel in Indian writing in English, which has established Tagore as one of the greatest novelists in Indian. Speaking about this novel Kripalani said :

The novel has laid out the foundation of the modern novel in Indian literature¹

Binodini is a widow. She is a rare combination of beauty and grace, dignity and intelligence. Her long struggle for fulfillment of her physical and emotional love through the companionship of Bihari, and her readiness to lose Bihari in view of his welfare, and her self-abnegation as a result, make her character all the more interesting. When Bihari finally offers his hand to marry her she says:

These words are my final reward. I want nothing more than what you have just affirmed. If I took more, it would not last. Religion and society would never tolerate²

Though the elopement of Binodini with Mahendra makes her a seductress, she remains chaste for, her heart carries only one single image of Bihari, hence Kripalani states as the following :

Of all the women characters created by Tagore in his many novels, Binodini is the most convincing, vital and full-blooded.³

The other women characters of interest are Asha, wife of Mahendra, is sober, docile, charming and innocent woman. She is not an ignorant woman, when she realizes her husband's true nature that he degraded the purity and sanctity of married life, she rises to the occasion and asserts her position in the house and she starts treating her husband with contempt. Rajyalaxmi, mother of Mahendra, is a widow; she is a self-centred and pompous lady. She is so much affectionate to her son that she cannot tolerate her son's growing nearness to her sister-in-law Annapurna. Annapurna is also a widow but she is a woman of virtue and kindness. But Rajyalaxmi is not completely blind to her son's deception to his wife and she tries to compensate this by asserting Asha's position in her family. Annapurna has no child of her own. She bears all the suffering and humiliation with good grace and she keeps faith in god. Her widow hood has not narrowed down her to a mean minded woman. She is a common well wisher of everyone in the novel.

The Wreck is the second novel of Tagore. It has received mixed response from the critics. Some considers the novel very high, some view it as novel of absurdities and inconsistencies. Majority of critics consider, it is not worthy of Tagore's genius. Krishna Kripalani opines:

The plot of the novel is developed through series of errors, accidents and is based down the dilemma of mistaken identity, resulting in exchanging of wives⁴.



Love is the central theme in *The Wreck*. It presents two women characters Kamala and Hemamalini. Tagore portrayed them almost at equal length. Kamala is simple, modest and charming girl of fourteen who happens to enter in to the life of Ramesh by accident. In spite of certain improbabilities and inconsistencies in the novel, one would owe one's appreciation to Kamala, the central character of the novel for her sincere devotion and dedication to her husband and her sincere faith in the sanctity of marital relationship. When she realizes Nalinaksha is her rightful husband, soon she understands her relationship with Ramesh is not a valid one and convenience. She even declines the suggestion of Hemamalini when she asks her to reveal her true identity to Nalinaksha she says:

*I have no right to establish, and I don't want to establish any*⁵.

She erases all the memories of Ramesh and she remains single. Hemamalini, the daughter of Anadababu, the beloved of Ramesh plays an important role in the novel. When she realizes the relation of Ramesh to Kamala, she does not blame Ramesh or Kamala but simply she understands them. When she is aware of Kamala's true identity and her genuine feeling for Nalinaksha the proposed groom for herself, would advice kamala to reveal her true identity and reestablish her relation with him. Finally she becomes an ascetic through her unfulfilled love. Kshemankari, the mother of Nalinaksha is a woman who gives utmost importance to her religious duty and ceremonial purity, she even sacrifices her husband for it. She is a little short tempered and she retorts anyone who tries to hurt her ego.

Tagore presents five women characters in the novel *Gora*. Though Gora is central is the character of the novel the role of Sucharita, Lolita and Anandamoyi in the novel is no less. Anadamoyi is the mother of Gora. She is inspiration and a great strength to Gora she excels even Gora in her universal outlook. She supports the marriage of Binoy and Lolita. For her caste or creed should not be a barrier between human relations. She inspires Sucharita and Lolita she is even a great consolation to Pareshbabu. Sucharita the heroine of the novel, while she is being inspired by Gora and his patriotism, she would transform him in to a complete man. Binoy draws inspiration from Lolita. In fact, he attains completeness through Lolita. Her exceptional patriotic zeal can be seen in her rejection of enacting a play at Magistrate's house. Hemamalini, is the aunt of Sucharita, she is a typical example of the narrow-minded orthodox Hindu woman. She is sectarian in her outlook. Barodasundari is another character, the wife of Pareshbabu, who represents the Brahmo orthodoxy. Both are fanatics, they are proud of their religion and believed in external observances rather than following the true spirit of their religion.

The Home and The World is a most famous novel of Tagore. It represents a triangular love story. Bimala, the wife of Nikhil, leads a highly contented life of her own. Her home is her world. Her husband is equal to god for her. Nikhil who believes in freedom and dignity of the individual does not like her treatment of him. So once he asks Bimala:



Come out in to the heart of the outer world and meet reality, if we meet and recognize each other in the real world then, only our love be true.⁶

Though Bimala is an uneducated, she is status conscious. In order to appear civilized and refined she develops taste for current fashions. In spite of all this, she is dedicated to her household duties. The swadeshi movement changes her outlook. Though she does not grasp the true spirit of the movement, she acts on impulse. At this moment, Sandip a friend of her husband enters her life. Her admiration for Sandip is due to his active involvement in the swadeshi movement. Slowly her admiration for Sandip transforms in to a strong passion. Now her home is not her world, her world is Sandip. She is quite aware of this fact. That she feels:

I could not understand the meaning of that sound in my blood. Where was that former self of mind? Whence came into me this singing flood of glory⁷.

Bimala, no doubt she misuses the freedom she gets from her husband but finally she realizes. Bararani is another woman character in the novel. Though she appears to be a little rash and harsh in her approach to others, she is good at heart.

Chaturanga is one of the best novels of Tagore. It has received great applause from the critics. The only woman character of great interest in this novel is Damini. She is a widow. Her husband bequeathed all his properties to Swami Leelananda before his death. Much against her will, Damini stays in ashram of Leelananda playing the hostess to the disciples of Leelananda. She is an epicurean. She wants to have her unfulfilled love to be filled up by someone. Sachis, separated from his father, seeking comfort in his uncle, becomes totally dejected by the sudden death of his uncle. He becomes the disciple of Leelananda when he happens to get in contact with Damini. She being an epicurean by nature, she is immediately attracted to Sachis. Her effort to reach Sachis' heart as well as her effort to forget him after her being rejected, the internal struggle and conflict, she passes through make Damini all the more interesting among Tagore's women characters. When Sachis prays her to leave him and not to disturb him and marry his friend Sribilas, she finally marries Sribilas.

Labanya is the main woman character in the novel, *Farewell My Friend*. She has a high dignity and self-respect. The theme of the novel is Love. The story revolves round Labanya and Amit Rai. Labanya slowly understands that she cannot be a rightful choice to Amit, she says this to Amit, she even encourages Amit to marry his old love and she marries Soban Lal. The novel ends abruptly, without complete development of the characters. Yogamaya and Ketaki are two minor characters. Yogamaya appoints Labanya as a tutor to her daughter. She was motherly affection towards Labanya. She takes on the role of matchmaker to Labanya, but she fails to bring unity between Labanya and Amit. Kateki is the old love of Amit. She was engaged to Amit in Europe, finally she marries Amit.

Two Sisters as the very name indicates, it is the story of two sisters Sharmila and Urmimala. Sharmila is the wife of Sasanka. She is a loving wife and is very loyal to her husband. She



loves her husband, not like a wife, but like a mother. Her husband's happiness is her prime concern. She does not even rely on servants in matters of service to her husband. Her husband's self respect is important for her. When he loses his job, she brings money from her father and invests in his business. Though her husband ignores her, she does never blame him for this. Suddenly she becomes sick, Urmimala enters their house and with her charm she attracts Sasanka. He cannot concentrate on business because of Urmimala. But Sharmila is mother at heart. She understands that her husband does not receive comfort from her, so he deserves her company. She even asks him to marry her sister. When there is a heavy loss in business, without knowledge of her husband she clears all the debts of her husband.

Sasanka realizes at the end, the greatness of Sharmila. He regards her as a goddess and keeps her portrait in his office, once he says to Urmila:

*A far your sister, she is veritable goddess, I worship her as I could worship none else in this life. She is no creature of this earth. So infinitely superior is she to us.*⁸

Urmimala is younger sister. She is so charming that anyone is attracted to her. She believes in freedom, a freedom with resistant. She does not even consider that how her intimacy with her brother-in-law disturbs domestic peace in her sister's life. She does not bother about the consequences. Finally she realizes and repents.

The novel *The Garden* is similar to that of *Two Sisters* in its story line. Niraja is the wife of Aditya. They would live happily for ten years. Both Niraja and Aditya share a passion in tending the nursery garden. The garden reflects their love. But a great change takes place after she falls ill. She becomes mean, cruel and self-centered later on. Sarala a distant cousin of Aditya, she comes to Aditya's house at his request to serve his wife. She also helps Aditya in tending the garden. Niraja's helplessness results in her frustration and lack of sympathy for Sarala. She cannot bare the presence of Sarala. She speaks with her rude, insulting and jealous remarks; Sarala is able to see inside her that she loves Aditya. She never blames Niraja instead she gives constant attendance to Niraja.

Four Chapters is the Tagore's last novel. Though it has political terrorism as its backdrop, the love theme of Ela and Atin is of main interest in the novel. Having lost her parents, Ela joins Indranath's party. Indranath had her pledged her life for the country. Atin too enters Indranath's party. They were terribly attracted to each other. Indranath deliberately prevents any progress in their love. Ela undergoes a conflict between her pledge to the party and her love for Atin but when she realizes the true nature of the party, she would like to take Atin away from the activities. For him country is above everything. Finally Indranath appoints Atin to kill Ela before the police catch her up. She expresses her passionate love for Atin and she dies humbly in the hands of Atin at the end.



When one examines the women characters in the novels of Tagore, most of the women characters in the novels are young, they may be widows, and they seem to be struggling to fulfill the void in their hearts. Some are passionate in their love, where as some are restrained, some are educated and educative and some are frustrated and totally withdrawn. Some resorted to religious path or devotional path to find out solace. Novels present women mostly in the role of 'beloved'. The central themes in almost all the novels are love. They sometimes may range from sincere and devotional love to insincere and illicit love. Even, the other women characters (mostly middle aged widow characters) seem to play little role in it, except a few characters like Anandamoyi and Annapurna. They would play either the role of well wisher or ill wisher. Some are merely sketches. Woman is shown in a conflict with her own self or with society or the world around her for the fulfillment of her love.

Where as Tagore's short stories present the woman in variegated forms and he portrayed women in variety of dimensions, as a child, as a mother, as a sister, as a wife, as a widow, as a mother-in-law, as a sister-in-law, as a co-daughter-in-law, as a friend, as a beloved, as a passive sufferer, as a guide, as an individual with the great strength and integrity of mind and with intelligence and grace and so much innate ability to understand the world around her. Tagore does not idealize women in his stories, as he does not do in his novels. He presents them as he finds them with all their strengths and weaknesses.

"The Post Master" is one of the moving short stories of Tagore. It represents a character, Ratan an orphan girl. She does odd jobs for the Postmaster; the postmaster shares his food with Ratan for her service. Though she is a young girl, she serves him like a mother. When the postmaster suffers from fever, that he feels :

In the loneliness of his exile and in the gloom of the rains he needed a little tender nursing. He longed to call to mind the touch on his forehead of soft hands with tinkling bracelets, to imagine the presence of loving womanhood the nearness of mother and sister.⁹

At this moment, Ratan serves him like his own mother. She calls the village doctor and serves him all over the night sitting by his pillow. When the application for transfer is rejected, the postmaster resigns his job and prepares to go home. When Ratan asks him to take her along with him, he laughs at her. It hurts Ratan very much. Her rejection of accepting one month's salary of the repented postmaster before he leaves, and her equal unwillingness in her being introduced to the successive postmaster shows her selfless love.

The story "The Exercise Book" is a satire on the child marriages as well as the denial of education to girls. The central character is Uma a nine-year girl. The joys and fears of the young girl are skillfully depicted in it. "Subha" is another interesting story of a young dumb girl. The humiliation that she suffers from the family and others is depicted quite movingly in this story. Her sole companions are two cows and village lad Pratap. She forgets everything in the company of her two friends on the riverbank, unspoken language of her eyes speak all



her emotions. Her parents have her married to a boy from Calcutta without disclosing the fact that she is dumb. Her suffering is endless, now she suffers in Calcutta forever among the unfamiliar faces for no fault of her own. The plight of the widowhood and childlessness is brought in the story “Living or Dead?” Kadambini is a widow has no one to call ‘her own’. She has no life, only existence. Later on her existence is mistaken for death. One day, under unbearable pressure, her heart stops beating suddenly and it is mistaken for death but she regains her consciousness, she is mistaken for a ghost. She has to prove her existence only by committing suicide.

Jaykali Devi in “Tress pass” is another interesting character of Tagore. She is a widow, she resides in Radhanath temple. After the death of his husband she devotes all her life to lord Krishna. She believes in the principle, “Service to Man is Service to God” she gives free treatment to the patients. She is very helpful and tireless in serving the community during rituals, celebrations and in time of danger. She is very strong and bold that after the death of her husband, she restores all the occupied property from others by fighting legal battles. She is very keen about the rituals that should be performed in the temple. Any violation in this brings about a storm on one who violates it. She is very particular as far as the sanctity of the temple is concerned. When a dirty pig enters Madhabi grove escaping the hunt of a drunken mob, the pujari Brahmin rushes into the grove to drive away the pig. But Jaykali stops him and bolts the temple gate from inside to protect the pig from an attack from behind the closed gate Jaykali shouts at the drunken mob: “Go back you rascals, do not pollute my temple”. This incident bespeaks her true conformity to the Vaishnavic philosophy, “Love all”, in her strength and in her self-will and in devotion and kindness and in her service she is above all the middle-aged orthodox widow women characters in his novels. In having self-dignity, purpose, devotion and dedication she is above Kshemankari of *The Wreck*, Hari Mohini and Barada Sundari of *Gora* except Annapurna from *Binodini* and Ananda moyi form *Gora* no other can stand in comparison with jaykali. Another widow character of great interest is Sohini. She is the central character of the story “The Laboratory”. It was the last and the most notable story of Tagore. Sohini is the most memorable character among all the heroines of Tagore. She has fine blend of tradition and modernity in her. She is bold and brilliant.

She has the depth of thinking and understanding. One would appreciate her for her dedication to fulfill the aim of her husband even after his death and her commitment for achievement of this end. Sohini is a widow and she is the wife of Nanda Kishore. Her husband wants to set up a laboratory with a thought that it should be a highway for the young researchers of science in India for conducting research and experiment. And he establishes it. But soon before it starts functioning, he dies. After the death of Nanda Kishore, Sohini carries out this mission. She does not even care her own daughter, when she becomes an obstacle in her mission. Finally she is a success in her mission. She has to face a lot to protect the properties belonging to Laboratory from the family members of Nanda Kishore and outsiders, they want to get hold on the property by making the only woman helpless. But Sohini is not a weak woman. She fights and wins the legal battles in courts using her charm and intelligence. In



her openness and frank expression of her passionate feelings, she resembles Ela of *Four Chapters* when she says to Nanda Kishore at her first meeting thus :

*I have been waiting for you morning and evening over the last two days. I'm quite amazed: I have charmed a lot of men, and this is the first time I have met a man who can beat me at my own game.*¹⁰

Her love on her husband is sincere, genuine and undivided. She worships laboratory as a temple. With the death of her husband, her love is not extinguished. She has great reverence for her husband even after his death speaking about the inspiration. She gets from her husband. She says to Chaudhuri:

*Other men make fools of women to entrap them: he entrapped me by imparting knowledge day and night. You know, a husband's faults can never be hidden from his wife. But I tell you, I have never detected the least dross in his make-up. When I saw close at hand, I thought he was a great man, now from a distance he seems even greater.*¹¹

Binodini does not seem to have any definite purpose in her life. Her modern education has not done anything to her in that line. Her mind oscillates between Mahendra and Bihari. When one compares Sohini with Binodini, Sohini is a most powerful woman. In her strength, courage, commitment and dedication for a purpose, Binodini is not equal to Sohini. The case of Sucharita and Lolita are different. Sohini even excels Bimala in her strength and intelligence and understanding. Bimala seems to wear a mask of a good wife. She misuses the freedom that she gets from her husband. Once she steps into the outside world, she forgets to recognize her home and her husband. Later she comes back home in repentance. Even the other heroines, for instance, Damini of *Chaturanga* and Labanya of *Fare Well, My Friend* cannot stand in comparison with Sohini. She is very frank and open. She makes a bold statement regarding the weakness of entire womankind and she says it is very difficult to maintain a mask of purity and there are weak moments for every woman and she is not exceptional that once she says :

*We women are not lifelong ascetics. We have tough to keep up pretence. Draupadis and kunits have to be pretended as Seetas and Savitris since childhood I have never had a very clear sense of right or wrong. I have plunged into bad ways quite easily and swam through easily too.*¹²

One may think she is very weak in her character; she deceives her husband with it. But it is not the case of Sohini. She is bold enough to speak of her previous relations to her husband. After she comes into the life of Nanda Kishore, she never has been disloyal to him. She turned the goal of her husband to be her own after his death. She faces the world boldly. After the death she does not have any shady affairs with other man. Her sole aim in her life is to make her husband's dream true. She speaks about this to Chaudhuri once:



I have been smirched in my body, but not in mind. Nothing could take hold on me. Any way my desires have been cast on the flames of his funeral pyre. My heaped up sins are being burnt away one by one. The sacrificial fire is burning right in the laboratory.¹³

In this way, she frees herself from her weakness and transforms herself into a strong personality. This kind of transformation, the struggle and self development cannot be seen in any other characters. She is a responsible wife and mother and also a responsible citizen, in a way making her husband's dream true. She is the representative of modern women, at times she rises above the modern woman and she is the most successful woman of all Tagore's creation.

"The Devotee" is the story of a married woman of an innocent husband, whose infatuation for the friend of her husband, Guruthakur, who is supposed to be the spiritual master of her husband, brings a rift in her life. Guruthakur is also equally infatuated to her. Through self-introspection and penance she raises above the commonality. Her momentary infatuation causes sincere repentance has become highly intolerable for her at later stage that she has imposed herself the renunciation of all the earthly pleasure and she leads a simple and austere life and dedicates her life in search of truth. She finds her infatuation to be a great sin. Then she leaves her husband when she realizes thus :

In the world of mine, there were only two, who loved me best, my boy and husband. That love was my god and therefore it could brook no falsehood. One of those two left me and I left the other. Now I must have truth and truth alone.¹⁴

When we compare her character with certain other women characters, she would certainly excel them in her strength and depth of thinking. For instance, Bindoni, keeping in mind the human limitations, one does not devalue her emotional struggle, but she elopes with Mahendra, in a way she is responsible for injustice to another innocent woman Asha, at the same time she craves for a life with Bihari, though she says outwardly that the words of Bihari have satisfied her sentiment, she leads a life of frustration. In the same way Kamala and Hemamalini in *The Wreck* suffer without a sense of direction. Damini from *Chaturanga*, cannot get the love of Sachis, marries Sribilas, Sachis' friend. Though she marries Sriilas, she cannot be his wife, and she leads a stressful life. In *Farewell My Friend*, Labanya seems to have no scruples at all. She simply shifts her opinion and marries someone else as if her love with Amit was a pass time. Amit's change of his opinion of marrying Ketali also seems to have no effect on her. It seems that their love is not built upon strong emotional bond and trust. The violation of Bimala in *The Home and The World* and the violation of Urmimala in *Two Sisters* show their lack of psychological depth and commitment. Thus Devotee excels most of the women characters in the novels of Tagore in the depth of thinking and in her conformity to truth.



Another interesting character is kumo from the story “Vision”. When kumo becomes blind, her devoted husband turns to some other young girl. She endures everything relying on god. Her heart does not harbor any grudge against the girl Hemangini. At the end of the story Hemangini comes in bridal dress to get the blessings of kumo. Though the thought itself is painful for her that her husband remarries Hemanigini while she is alive, she is very gentle to Hamangini that she asks Hamangini :

*Why shouldn't I bless? You have done no wrong.*¹⁵

It shows her goodness and endurance. Her love and her firm faith in god and truth win back her husband. In this way she is above Niraja of *The Garden* who envies the relationship and Sarala. Though their relation is not bordered on illicit intention, she insults the sweet natured Sarala in hundred ways.

Anila in “House Number One” is another interesting character in the stories of Tagore who deserves best appreciation. Her husband is boastful about his intellectual accomplishments. He takes pleasure in having around him, all the time some aspirants for debates and discussions. He thinks women do not deserve to take part in intellectual discussions and an intellect does not have to prove his worth before a woman. Anila’s place in her house is only to cook and serve the intellectual companions of her husband. He speaks little to her. One may think that she is a passive, traditional sort of woman therefore she does everything silently but ones true admiration comes from the fact that her conformity to her bond of marriage though she receives an irresistible temptation from the man, Raja sitangshu mouli from the house number one in the form of letters. He is a man more talented and multi-talented than her husband and he is more handsome in appearance. For a happy wife, those letters may not effect, but to a neglected wife, who has been constantly looked down upon by her own husband, does not have to wait for being tempted, they themselves are in a position to tempt others. But when the other man’s admiration becomes intolerable for her what all she says to her husband is:

*The people next door are becoming a nuisance; let's move to some other house.*¹⁶

She could indeed enjoy receiving letters of admiration. At least she could secretly cherish the thoughts of her being with the other man, if she has not courage to violate openly. But, in thought, in word, in action she is pure. So, she suggests her husband to move away from the house. When her husband orders her to prepare dinner on the very day, she returns from her father’s house, when her brother kills himself due to his failure in his examination. He does not even enquire about the reason of her sudden visit to her father’s house. How alienated she must have been! She prepares an elaborate dinner, and she leaves that very night, leaving her husband a note and the charge of the house. Her husband finds the letter that reads as:



I'm leaving don't try to find me. You won't succeed even if you try.¹⁷

Her husband finds a tin box containing all the jewels of Anila, even the bangles she always wear, everything except conch shell bracelets and iron bangle indicating her married state, in one compartment there is a bunch of keys, in other various coins in paper packets. Whatever money remained from the monthly household expenses is accounted to the last paisa, a notebook contained a list of utensils and other household goods, as well as of the clothes sent to the washer man, the milk man's and grocer's accounts are also their, except her address. This shows how responsible she is, in her household duties and how self-respected she is. She excels most of the women characters in the novels of Tagore in her dignity and decorum.

Mrinal is a very interesting character from Tagore's story "The wife's letter" one would know about herself revealing letter to her husband after she left her house. She is an educated woman. She is individualistic in her thought and action and highly expressive, one can find her assertive nature in her own words :

It is impossible for me so to limit myself in every point, when I decide that something is right, it is not my nature to be persuaded someone else sake that it is wrong.¹⁸

She was married because of her beauty. Her beauty is soon ignored by her own husband but every now then he is forced to remember she has some brains and she is blamed for this by everyone of her in-laws family. Bindu, the younger sister of Mrinal's co-daughter in law, after the death of her widowed mother and being refused by her cousins for a shelter, she approaches her sister, even her own sister speaks insultingly. Bindu's sister is too much submissive in her nature that she is always anxious to prove everyone in the house that she has secured Bindu at bargain for the least price. She tries to prove Bindu yields much labour and costs little. And after the arrival of Bindu into their family she always pretends that the whole matter of Bindu as a great nuisance that she would do anything to get rid of this burden. She tries to demonstrate it through the coarseness of cloths and food she provides for Bindu. Bindu is also put to work at most menial household duties.

When Bindu develops some rash, everyone hates even to see her. Only Mrinala allows her into her house and serves her much against the will of her husband and other family members. Bindu's sister does not leave her pretence even at the serious condition in the life of her sister. She tries to show extreme irritation at this, she even proposed that she should be sent to the hospital. Unable to get rid of Bindu by their own means they arrange a match for Bindu. The groom is a mad man. Bindu begs all the family memers atleast provide her some little corner in the cattle but was refused.

Soon after marriage Bindu escapes from her in-laws house for their cruel treatment and she hides in the coal shed of the in-laws house of Mrinal. She is dragged out and everybody blames her for her escape and they call her a liar. Again by force, she is sent back to her



husband's house. Mrinal makes a strong protest against the family members at this. She demands them not to send the poor girl back. But all in one voice says that she should be sent back and she is sent.

Mrinal wants to save her with the help of her cousin Sarath. Mrinal asks Sarath to put Bindu on the Train however, while she is going to Puri. But when the time comes, Sarath puts a blank face, for Bindu has set on fire to her clothes and get killed herself. The death is reported to Bindu's sister and to Mrinal's husband and other family members. They receive it without sentiment, without sympathy. When Mrinal learns all this from Sarath, she is quite shocked and she has decided not to go back home. She breaks her bond of her marriage. She wants to lead her life in service of God and the suffering. The women characters in the novels of Tagore in no way comparable to Mrinal in her strength to oppose oppression, and in her questioning spirit, in her expressive nature, in her sympathy for the fellow suffering.

Rashmani in the story "The Son of Rashmani" is an ever memorable character of Tagore. She is mother of Kalipada. She is very loving and caring wife as well as mother. Though she is mother of Kalipada, she has to play the role of a father too. Bhavani is her husband, but he is not capable of maintaining the household duties. He is a daydreamer. He takes pride in the past glories of his father's and grandfather's times. He spends lavishly. No other woman character is as understanding as Rashmani. She has genuine love and affection for her husband and son. Her commitment to the household responsibilities, her presence of mind, her sympathy and understanding of her husband, her practical approach to things, her guiding spirit her foresight for her son's future and her upright behavior make her an ever memorable character. Rashmani's character shows how understanding a woman could be as a wife and as a mother. She is not attached to any ideology or a participant in national moment and spoils the home atmosphere. As a rightful mother and a rightful wife, she sets the house in order. After the death of her only son, her husband is highly shocked. Then she keeps all the sorrow of her son's death to herself, she treats her husband like her own son that is the strength of character of Rashmani.

There are certain other characters who bring disasters to their husbands. For instance, Mokshada from "The Golden Deer" is an example, for how a woman without understanding nature can turn a happy home into hell. She always pesters her husband for the acquisition of wealth. She has no love or affection for her husband or her children. Her only love is wealth, she is envious of others prosperity. She does not know the value of true love and innocence. She considers the innocence of her husband to be his incompetence. And she does not know the simple joys in life have great significance. Her avarice kills her husband finally. To this class belongs Ramkanai's wife. She unlawfully claims the property of her brother-in-law's wife for her son, after the death of her brother-in-law. In the absence of Ramkanai, she tries to get it with the help of her relation by creating false proofs and demanding Ramkanai to give a false witness in the court. Ramkanai does not commit to the falsehood, he admits the facts and collapses there in the court hall itself, and soon he dies. Barada Sundari, the wife of Ramkanai's elder brother, she is as hypocritical, greedy and selfish as Ramkanai's wife.



Kiranlekha of “Haldar’s Family” is one such character, though her concern is not for wealth. She lives in false pride of her family name, ignoring her husband and his interests. She fails in understanding her husband.

When one looks at the characters of Mokshada, Kiranlekha, Ramkanai’s wife and Barada Sundari, one can understand Tagore does not idealize woman. He presents women as he finds them. He does not attribute anything that is abnormal to their nature. Looking at the stories of Tagore and women characters in them, one can find wide variety in characterization. The characters range from a child, a daughter, wife, mother, a helpless widow, friend, guide, loving sister, sister in law and daughter in law, a devotee and a revolutionary to a modern a woman with progressive outlook.

When one looks at the women characters in the novels of Tagore, they mostly belong to the middle class society or above middle class society. Some are educated and some are uneducated too. They must be either young wives or young widows or the middle-aged widow mothers or the middle aged widow aunts. As most of the protagonists in his novels are young women their chief concern seems to be love, whether it is proper or improper. One cannot dismiss the fact that love is a primary sentiment in human life. But the scope of love is very wide. The novels of Tagore present characters that are in love in the limited sense, in the sense, between a young man and a young woman. Most of the characters seem to have involved in love without any direction and purpose and without proper understanding. They involve, they suffer and they get frustrated. Fulfillment of love is a rare occurrence in the lives of the women protagonists in the novels, whereas women characters in short stories are full of variety and full of life. Immense variety of nature of women is presented in the short stories of Tagore. Each character is unique by itself. The brief analyses of above women characters from the novels and short stories of Tagore would provide sufficient evidence to say the women characters in the short stories of Tagore are more life like and more charming and more sparkling than the women characters of his novels.

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