

The Depiction of Women in the Selected Novels and Short Stories of Rabindranath Tagore and Saratchandra Chatterjee: A Comparative Study

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CHAPTER 4. Conclusion:

The research started with the aim of finding out the validity of the following statements put forth in the hypothesis: Both the writers created unusual women characters and their uncommon struggle to realize emancipation. Though belonging to the same era, their way of dealing with the same problem was distinct. While Tagore portrayed women empowerment within the prevailing social values, Saratchandra's women decided and chose their form of freedom without getting dominated by the societal norms. Each fiction and its women have been studied in the light of the writers' idea of women's liberation in the contemporary world. The women belonged to different socio-economic backgrounds, which led to a deeper analysis of their conditions and their reaction to them.

4.1 Rabindranath Tagore and his depiction of women characters

Position of widow

Bengal was suffering from various social vices during the time Tagore wrote the selected novels and most of these problems were related to women. Though the heinous custom of *Sati* was abolished by the British government after much hard work by Raja Ram Mohan Roy and others, the traditional norms had always designed a very difficult life for the widows. Having novels as the mirror of the society and means for reform, Tagore delved into the life and psyche of widows. They were the protagonists in some of his fictions too, paving the path for acknowledging women for their individuality and intellect, not for their physical appearance only.

Chokher Bali is one such novel, which has Binodini- a widow as the lead character. Along with Binodini, Annapurna and Rajlakshmi portrayed various facades of the lives of widows in this novel. The fiction could be interpreted at various levels in the way Tagore viewed condition of widows and emancipation of the same. Based on this point of view, Annapurna and Rajlakshmi could be considered as the representative of their kind of that time; and Binodini as symbolic to the writer's idea of liberated woman. Tagore criticised the social system, where a woman's existence and value in the society is completely depended on her having a male figure in her life. That answered Rajlakshmi's possessing a natural dominance over the household, though Annapurna was more capable and both held similar positions at home. But at the core of it, both the sisters-in-law did not have much different position in the family, which could be observed towards the end of the novel. So the tale remained alike for the widows at that time, who either continued their life as a mere piece of furniture at home

or were thrown into a life of anonymity on the streets of Benaras. Within the purview of these circumstances Binodini was a character, who not only defied and challenged the set values of the society but also had the courage to live on her own terms. Her status as a widow could not create hindrance on the way to her dreams and she was able to prove that weakness and strength did not depend on one's gender, but it was the creation of the mind. Apparently her acts could be judged as villainous but her aspiration of having a normal life should be marked as an example for all women of her kind to strive for a better future for themselves.

The two elder sisters-in-law of Bimala in 'The Home and the World' again depicted the pains of this class of women, who after losing their husbands were secluded from the usual way of living. Tradition did not allow women to be happy without her husband and for that it took away all sorts of colour, joy and wishes from a widow. A life full of hardships without any hope for the future could affect a mind in two ways and Tagore illustrated these effects through these two sisters-in-law. From the beginning, the elder one was not mentioned a lot because she had mostly kept herself away from household affairs and spent her time in the devotion of God. This was the case with many widows at that time and was widely accepted as a sign of righteousness. But in this praise for virtue, a woman's simple requirements and wishes were ignored by the men. As pointed out by feminists, it was the mind game of the patriarchy to sustain its control over women by conditioning their psyche according to its needs.

The other effect was portrayed by the second sister-in-law, whose unfulfilled desires were vented out in the form of jealousy for Bimala. The sister-in-law failed to appreciate Nikhil's unbiased attitude for his wife because she did not get any such freedom from her husband and her life as a widow continued to remain in shackles. She criticised Bimala at every step, which Nikhil could realize as her way to adjust to the situation. Society strangulated a widow's emotional and physical progress, which eventually strangled its natural course of development.

Women and importance of education

In nineteenth century, education was not a right but a thing of luxury, which was meant for a chosen few and women did not belong to this group. A handful of women had the privilege to study for some years, otherwise according to the tradition the girls were married off at an early age i.e. nine or ten. The prevalent approach proclaimed that a woman was not required to use their head in any family affair and was expected to be depended on the men of the household.

The perspective that learning and acquiring knowledge was essential for emotional and intellectual growth for every individual irrespective of their gender could not get accommodated in such a society.

In the above mentioned societal situation, Tagore's opinion about educated women and the benefits of having them in a family and community was a befitting reply to the orthodox patriarchal values. Unlike his contemporary society he had a different environment in his family, where women were involved in writing, music and other creative work. This experience had affected his way of thinking and its influences could be felt in his writing too. The women characters chosen for this research could be studied in two groups: literate women and the women who were initiated into education. Binodini from *Chokher Bali*, Mrinal from *Streer Patra* and Hemnalini from *Noukadubi* belong to the first category, while Ashalata from *Chokher Bali*, Bimala from *Ghare Baire* and Kamala from *Noukadubi* are in the second one.

Through the pages of '*A Vindication of the Rights of Women*', Wollstonecraft urged women to become autonomous decision makers; but beyond insisting that the path to autonomy goes through the academy, she provided women with little concrete guidance. Although Wollstonecraft toyed with the idea that women's autonomy might depend on women's economic and political independence from men, in the end she decided well-educated women did not need to be economically self-sufficient or politically active in order to be autonomous. (p. 15- 'Feminist Thought – A More Comprehensive Introduction' by Rosemarie Tong)

Binodini and Mrinal delineated this ideology in practice when they chose their destination and the path to reach that goal. Binodini was a widow, who had no financial and social status, but could not stop her from expressing herself or her realizing her dreams. The novel had quite a number of instances that showed Binodini as a well-read person and also aware of the world. She never asked for sympathy from anyone and in its place she demanded her rightful position. The end of the story was completely in the hands of Binodini and the two men became more or less a pawn at her disposal.

On the other hand, Mrinal was an example of beauty with brain, who declined to be a mere showpiece in a rich household and decided to live a life of respect on her own terms. Her life was within the four walls of the inner house but that could not restrict her mind from reaching out. She always felt a deep connection with the Nature and her writings enhanced that bond

further. Her obscure background did not become a hindrance for her to adjust in the new city life after marriage. She was educated and aware of the outside world, which was obvious from her confident disposition in front of her husband or any other men. She found refuge in her diary that became her medium of expression.

She constantly fought for her identity till the day she left her husband's home in reality to realize the essence of individuality. Tagore's Mrinal was of the same opinion as Wollstonecraft and that could be understood from the following lines explaining critic's view: 'What Wollstonecraft most wanted for women is personhood. She claimed that a woman should not be reduced to the "toy of man, his rattle," which "must jingle in his ears whenever, dismissing reason, he chooses to be amused." In other words, a woman is not a "mere means," or instrument, to one or more man's pleasure or happiness. Rather, she is an "end-in-herself," a rational agent whose dignity consists in having capacity for self-determination. To treat someone as a mere means is to treat her as less than a person, as someone who exists not for herself but as an appendage to someone else.' (p. 16- 'Feminist Thought – A More Comprehensive Introduction' by Rosemarie Tong)

In comparison to Binodini and Mrinal, Hemnalini had a modern upbringing as she belonged to Brahmo Society, which gave a lot of importance to education and scientific thoughts. She was a college student like Ramesh along with skills a girl of her age was expected to have- sewing, cooking and singing. She proved to be a level-headed and logical person, when she maintained her cool after knowing about Ramesh's alleged marriage with someone else. In place of blaming him, she cared more for an explanation from him- such sensibility could not be a character of an ignorant person. Hemnalini's education was criticised by Khemonkari and was held against her bold attitude in declining to marry Nalinaksha, but that did not dissuade her from her decision.

Unlike the modern age, Tagore's time did not accept a woman leading an independent life or trying to find her rightful position in a place, which used to be called as man's world. In such a patriarchal setup, Mrinal, Binodini and Hemnalini were women with grit, guts and goodness. They had the determination to decide for themselves and also follow their hurt, while retaining their self-respect.

Tagore initiated a two- way process in these novels in which, on the one hand, the above ladies portrayed the power of being at par with the men and on the other hand, three women were initiated in the process of education bringing a noteworthy change in their personality.

Mahendra was studying in college when he married Ashalata and he found her illiteracy quite unacceptable. Though his mother disapproved Ashalata's studying, Mahendra was persistent in his mission. Later on the docile Ashalata found books as her companion and knowledge gave her ability to manage the household in her husband's absence.

Bimala got married to a zamindar Nikhilesh, who was progressive in his thoughts and acts. Many readers and critics have been of the opinion that Nikhilesh represented the writer. Bimala was surrounded by traditional values that restricted a woman behind purdah in the mundane activities of home. It was Nikhilesh's ideology of acquainting his wife with the outside world, so she could contribute at home and if needed in the society in a better manner. When Bimala entered the sitting room of her house, she actually opened her mind to knowledge. It was this self-awakening that helped her distinguish between fake and reality.

A young and ignorant girl from an unknown village stepped in Kolkata and transforming into a matured woman in little time- that was what Tagore showed in Noukadubi. It was destiny's game that brought Kamala to the city but it was her struggle that developed her to an individual decision-maker. Ramesh could observe a marked difference in her wife when she came home in school vacation. All the steps she took thereafter depicted her confidence as an owner of an independent mind.

At times, Wollstonecraft constructed her argument in favour of educational parity in utilitarian terms. She claimed that unlike emotional and dependent women, who routinely shirk their domestic duties and indulge their carnal desires, rational and independent women will tend to be "observant daughters", "affectionate sisters", "faithful wives" and "reasonable mothers". The truly educated woman will be a major contributor to society's welfare. (p. 14- 'Feminist Thought – A More Comprehensive Introduction' by Rosemarie Tong)

These women from the pages of the selected fictions somewhere proved that Tagore shared Wollstonecraft's outlook about the importance of education in the progress of women. Another first time in India unlike west was that it was men who voiced their opinion about women emancipation. In all the novels chosen for research, it was a man who did not accept a woman to remain ignorant and motivated her to the path of literacy.

Marriage and independence of women

Marriage has always been recognized as one of the most pious social customs and in the past it was the one of the few accepted relationships between a man and a woman. But this institution was treated as another means to have a leash on women. Rabindranath Tagore through the character portrayal and the journey of these individuals condemned this celebrated practice of the then society. The discrepancy was from the beginning of the wedding i.e. the age of the bride and the groom. A girl's marriageable age began at nine years and more or less finished by the time she became an adult, whereas a man was eligible to marry till the time he desired and had the right of having more than one wife.

Each woman's journeys depicted a unique problem in the way the tradition was followed and the status of woman in the whole process. Ashalata's wedding to Mahendra took place in a very unusual circumstance, wherein her wishes had no place. When Mahendra showed disinterest in marriage, Behari became the suitable groom for Ashalata. But, seeing her Mahendra changed his mind and Behari gave in. In these changing episodes the girl was only a spectator and also a recipient of the consequences. Ashalata was married in her adolescence and that answered her immature behaviour and incapability in managing household responsibilities. Though her mother-in-law blamed her being an incompetent housewife, she failed to realize that a girl in such a young age was not mentally or physically developed to take up a married woman's duties.

Physical beauty of a girl was of prime importance in a marriage and it was extensively criticized by the author in '*Streer Patra*'. Mrinal was beautiful and intelligent, but it was her good looks that fetched a rich husband and her intellect was never recognized. A girl was never expected to have any skills related to brain because the contemporary society had divided a person's ability along with the gender. Similarly, a girl who was not alluring in the eyes of the prospective groom's family had rare chance to get married. Mrinal had to fight with her in-laws and husband constantly to prove her mental acumen; somewhere she was right in pointing out that the men of the house were jealous of her as they could not match to her wit. This argument could be true for the society at large, because women had been showing brilliance in various fields from ages and men had been trying to control them by disregarding their talents. Bimala in '*Ghare Baire*' also conveyed the same unwritten doctrine of that time, in which a woman's value was decided on her appearance and not on her chastity. Though it was surprising, it was a common fact that elegance was associated with fair skin and money. A person's complexion and social status were inter-related and one

could have both or nothing. So, when Bimala came to know that Nikhil belonged to the aristocratic class, he became her unseen prince from the fairy land.

The patriarchal society was known for its double- standards and one that marked the hypocritical nature was different sets of principles for men and women. A girl from birth till death was conditioned to a certain way of living that was convenient to the male in her life. This was done in a slow and subtle manner, eventually which was internalized by the female folk. An example could be found in '*Ghare Baire*' and with Bimala. Her monologue in the beginning not only described her as an individual but also spoke loads about the specific gender roles. Though Nikhil did not match with her expectations, he became God to her after marriage. Like most girls of her time, she was taught to worship her husband as next to the almighty. As a modern man it was difficult for Nikhil to accept his wife treating him like a divine entity, which was natural for Bimala. Again it was ingrained in the minds of the women that their world was within the four corners of the inner chamber and crossing the threshold was a sin. While Nikhil wanted his wife to know the world and increase her awareness, in the beginning Bimala considered it futile and did not accede to the change. When a female's existence was penned meticulously within the high walls of timidity and modesty, a man had all the freedom to choose his lifestyle or life-partner- still he was considered superior and abler than her.

Though our scriptures described that a girl and a boy are equal in respect to social status and opportunities, it was never practiced in the same manner. While people did everything to get a boy-child and he had all the privileges at home as well as in the society, girls were considered as burden by the parents. As discussed above, it could be noted that a woman's value in the marriage market was determined by her age and beauty and submissiveness after marriage. The marriageable age for a girl finished by the time she reached nine or ten. To evade society's criticism, the parents often married off their daughters to men who were much older than the brides. As traditional Hindu law allowed a man to have more than one wives, he became the prized catch for a bride's family, wherein he asked for any amount as dowry in exchange of saving their girl from remaining a spinster for the rest of her life.

Tagore's '*Noukadubi*' is a story of two girls whose lives were wrecked at the hands of men, until they took control of themselves. On the one hand, Kamala was that child-bride who did not have the right to see her husband before the wedding. Kamala was an orphan and a burden on her uncle, so her guardian found every possible means to dispose of the

responsibility. And in this process she was a commodity that could be only sold and bought. On the other hand, Hemnalini was that woman who was denounced by her family along with the outsiders, when she stood for her self-respect and decided not to marry out of her choice. Her education and independent outlook was looked down upon and treated as the cause for her unmarried status.

She is not in the world of the fairy tale where the fair woman sleeps ages until she is touched by the magic wand... At last, the time has arrived when woman must step in and impart her life rhythm to this reckless movement of power. (Tagore, Selected Essays, pp 226)

4.2 Saratchandra Chatterjee and his women characters in the selected works

Levels of Liberation

Except in books, men did not give any respect to women; but it is also true that in every country a woman has achieved a position and respect through her own mettle. It had happened once in the ancient Egypt, whose effect reached Rome too. This happened in this country also, when women dared to write Vedas. Now, they do not have the right to touch them even. The time when women did not fall for men's flattery and had the courage to make a man fulfill his promises, the value of women could be realized at that time. (p.30, Self- translation, Narir Mulya by Saratchandra Chatterjee)

A writer, who lived a carefree life for most of his youth and adulthood, knew the value of freedom. This unbounded spirit was deep-rooted in his mind and got vented a number of times in his novels through his characters' psychological delineation. Women from the selected novels represented or practiced freedom that she desired for herself, confirming her identity and portraying liberation at different degrees. The research revealed a gradation of individuality in Parvati, Kamal Lata, Abhaya and Kamal who had the courage to speak and follow their mind.

The first on his scale of liberated minds and individualistic women is Parvati. She was a village girl and expected to be submissive as a person. But seeing her parents deciding her marriage to someone unknown, she dared to visit Devdas in his room at midnight. This act of Paro was not only bold but also dangerous as it could have destroyed a girl's respect forever; she was ready for that shame but was not willing to leave her future in others hands. Her belief in herself did not reduce after her marriage, which made her successful as the mistress of the house and the mother to grownups in a short time. At an age when woman's chastity

was always under scrutiny, she was able to maintain the line between love and lust along with preserving her feelings for Devdas. Parvati believed that a woman was capable of fulfilling her duties and also follow her heart.

While Parvati had the ability to take a hold of any uncompromising situation and confirming her position, Kamal Lata was writer's answer to the social prejudices of that time. When Srikanta met her, she had already been a widow, an unwedded mother and then she was living as a Vaishnavi devotee of Krishna. Though she was not a widow by choice, but she was ready for society's disapproval, rather than marrying a degraded man. She was honest towards the doings in Vaishnav faith, like the way she was forthright about her feelings. Saratchandra criticised the patriarchy's selfish attitude towards widows, who were forced into a drab and uninteresting living. According to him, every woman might not be happy in adopting a life of devotion for the rest of her life, by giving up her desires. His point of view could be realized in two levels- Firstly, it was the duty of every person to respect the wishes of others irrespective of the gender because all women were not as strong-willed as Kamal Lata in their decisions. Secondly, society as a whole should begin to broaden its acceptance for women like Kamal Lata, who had the grit to express their feelings openly, face all odds and continue being happy.

With Abhaya, Saratchandra went a level higher in creating a democratic and progressive society for women of his time. The first time Srikanta met Abhaya left him confused and bit irritated about her. The reason was his upbringing and social setup, where women did not have the right to expression and timidity was considered as her brightest ornament. Defying such a social structure, a young woman from a remote village was travelling on a ship to an unknown country in search of her husband; to top it all, the man who accompanied her was not related to her. The circumstances were absolutely uncommon and unacceptable at that time, which might have made the author to establish his characters in Rangoon. Abhaya chose Rohini's selfless love over her treacherous husband. In other words, she listened to her heart and rejected the prevalent biased virtue of revering a husband regardless of him being unfaithful. Their story proclaimed a different level of relationship that was quite unusual for that time. A time when marriage was considered as the only sacred social relationship between a man and woman, Saratchandra was way ahead when he showed live-in and more importantly from a woman's point of view. Abhaya and Rohini lived together in Rangoon and there was no mention of marriage by Abhaya, when she told about her decision to

Srikanta. Through his heroine, Saratchandra visualized the spirit of freedom, wherein she was the decision-maker for herself.

Kamal was another name for a liberated mind and she embodied the true soul of emancipation. The thoughts which might or might not have come into any woman's mind during those days were practiced by Kamal in reality. She was a confluence of east and west upholding the best of both the worlds and could be recognized as the author's absolute answer to patriarchy. She defied all the rules tradition prescribed for women and set her own principles in a man's world. Indian society was stifled by self-praise of its irrational dogmas and people were living in a false paradise of possessing the best cultural values in the world. In such an egoistical community Kamal was like a storm attacking and challenging the irrational with certainty. Kamal was author's spokesperson, who was commenting on a number of social prejudices of his time. Firstly, the hypocrisy of men and helplessness of women in a relation was thoroughly criticised by her. Secondly, Kamal proved everyone that a widow need not to be vulnerable and if desired, she could administer her own and others life too. Also, she had the right to live a life of her choice without the intervention of others. Thirdly, it was not money or man that could complete or complement a female, but it was her confidence and courage, which could liberate her from the shackles of discrimination. Fourthly, marriage was a social custom and it did not prove to be the reason for the union of hearts. Both man and woman shared equal rights in choosing their partners and were equally responsible for making marriage a success. Lastly, according to Kamal love between couples was more important, rather than any social bonding for being together. She never agreed with the prevalent dictum of adjustment over affection and altering one's liking for another was a natural trait in a human being. Here was another example where the writer implicitly pointed towards live-in relationship, which in a way supported the feminist principle of achieving parity between the genders.

Women with Distinct Attributes

In most of his fictions Saratchandra had upheld the cause of women, especially those who belonged to the lower classes or regarded as outcasts in the social structure. Unlike his contemporaries, he had come in close contact with various kinds of women and got the opportunity to know and understand them. This familiarity helped him to develop a unique outlook to judge characters, who otherwise were either ignored or exploited.

Annada and Parvati portrayed a rare combination of traditional values and modern thought. Both of them were loyal to their husband and shouldered the required responsibilities from heart. But they did not give up their self-respect in this bargain and put forth their opinions whenever necessary. Annada seemed a meek character till the time Srikanta could realize the strength in her silence. Her wifely duties could not eclipse her guilt that she accepted her sister's murderer as husband. The ability to accept one's obligation and admit one's sin at the same time demanded a lot of courage, which was fulfilled in every respect by Annada. Similarly, a person like Parvati could never concede to others opinion blindly. She had been very clear about her viewpoint, which did not alter with changing circumstances. Parvati proved that women could be more matured than men and be confident as well as reasonable.

Women like Chandramukhi and Rajlakshmi were not fictitious characters for Saratchandra because he had interacted with such people in reality. Prostitutes were the creation of male atrocities, so to label them as lowly beings was hypocrisy.

As Lord Krishna has 108 names, Hindu scriptures mostly have assigned a number of names to prostitutes also. If that is the case, then it is understandable who is more selfish and has immoral character between men and women, and it is also clear for whom, the customs and laws should be made to remove sin from the society, and it is also obvious who should be kept under a scanner and punished more to keep the society pure. (p.35, Self- translation, Narir Mulya by Saratchandra Chatterjee)

Through these two unforgettable individuals, the writer illustrated two facts. Firstly, prostitutes were always a part of the society and branding them outcast would only disintegrate its constitution. Both Chandramukhi and Rajlakshmi wished to be accepted in the mainstream and wanted to live a normal life. Saratchandra kept their future open-ended because during that time it was impossible but he had the hope for change. Secondly, though they were aware of their societal position, they chose and followed their own paths. Rajlakshmi was rich and had power, which made others respect or fear her. Chandramukhi might not be as affluent as Rajlakshmi but she had enough means to live a decent living. But the grit lay in their giving up all the wealth and luxury for what they thought as more valuable. So, the writer had tried to reason out the misconceptions about this group of oppressed women and shown their true worth.

The three most unconventional women from the pages of Saratchandra's novels are Kamal, Abhaya and Kamal Lata. All of them defied the rules set for women in general and

particularly for them also. From the beginning Kamal opposed the prevailing social believes and customs, which made her secluded for time to time. But she did not deter from her path and in the long run could convince some people about her ideas. Neither her lifestyle was not in coherence with that time nor did her attitude resemble traditional norms.

How can a wife hate her husband? According to tradition, howsoever a man might be, for a wife he is God and when this God dies, it is the duty of the wife to follow his footsteps blindly. In this age, living a life by remembering a dead husband signifies womanhood. (p.35, Self- translation, Narir Mulya by Saratchandra Chatterjee)

Similarly, Abhaya did not find any heroism in sacrificing own happiness for an undeserving man like her husband. Though she was looked at with contempt by Srikanta, she remained firm with her decision while explaining her viewpoint. Lastly, Kamal Lata showed that a woman's desire for love could not be forcefully hidden under the garb of devotion. In a way she voiced for those widows whose existence was reduced only to the service of God after they lost their husbands. Her integrity towards the ashram was unquestionable, but that could not kill her aspiration for freedom. The noteworthy part in them was that their insignificant and meager background could not pose a hindrance in their way to liberation from arbitrary rules. They could have become the best stories of tragedy but they chose to set examples for other women. Like liberal feminists, Saratchandra criticised patriarchal believes in the selected fictions. This could be understood better from the following lines portraying similar point of view:

Liberal feminism wish to free women from oppressive gender roles—that is, from those roles used as excuses or justifications for giving women a lesser place, or no place at all, in the academy, the forum, and the marketplace. These feminists stress that patriarchal society conflates sex and gender, deeming appropriate for women only those jobs associated with the traditional feminine personality. (p. 34- Rosemarie Tong in 'Feminist Thought – A More Comprehensive Introduction')

4.3 Treatment of emancipation of women by Rabindranath Tagore and Saratchandra Chatterjee

Though a writer in heart and soul, it could not be denied that Rabindranath Tagore was a social reformer too. His pen became the medium of expression and creativity liberated his mind in conceiving characters who were capable of setting examples for future generations. The selected novels clearly stated his idea of modern women and the path that led to

emancipation. Personally he disliked formal schooling and did not attend one but he knew the importance of the education in an individual's life. Firstly, Tagore either portrayed women who were literate or depicted women who got into the process in the course of the novel. Through various situations and events, he illustrated that knowledge built confidence, eventually achieving self-realization and self-worth. Secondly, his characters proved many times that it was not money or status that decided a person's power, but her disposition that claimed respect from others. She might belong to any social strata but the courage to assert her rights should come from within. Lastly, as he had observed equality between the genders at his home, he showed the same in these novels. A man's mind needed to be liberated of prejudices and egoism, leading to a woman's liberation from society's biased ideas.

The concept of women's liberty got a different perspective from Saratchandra Chatterjee's interpretation of his female protagonists. He being a bohemian in heart could never accede to anything less than complete freedom in thought, expression and living. Similarly, he created free-spirited women, who showed vigor in dealing with uncompromising situations but never gave up their desire of self-actualization. His ideology that he upheld in the selected novels could be illustrated under three points and they are: Firstly, according to him there should be equality and respect between a man and a woman. The degree of realization of one's right and delivering duties should not be decided on the basis of gender. Society's hypo critic rules would only jeopardize its progress if one half of the community was ignored. Secondly, dignity was an innate feature in every individual and it did not change with social position. Like man, a woman had same authority to maintain her respectability irrespective of the circumstances. Being a woman, she must not compromise with any kind of eccentricity of any worth. Thirdly, it could be comprehended from the research that the writer was the spokesperson for women from every strata and background. His life was a collection of experiences from various corners of the society and these women conveyed the message of self-recognition to the patriarchy.

By virtue of their depiction of women and the path for their emancipation, two differences could be noted between the two authors. Firstly, lack of inconsistency could be observed in Tagore's portrayal of female characters. While Mrinal gave up her husband's home for self-respect, Hemnalini was shown as forgiving Ramesh who cheated her by marrying someone else and also hiding the truth from her. On the one hand, Ashalata stayed back at her husband's home to carry out her responsibilities, though she knew Mahendra was disloyal towards her. On the other hand, Kamal was aware that Ramesh was caring and dutiful

towards her, but she showed irresponsibility by leaving the house without informing anyone. Like Binodini, Bimala's two sisters-in-law were also widows. Though coming from a poor background, Binodini was literate and had access to the men's world, whereas the two sisters-in-law never crossed the threshold of the inner chambers.

Secondly, Tagore could not go beyond or against the prevailing social norms. He belonged to the aristocratic class and has a certain category of readers, who were mostly upper class or upper middle class. Although his heroines ventured into the world of unrestricted freedom, ultimately he merged them within the existing system. Ideas like a young widow marrying a young man, a Brahmo girl marrying a Hindu boy, a man and woman living together without marriage or a woman having a relationship outside her marriage was unacceptable to Tagore's society. So by the time the story ended either the woman was shown settling within the prevalent establishment or the end was left to the readers understanding.

If Saratchandra's women were reviewed in the same light, it could be noticed that his idea of women's liberation was similar for all women regardless to the class, caste or religion they belonged to. Parvati belonged to the richer class but she got the opportunity to visit Devdas in his room to decide her future. Similarly, Annada got her moment to determine her course of action when she chose to go with her husband and also when she resolved to live a life of anonymity. The way his heroines acted, it could be concluded that Saratchandra did not restrict their thought process according to the set customs. It was neither just nor unjust for him because he gave more importance to individual's rights and desires. That answers to Rajlakshmi and Chandramukhi taking a different course for the same reason- Rajlakshmi resorted to a simple living to be with the man she loved all her life and Chandramukhi gave up her luxurious life to respect her love for Devdas.

The author gave them full authority to experience, accept and realize the true value of their existence by themselves. When he spoke about equality between man and woman, he meant it every manner. So, Hemnalini was accepted though she fell in love with Kamal's husband and later eloped with him. Kamal's modern ideas were eventually understood and her relation with many men was considered a part of her journey in life. Nilima was not branded as another woman and her loneliness was treated with kindness. Abhaya was not looked down upon because she was living in with a man, but was acknowledged as a strong woman fighting all odds. Rajlakshmi and Chandramukhi were prostitutes but Saratchandra created

such distinct and intense characters in them that these two women made a mark in the readers' mind of all generations.

It could be concluded that the two authors had a distinct way of thinking in regard to woman and her rightful position in the society. Though quite senior, Rabindranath Tagore and Saratchandra Chatterjee belonged to the same era viewing similar things in Bengal. It could be the background and a writer's discretion, which were responsible for their different approach. Having said that, it could never be ignored their contribution in the upliftment of women in Bengal and their contribution in Bengali and Indian literature.

References