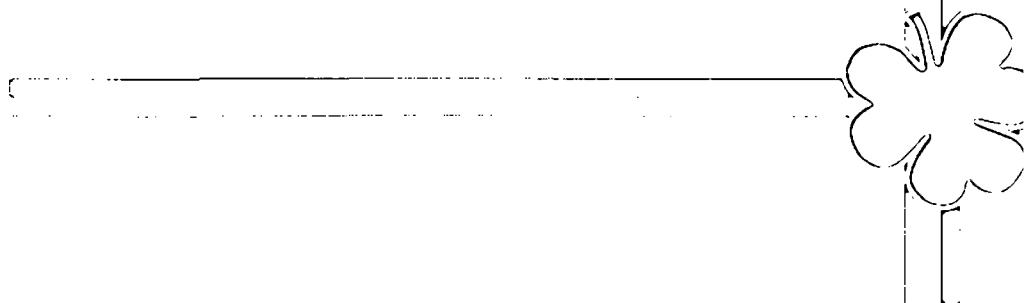


Conclusion



CONCLUSION

Rabindranath Tagore – poet, dramatist, novelist, educationist, philosopher and painter is one of the greatest literary figures of Indian literature. He has been honoured with the Nobel Prize for literature in 1913. Also has he won the distinction and popularity as most of his works have been translated into different languages which has brought distinction not only to Bengali literature but also to Indian literature. Tagore's novels and novellas represent his concern as a creative artist and thinker. Tagore's achievement as a novelist are best viewed against the background of cultural, social and literary developments of late nineteenth and early twentieth century in Bengali society.

The locale of Tagore's novels is Bengal which deals with the different aspects of Bengali life. All his novels and novellas are set in the background of Bengal region depicting the life style of Bengali people. The mention of Calcutta city of West Bengal in almost every novel is the evidence to support the narration. The storyline of his novels lies in the time period of late nineteenth and early twentieth century. These novels deal with the social issues prevailing in the society during that time span. To authenticate the narration, Tagore discusses pre-independence struggle in *Gora*, *The Home and the World* and *Four Chapters* which evidently indicates that the early twentieth century is the time period of the texts. In *Quartet*, Tagore talks about the devastating plague of Calcutta which broke out in the year 1899. Therefore, the storyline relates to late nineteenth century. Tagore's narratives are immensely effective because of his literary writings with perfect control over the tools and mediums used by him.

The architectonics of Tagore's novels show the strength of craftsmanship which results in the effectiveness of narrative. The language used in his novels and novellas is simple and vernacular, and the dialogues are as per the situation, time and setting of the story. His reliance on dialogues to intensify the dramatic effects of the novels, makes his novels fit for the stage presentation without much alterations. The dialogues are marked by the poetic grace and dramatic verse in his novels as in *Farewell My Friend*, he has made the best use of his poetic skills. In rest of his novels and novellas, the language and dialogues have spellbound impact on the readers.

Tagore has used different narrative techniques in his fiction – writings. In most of his fiction like *A Grain of Sand*, *Broken Nest*, *The Wreck*, *The Nexus*, *Gora* and *Two Sisters*, Tagore has used the third-person narration and himself narrates the story as an author. Tagore uses another way of narration in *Quartet* where he makes one of his characters the narrator of the story. Sribilas, a character in the text narrates the whole story by participating in all the events. Shifting from present to past also is another mode of narration used by Tagore. Flashback is one of the narrative techniques in Tagore's novels. The characters in *Four Chapters*, *The Garden*, *Farewell My Friend* and *The Home and the World* make the use of flashback technique to strengthen the present and past incidents which makes the text efficacious. *Farewell My Friend* is his only novel where he introduces a different narrative technique. During the narration, Tagore makes his appearance in the text by citing his poetry through the characters which adds uniqueness to the novel. In the *Home and the World*, Tagore makes all the characters of the text the narrators. Each character of the text narrates the story from his/her point of view and the storyline moves forward with the characters' interpretation of the incidents occurring in the text.

Tagore has given apt titles to his works. These titles gain deeper meaning as the narrative progresses and the relationship between the characters and the events become clear. The titles given by Tagore to his novels and novellas are so effective that it becomes easier for the readers to picture the content of the texts. The title of Tagore's *Gora* is self-explanatory as it is taken from the name of the main protagonist Gora. Rest of the novels and novellas attain the titles from episodic occurrences in the text like *The Wreck*, *Farewell My Friend*, *The Nexus and Quartet*. Symbolically the titles justify the main happenings of the novels as in *Broken Nest*, *A Grain of Sand*, *The Garden* and *The Home and the World*. *Broken Nest* is an apt title for the text as the storyline is based upon the efforts made by Bhupati to mend the broken nest of his marital-relationship with Charulata, though he fails in his endeavour. *A Grain of Sand* is called thus as Binodini calls Asha's friendship with her as a grain of sand in the eye which draws pearly tears. The feeling of unjustified suffering, in spite of her being educated and beautiful makes Binodini bring turmoil in Ashalata's life, and even Bihari and Mahendra. *The Garden* is also aptly titled because Neerja's life revolves around the garden made by her husband, Aditya. *The Garden* is symbolic of blossoming of her love for Aditya and also the intensity with which he reciprocates her love. It signifies the flowering of their relationship, while also how it only brings the downfall of a fulfilling marriage. The title of the other novel *The Home and the World* clearly signifies the protagonist's (Bimala) conflict between the home and the outside world. Bimala is unable to overcome the temptation of the outer world especially the relationship with Sandip. However, when the reality of Sandip is exposed, she returns to her home. As the title suggests, *The Wreck* is based upon the wreck episode of Padma river where the protagonists of the text - Kamala and Ramesh meet. The wreck actually causes a havoc in their life. Still, this very destruction

brings out the strengths in various characters and evolve them as human beings.

The title *The Nexus* evidently signifies the connection and link between two persons through the relationship of Madhusudan and Kumudini. Symbolically, the novel shows how the power politics/nexus of patriarchy subjugates a woman; whereas *Quartet* deals with the group of four people – Jagmohan, Sachish, Damini and Sribilash. As the title indicates this work in four chapters brings out the varied perceptions, principles and view points of four mentioned characters. The title of *Farewell My Friend* is centred upon the farewell note given by Labanya to Amit for the sake of their friendship. It strongly advocates the need of human beings to stand by truth and value, even at the cost of their values. The farewell has to be to the untruth, immoral and unethical mores. Tagore's novel *Two Sisters* depicts the relationship of two sisters - Sarmila and Urmimala whereas *Four Chapters* comprises of four chapters which present the story of Atin and Ela. The titles given by Tagore to his novels and novellas are significant and well suited to the texts.

The variety of themes figuring in Tagore's novels points to the various range of his interests and concerns. As a novelist, the conflicts, tensions, frustrations contradictions and embarrassment stemming out of polarities of past and present, orthodoxy and radicalism, tradition and modernity seem to interest him. Through his novels, Tagore takes up the human situations for the analysis of the position of beings in the Indian society.

Tagore embodies a powerful vision of India through nationalism and patriotism in his novels. Tagore asserts that nationalism is not a self-expression of man as a social being rather union of people in the organised self-interest of beings. *Gora*, *The Home and the World* and *Four Chapters* are the novels based on the theme of nationalism. He argues that independence can be achieved by the

promotion of self-help and strength rather than by the denunciation of the British. He refuses to accept the insanity of the nationalists in burning foreign goods as a mark of non-cooperation and feels disheartened to see that many young minds are turned to the cult of terrorism in the hope to free their mother-land from foreign tyranny. The characters in these novels face suffering by being caught up in violent turmoil of political struggles. These novels present the political emancipation against the background of Swadeshi Movement in Bengal.

Tagore perceptibly records the sufferings of the women, influenced from the society's rigid thinking, in his novels as a theme. The conditions of the women in the Bengali society in late nineteenth and early twentieth century is exemplified particularly through *A Grain of Sand*, *The Wreck* and *Quartet*. However, in almost all his novels, the feeble characters transform into strong personalities in the end. Through the characters of Hemnalini (*The Wreck*) and Sarala (*The Garden*), Tagore has portrayed the strong women who assert their individualities in male-dominated society. In his novels, the female characters are not merely puppets of the existing system rather are courageous enough to fight against the adversities. Tagore's deep concern for women is reflected through their strong and sensitive depiction in his novels. Tagore is well aware of the weak position of women in the society in early twentieth century. Therefore, he favours an equal status and respectable place for them in the patriarchal set-up through his novels.

The social issue of discrimination on the basis of caste is dwelled upon in detail by Tagore. He promotes equality in the society without any injustice to any caste. This vision of Tagore is depicted through the characters of Annadamoyi (*Gora*), Jagmohan (*Quartet*) and Nikhilesh (*The Home and the World*). Tagore argues through his novels that mankind cannot be divided on the basis of caste.

Through his novels, Tagore presents his vision of united India without any biasness.

The social issue of extra-marital affair is also dealt with by Tagore in *A Grain of Sand*, *Two Sisters* and *The Nexus*. Tagore raises this human and social matter which creates turmoil in the relationships and disturbs the family life as well. After creating much havoc in the lives, Tagore makes his characters accept their mistake like Binodini, Sarala and Urmimala and realise the strength of the marital bond.

Humanistic values become another prominent theme of the novels of Tagore. Tagore's sympathy is for all the characters who suffer because of social pressures, sheer chance or human weakness. In *Quartet*, *Two Sisters* and *Farewell My friend*, Tagore has depicted the human values like devotion, love, sacrifice, help, care, sympathy, forgiveness, repentance along with possessiveness and betrayal. The characters portrayed by Tagore in his novels and novellas depict such strong human values which work for the welfare of the human beings. Humanity towards mankind is depicted through the character of Jagmohan (*Quartet*) who is always ready to help people without any consideration of caste and race. Sachish (*Quartet*) follows him and indulges himself in humanitarian activities started by his uncle Jagmohan. The human values of sacrifice, devotion, love and forgiveness are expressed *Two Sisters*, *Farewell My Friend* and *Quartet* through the characters of Sarmila, Labanya, Sarala, Damini, Bihari and Sribilash. Tagore argues that these human traits are the reason behind the growth and downfall of the beings.

Along with the human values, Indian culture with its belief system becomes another theme of Tagore's novels. Tagore seems fully aware of the

powerful qualities of Indian tradition which consist of the spirit of assimilation, serenity behind agitation and the firm faith that there is a point at which all the basis values – truth, goodness, sacrifice, love, freedom, tranquillity - converge. The strong Indian cultural values of family system, brotherhood, friendship and marriage institution are depicted by Tagore in *Broken Nest* and *The home and World* along with the religious beliefs and dogmas. Rigid and orthodox thinking of Hinduism which is an obstacle in the elated life style is attacked by Tagore in *Gora* as the aversive side of Indian culture.

Tagore has tackled variety of themes in his novels, but his characters are confined to the upper middle class segment of the Bengali Society. These characters emerge from the real life situations. The female characters of Tagore's novels and novellas are exploited by the feudal society. The out-dated, rigid and orthodox customs of Indian society towards women enhance the miseries for them. Tagore argues that women are not given the deserved place in the social set-up but he is never influenced by patriarchal view. Thus, Tagore depicts his female protagonists like Binodini (*A Grain of Sand*), Bimala (*The Home and the World*), Charulata, Labanya (*Farewell My Friend*), Sucharita (*Gora*), Kamala (*The Wreck*), Hemnalini (*The Wreck*), Neerja (*The Garden*), Damini (*Quartet*) and Ela (*Four Chapters*) as more powerful and brighter than the male characters. Tagore's portrayal of women characters confirm his view that women should be given equal rights and opportunities and women should occupy their rightful position in the society along with men. Tagore's male characters are typical representatives of the bourgeois society in early twentieth century – men of property and business like Mahendra (*A Grain of Sand*), Madhusudan (*The Nexus*), Sasanka (*Two Sisters*) and the pseudo-intellectual like Amit Rai (*Farewell My Friend*), Naren Mitter (*Farewell My Friend*) and Sandip (*The Home and the World*). The responsible and

sensible male characters are also portrayed through Bhupati, Binoy (*Gora*), Nikhilesh (*The Home and the World*), Bihari (*A Grain of Sand*) and Ramesh (*The Wreck*) by Tagore. These characters are revealed sometimes by themselves and sometimes the author himself describes them. Through the characterisation of male in his novels and novellas, Tagore asserts that the men are not yet been emancipated from the age long patriarchal set-up. The characters in Tagore's novels and novellas are so realistically portrayed that the readers comfortably connect with them and relate to the stories as if these are of the people around them.

The ending of any novel is the outcome of what the characters have experienced through the events developed in the text. Most of Tagore's novels and novellas end on an assertive note with the transformation and self-realisation of the characters. After all the complications aroused out of the wreck episode in *The Wreck*, the novel ends with the union of Kamala – Nalinaksha and Ramesh – Hemnalini in strong relationship. Urmimala in *Two Sisters* realises her mistake of creating havoc in the life of her sister, Sarmila and the text ends with the union of Sarmila and Sasanka. *The Nexus* is a strong feminine text but culminates with the surrender of Kumudini to her husband, Madhusudan. *Quartet* draws its conclusion with the transformation of Sachish from an atheist to the devotee of God and the union of Damini and Sribilash in a marital bond. *Farewell My Friend* too ends with affirmative note where Amit – Katie and Labanya – Sobhanlal are entangled in the powerful relation of marriage. Gora ultimately realises the true meaning of religion and releases himself from the rigid orthodox customs of Hinduism in the novel, *Gora*. The text ends with the self-realisation of Gora and the union of Gora and Sucharita. *The Garden* is the only novella of Tagore which ends with the demise of the female protagonist, Neerja, whereas *A Grain of Sand*'s finale is with

Binodini's self-abnegation and the union of Mahendra and Ashalata. The separation of Binodini and Bihari in the text stimulates Tagore to express his unhappiness about the ending of *A Grain of Sand*. *Four Chapters*, *Broken Nest* and *The Home and the World* are such works of Tagore which have ambiguous endings. The last lines of the texts leave it to the readers to interpret and contemplate the circumstances created in the narration. *Four Chapters* ends with the request made by Atin to Ela. Atin asks Ela to go to sleep and gives her chloroform. What happens next is left for the readers to presume. *Broken Nest* culminates with the denial of Charulata to accompany Bhupati to Mysore without any further detail about the impact of this decision on Bhupati and Charulata herself. *The Home and the World* ends with the description of serious head injury of Nikhilesh where the readers are compelled to use their own imaginative skills to conclude the text.

Rabindranath Tagore is the manifestation of the Indian spirit. He epitomises peace in the world amidst the strong forces of religious division. His vision of religion is love and unity which discovers the rest of the world in oneself. Tagore's religion is an aspect of human spirit. He argues that it does not come from God rather is rooted in human beings. Religion, for Tagore, is an essential quality for the unity which emerges from ultimate self-consciousness. He considers human beings as special and highest manifestation of God. Tagore believes in the ultimate goodness of the world. He thinks that goodness is the optimistic element in human beings which makes them special.

Tagore has faith in unity of mankind. In his novels and novellas, he explores unity in diversity. He dreams of India as a country where there is no discrimination on the basis of caste and race, where men and women have equal status and where there is unity in all the religions. With this vision, Rabindranath

Tagore establishes himself as a great literary figure in the history of Indian literature. His ideals and principles as a thinker, intellect as an artist and his humanity as a human being further confirm him as an iconic writer in the world.