

Conglomeration of the psyche: Perusing the dispositions of select characters of Tagore

Afsal Jamal.P

Assistant Professor

PTM Govt College, Perinthalmanna, Kerala

afsaljamal@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

It seems that short stories have a particular attraction to men. Man used to narrate stories to his spectators in the pre-historic period. The most important uniqueness of short stories is dramatic quality, lyricism, revelation and proposition. According to Indian poetics, the suggestiveness or *vyanjana* is the significant one. But in western poetics, it is symbolism. In the short stories of Tagore, one can discover the authority of man, nature and the mysteries of the paranormal. The pictures of rustic - metropolitan lives, breakdown of the aged joint families, ancestor's quarrels, conflict in love and fondness, conflict between spiritual superstitions and humanistic principles offer a high-flying place in Bengali life. Tagore is extensively regarded as the trendsetter of the modern Bengali short stories and is attributed with introducing conversational speech into Bengali literature. His stories portray human affiliation within a simple, comparatively ordinary plot.

Key words : vyanjana, suffuse, aspirations, mute, intervention, idealize.

INTRODUCTION

Tagore deviated from the traditional way of storytelling and discovered a new structure. The short story begins abruptly, develops around an ordinary incident and ends with a twist. Tagore's short stories were original creations having no influence from any western writers. The incidents are few in these stories. Another important feature of his stories is the beautiful natural description. Not only Tagore's characters have life and spirit, even the houses, the surroundings and atmosphere are full of life and spirit. His characters weep because of conflict between goodness and cruelty. The child occupied the central roles in majority of his stories. The chief themes in his stories are the troubles of the combined family organization, social disapproval in a wider sense, love obsessive or good-natured. Tagore's characters are by no means fake creatures. They are common men, women and children. The characters have their own personalities. The heartbreaking circumstances of the women in all roles of life-wife, mother, daughter, sister are pinched through a numeral of characters in his stories. The characters are not illustrious men but they generate a permanent feeling in our minds. Pathos is the major current of Tagore's short stories. The majority of his writings portray Indian way of life.

Tagore by no means prejudiced by patriarchal principles. That's why he portrayed his heroines as more commanding and brighter than pathetic men. Tagore not only reveals the mysticism of his heroines but also demonstrates their enthusiastic realistic wisdom and willpower. Tagore's stories corroborate the information that he understood in the development of women and in their liberation from feudal oppression. He also thought that, given identical rights and opportunities, they might dwell in their equitable place in society side by side with men.

Tagore's male characters are a diverse group. They are the archetypal agents of the bourgeois society. One finds in his narration the forlorn and the sophisticated, men of belongings and of trade, the happiness hunter and the fake academic, the booklover and the reporter, the audacious and the spineless. These characters exposed from time to time through themselves, now and then through the writer's account. A good numerous of these stories

are expressed in the first person and the narrator has no vacillation in enlightening his own weaknesses and also his potency for the advantage of the readers. Some male characters are in fact powerless and the reader may be aggravated by their inert nature and behavior. The youth of the concluding years of the nineteenth century had not yet been liberated from the age-old authoritarianism of social bonds.

The Postmaster by Tagore is a story of an unnamed postmaster who is bestowed with a remote post office set in a typical Indian village. The story teller is a postmaster. He has less number of friends; his closest friend is an orphan girl whose name is Ratan. Enquiring about her parents, he realized that she had better memories about her father, compared to her mother. *Kabuliwalla* is the story of merchant from the place named Kabul. In the story, one can read that the Begalis taking into consideration them as rough and cultureless who lend money at an exorbitant rate of interest and even ready to take the life at silly reasons. Even rumors spread that they would take away kids in their bags that they always kept with them. But in Tagore's story, kabuliwalla became an icon of love and compassion. While *Subha* is the story of dumb girl who is very beautiful and made to accept a young man as her husband who was unknown as far as the physical deformity of the girl was concerned. After her marriage, she experienced almost a deserted life as her husband never cared for her or for her emotions. That made her almost lonely and sought refuge with the friends of animals, especially two cows, surbhashi and panguli. She tried to communicate all her sufferings to these animals. The life sacrifice of a servant for the master forms the theme of *The Child's Return*. This servant belittled his own life for the sake of his master.

These stories are of multiple kinds and using miscellaneous techniques, especially suggestive dealing with multiple aspects of life in Bengal and portraying specific types of people from various walks of life. These stories are noted for amalgamation of sharp observation and pure imagination, of irony and compassion and known for the writer's talent for catching hold of the minute details and his perspectives on the injustice existing in the society. The characters that come in these stories, differ from those of his plays or novels, are ever memorable. Many of these characters reside in the mind of the author itself before these images manifested into stories.

Most of these stories are woven around families and human relationships. The significance of relationship is highlighted in all these. Apart from that, compassion, brother hood, human values etc found important space and seriousness. While his stories concentrated on these ideas, many of his poems made use of mystic feelings. Though mysticism crept into his poetry, it was not an act done purposefully. This was neither used as a way to escape from the realities of the life too. Tagore always showed little consideration for the specific qualities of people. He was continuously impressed by the mystery of life.

The style of narration as far as the stories are concerned, is simple, the poems he wrote were free verse, flexible and the tempo of the poems was reflected in the meter used in it. He was very much particular in using the colloquial language too. Though he tried to copy life in his stories, there was a note of sorrow in most of his works. Mostly, these stories dealt with the circumscribed life of women, especially of a Hindu family, the mental disturbances, position in the society and capacity to tolerate and adjust with the surroundings. Tagore was influenced by the teaching of the Upanishads and his own faith in God and religion, in fact the personal cleanliness and a mind to serve others. He visualized a need for fresh world order built on the transnational values and concepts.

His story *The Child Return* narrates the life of Raicharan who has been working as a servant from his teens. The title of this work signifies the role children have to play in the life of parents. The aim of Tagore, of course, was to bring out the emotions and affections of a father towards his son. It was set in the British India, in Bhadrakol in Bengal. He was appointed to look after the child of a prosperous family. Raicharan treats his master as his father. When the child began to grow and call Raicharan Cha-cha, his happiness touched the sky. The

interpersonal relationships of a family, including the sorrow of a mother in losing her child too are narrated. Hence both the happiness as well as sorrow related to child-parent relationship is nicely represented.

In *kabooliwala*, Mini and Rahmat are the main characters. Rahmat, the Kabooliwala from Afghanistan sells items from door to door. Once, Rahmat met Mini who later became friends. He is a good listener to the talkative Mini. Rahmat loved Mini as she was exactly of the age of his daughter. The emotions of these two characters are highlighted. Rahmat, while spending time with Mini remembers the time spent with her daughter who was left in Afghanistan. Rahmat is a character who never tolerates abuse by the customers, sometimes it even leads to fight. Later he was sentenced to imprisonment. Even after that, he decided to uphold the truth. It is a story that centers on the feelings and emotions of the characters.

Ratan, the leading character in *The Postman* is pruned by the postman. The two people influence each other. At the beginning of the story, Ratan roams around Ulapur. Though failed to understand the purpose, later identifies a sense of individuality. The postman is highly talented and scholarly. He is from the city who is well-mannered. The postman acquaints Ratan with a life and world which was not known to her previously. Throughout the story, the postman symbolizes strength and respect. Longing, separation, companionship, dependency all come from time to time in the story to act as a bonding term between the two characters. The two ways by which human mind works or the two perspectives are shown by the writer through these two characters. The postman becomes so philosophical that he uses to console Ratan.

A dumb girl Subhashini who becomes one with the flora and fauna is the heroine in *Subha*. There are three things similar, nature, animals and Subha as all of them are dumb. Subha experiences almost excommunicated because of her physical deformity. It was because of this isolation, or rather to overcome the loneliness, Subha makes friendship with nature and animals. In this story, one can observe that her relationship with nature and animals is deeper than to people around her. The reason to find solace in nature is due to the motherly image for the flora around her. She believed, she was stolen out of her mother nature during the family's shift to Calcutta. That was the starting point of her entire tragic experiences in her life. Though her name Subhashini means one who can speak well, she is a dumb speaker throughout the story. The writer opines that nature herself made up for her as a distinct medium to communicate her feelings. Since from childhood, Subha was denied the capacity to speak, Tagore is able to, through her portrayal, instigate sympathy in the mind of the readers. Even her parent's treatment of her dumbness makes the readers think. For her mother, she was a stain upon her body while her father held an entirely different perspective as he loved her too much. His heart experienced grief over the deformity of his daughter.

Tagore believed, like Anton Chekhov, the story should end with an element of incompleteness. The artistic talent of Tagore is visible in the ending of his stories. The reader, once completing the reading, should feel that the story is not yet over. There are many more elements or incidents to happen. With such an endless ending, the writer wanted his readers to think about life, which is in a particular sort of flow. The narrators in many of these stories change by listening to any story narrated to him in between. The stories begin with the description of one or two characters and later the story proceeds to their past, occasion of separation mixed up with sorrow. Tagore's style is simple, conversational and not deeply colored. Lesser elements of artificiality are what make his stories unique. Author seldom interferes in the actions of the characters. He never tries to idealize his characters too.

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