

prominence which is all the more true of Tagore and his contemporary Sharat Chandra Chatterji. The latter has no parallel so far his study of women is concerned. Tagore painted the three aspects of womanhood, namely of beloved, of mother and lastly of the individual.

It is difficult, nay even impossible to appreciate Tagore unless one is familiar with his philosophy of life which naturally found expression in his writings and also in the characters he introduced in his plays and novels. He combined in his sage-like constitution the three different aspects of poet, philosopher and patriot. This is why he was known as Gurudeva - the respected teacher - and that is why his influence on Indian culture and mind is only second to Mahatma Gandhi. On the one hand he was influenced by the lofty ideals of the Upanishads but opposed to dogmatic Hindu doctrines. He was not a great supporter of the theory of denunciation or 'Tyaga' and regarded this universe as a beautiful place to practice all beautiful and noble things. That is why he could love man irrespective of caste, creed and sect as god's own creation. While writing came natural to him, the source of inspiration always sprang up from the spirit of man and his maker. As he grew older, he became confident that only in freedom and social justice could the message of god be heard and practised. In politics he refrained from allying himself with any political party in the beginning but when the impact of Gandhi and Nehru was visible in the eradication of social injustice, untouchability and restoration of women's right he became an ardent supporter of the Indian Congress. His greatest contribution to national feelings are his songs and characters permeated with a selfless spirit of patriotism. Mention may also be made that it was he who gave India her National Anthem. Thus, Tagore was a prince among those whose patriotism was inspired by highest ideals of humanity.

authority and bullies her time and again . He is confident that he can achieve anything by means of his wealth and his acquired position . It is only after years that he realises that though physically he always possessed her Kumudini never belonged to him . He loses confidence and pride and later tries to mould himself by changing his ways of life in a ludicrous manner . Actually the poet started it with its title ' TEEN PURUSHA ' (The Three Generations) on a very ambitious scale but being constantly in conflict with his manifold roles of singer , teacher , philosopher and patriot , failed to sustain interest and finished it as **Cross currents** .

9— **Last Poem or Farewell my friend** : This novelette is very popular among Tagore's admirers especially the Bengali readers and has an appeal of its own . This appears as a page torn from Tagore's own life where he allows himself to be severely criticised by an Oxford-trained intellectual . It has been held in great esteem by critics and one of them remarked ' This is a love story , written as if to end all love stories ' .

The hero Amit is an ultra-modern Bengali intellectual of noble birth who develops a craze for originality and takes delight in running down all accepted and established conventions . He composes poetry of high order under an anonymous pen-name . However , his aggressive self humbles down when once he chanced to meet an intelligent and equally intellectual girl in Shillong (Assam) whose charm and carriage all fascinate him and Amit is swept of his feet . Though head and heart in love with her , he fails to play the romantic role and makes a pathetic picture of him self by not accepting the things as they are . Labanya , the sensitive and sensible girl recognises his failings and disappears from his life leaving him wondering . Out of admiration and attachment she sends him her last poem of farewell which is pulsating with intense feelings of love .

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Thus , the range of Tagore's novels is as wide as his canvas and feelings . He was not wedded to any strict trends of realism or idealism but being essentially a humanitarian he followed honestly and devotedly his characters whom he picked up from his surroundings . Since Rabindranath was an ardent protagonist of religion of the man , his characters - men and women - are filled with bubbling spirits and are fed on human milk . Being a product of a transitional period , he constantly lived in conflicts of old and new and kept a cautious eye on the incursions of western ideas into Bengali literature . In Bengali literature female characters acquire more

nist. While he disapproves his father's orthodoxy he appreciates his uncle's way of life. In the meantime he chanced to meet an orphan girl whom he offers to marry but she commits suicide only to save her lover from embarrassment. His uncle, too, absorbed in humanitarian work succumbs in the epidemic of plague. These events throw Sachish in the company of a band of Vaishnava devotees, where he meets an extremely pretty, intelligent and remarkable girl. Though outwardly he avoids her, but is always conscious of her charms and appeal. He can neither summon up courage to hold her hand nor can he bear the loss of her company. Tossed in the inner struggle, he begs of her to release him from her love and finally succeeds in returning to Calcutta, where he pursues his humanitarian projects.

7— **Home and the world** : In the same year Tagore came out with this novel which again depicts a clash between the old and new ideals, clash in realism and idealism, in love claimed as a right and given of free will. The Novelist himself was passing through a tormenting period between his love for home and that for outer world. The theme and treatment also confirm the belief that though Gandhi and Tagore belonged to different worlds they were very near to each other in expounding the philosophy of non-violence.

The story moves around two men and one woman. Nikhil is a scion of a noble family and is too stupid to detect that his charming wife Bimla is gradually coming under the influence of his friend Sandip. The latter is fiery, tempestuous, romantic and eloquent as compared with shy and quiet Nikhil. Bimla acknowledges a transformation in her life ever since she came in contact with Sandip. Nikhil detects this undercurrent at a late stage but he is reluctant to interrupt since he values love when given out of free will and not claimed as matter of right. Critics have called it an allegorical story where Bimla represents charming feminine Indian grace, Nikhil symbolises all what is noble in tradition and Sandip represents the aggressive but forceful western attitude in preference to traditional outgrown values.

8— **Cross Currents** : it is a psychological story handled in rather a weak fashion. It depicts the conflict in the values the landed aristocracy possessed, which though it lost its wealth and prosperity refused to part with traditional pride and love of possession.

Madhusudana a crude millionaire when married to Kumudini the lovely and graceful daughter of a leading industrialist, tries to maintain his

dian marriages such an incident was possible as the bridegrooms are not expected to have seen faces of the brides. This story has been retold in different versions and has been filmed more than once.

5— **GORA** : As mentioned above Tagore loved India and its heritage with a devoted heart and had a very soft corner for some of the traditions embedded in Indian life. In Gora he has been able to paint a character who is a passionate advocate of ancient Hindu ideals and morals and yet shows wonderful receptiveness to new ideals when convinced. It is said that Tagore conceived of this character in the presence of sister Nivedita who though of qorish origin, had become a strict disciple of Swami Vivekanand and a passionate advocate of Hindu life. She was very friendly to Tagore and the latter related this story to her before producing it in the shape of his most effective novel.

Gora is an Irish child whose parents are killed in the mutiny of 1857, and he is brought up by an affectionate kind Brahmin lady. Gora blooms into a handsome boy well initiated into Brahmin way of life. His crusading nature leads him away even from his very devoted friend and also from the girl who doted on him. Suddenly, when he comes to know of his foreign origin, he realises that in the caste hierarchy he is hardly above than an untouchable. Therefater, he identifies himself with a true Indian making no difference between any religion, creed, caste or sect. He loses no time in recognising the great heritage of this country with its synthetic culture and says: «To-day, I am neither Musalman, Hindu or Christian. I am an Indian and this is my land.» Thus Gora can be called an epoch making novel produced at a time when Hindu society was passing through a transitional stage. Apart from Gora's character, role of Sucharita, the representative of feminine grace and beloved of Gora and that of Anandmayee, the mother are exquisitely superb. In very touching words Gora calls his mother: «You are the image of compassion, you are Mother India...»

6— **Four Chapters** : There were times when his adversaries and critics touched Tagore's vulnerable and sensitive nature and left him sad. But being endowed with a robust attitude to life, he always emerged victorious. In similar circumstances he produced his 'Four chapters' which is a magnificent tribute to his sound, sane and logical thinking and has been rated 'a work of art without a single blemish.'

In this novel four characters are introduced in four chapters while only one of them related his tale. This pivotal role is given to Sachish who due to unfavourable circumstances turns an atheist but positive huma-

2) **Broken Nest** & 3) **Eye Sore** (Also known as **Binodini**)

The above two novels appeared at a time when Tagore living with his father Maharshi Devendranath was absorbed in religious and devotional atmosphere. He was under the influence of Vaishnava poets whose devotional songs were sung at every house in Bengal. The young poet inspired by the religious fervour sang in vibrant tunes the full-throated melodious lyrics after the Vaishnava poets. His father was so pleased with his performance that he remarked : « If the ruler of this land had known the language of its people, he would have surely rewarded you.» Both the novels mark a deviation from the early beaten path of conventional writings and are interspersed with realistic themes, laying foundation of new school of realism in Bengali literature. In both the novels the writer seeks to present the new situations in middle class families.

**Broken nest** recounts the tragedy of a young busy editor of a paper who neglected his young and romantic wife. The latter is driven in the arms of her husband's cousin whose warm breath consoles the young heart and in course of time both inspire each other developing into budding writers. But, as strong are the forces of traditional society, their beautiful nest is finally broken by the strictures and censures, culminating in their separation .

In **Eye Sore**, Tagore handles a powerful plot against the background of a well-to-do and respectable Bengali family. None could imagine that a house which appeared all calm, ideal and disciplined from outside, would be tossed up by passions so violent that they threatened its very existence. The rebellious nature of the man once asserts itself and the hero, till now under the loving influence of his mother, discards his illiterate but devoted wife and finds shelter in the arms of a dynamic young widow. However, the timely intervention of a devoted friend saves the situation and the house from being ruined.

4--- **The Wreck** : Tagore had gone through the ordeal of a grim tragedy when he lost his loving wife, followed by the death of his lovely daughter Renuka by name. Torn by grief he buried himself in the creative work so as to forget the tragedies. Then in 1903, he contributed serially a novel well known for its ingenious plot. It was meant to be really an entertainer with no deep philosophical appeal or mission. The story is based on a tragic incident when a boat full of passengers capsizes in the storm after which there emerges a dilemma when two brides get exchanged . In ancient In-

3) . Dui Bohn	Two sisters	(1898)
4) . Nauka Dubi	The Wreck	(1902-3)
5) . Chokher Bali	The Eye sore	(1899)
6) . Gora	Gora (The White man )	(1908-9)
7) . Chaturang	Four Chapters	(1913-15)
8) . Ghare Baire	The Home and the World	(1915)
9) . Teen Purusha	Three Generations	(1925)
10) . Yogayoga	Cross Currents	(1926)
11) . Seshar Kavita	Farewell my Friend	(1929)

or

## Last Poem

1— Young Queen's Market : Apparently this was his first full-fledged novel where the poet in him dominated over the poor novelist . This was a very happy and glorious period of Tagore's life when he resided in a villa on the bank of the Ganges at Chandernagar and drank profusely at the majestic beauty of the river feeling the spell of river-life in Bengal. Throughout the day he would see boats floating on the bosom of the river when sometimes in imagination he floated with one of them. The novel was cast on the early established traditions and can be aptly described as a poetic essay mixed with fiction . The plot of the story is :

« A tradition-ridden, brave but vindictive ruler does not approve of his son's sympathy towards the suffering of the people. Being power-drunk his attitude towards his subjects is that of a tyrant which is resented by the prince. Consequently the father brands the son as a rebel and expels him from the kingdom. The banished prince meets his sister and offers his services to escort her safely to her husband. When the two reach there the husband has already taken another wife and there is no place left for her. Under the circumstances both return to Benares and the place where they moor the boat is called Bau - Ranir - Hat.

Being the first attempt the novel lacks in maturity though rated extremely important as a historical romance. It has the necessary seedlings which bear fruit much later and brings to the surface the tyrannical attitude of chiefs and Zemindars who always neglected the welfare of their own people.

It spotlights the noble character of the prince persecuted by his own father. Tagore must have liked the plot, character, circumstances and theme considerably as he dramatised the story in 1907, adding another character prototype of Mahatma Gandhi .

the beginning he was criticised, badgered and at times humiliated but with process of time he attained mastery, gaining confidence and then produced work after work with a perfection hitherto unknown. He had to fight battles with orthodoxy in laying new forms of literary expressions. His genius magnificent and versatile shone in the different spheres of poetry, plays, stories, novels, songs, painting, philosophy and above all in patriotic writings.

Although Tagore wrote a large number of short stories, plays and novels and essays he attained international fame in the domain of poetry which prevented people from appreciating his other literary forms. No doubt poetry was his forte but he equally excelled in short stories, plays and novels. His poetic attainments dimmed the novelist and essayist in him, especially after the award of Nobel Prize. Therefore, very little is said and written about his novels which are by no means inferior to the other domains of his writings. He wrote several novels in Bengali, most of which have been translated into English, French and the Indian languages.

It should not be forgotten that Tagore lapsed into writing of stories and novels when he could snatch some leisure from the jealous mistress of poetry which claimed his entire time and mood. In his plays he could keep the mistress in humour introducing poetry here and there but stories and novels required greater concentration. While songs and poems came handy at river-banks, groves, boats, forests, peaks and at odd places promising inspiring landscapes, the writing of story and novel made him sit at some place in a chamber which ran counter to his truant nature. Because of these traits he could devote only a limited time to the completion of his novels, which often remained incomplete because of his meddling into other domains. Sometimes it happened that the pattern planned earlier, underwent considerable change when he re-started on the unfinished novel. His characters must have been feeling miserable at this sad neglect waiting for his early return and at times feigning disapproval could not co-operate with him. It would be worthwhile to acquaint our Iranian friends with bare skeleton of the plot and the background of his well-known novels so that the novelist in Tagore may be better understood and appreciated. The titles quoted under are not in strict chronological order and the dates are by no means strictly authentic. The titles are:

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|----------------------------|----------------------|--------|
| 1) . Bau-Thakurani'r- Hat: | Young Queen's market | (1881) |
| 2) . Nashta Nid            | The broken Nest      | (1897) |

## **RABINDRANATH TAGORE : HIS NOVELS**

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The Indian Renaissance like all other renaissances in Europe was the result of the impact of an alien culture of the West which was visible in several aspects of Indian life and literature. After the British conquest of India this impact came in doses and degrees and liberated the mind and soul of Indians from the shackles of the past and also inspired the scholars to go in search of fundamental values of abiding nature, existing in the old literature. The Indian mind freed from the rigidity of the past glory became receptive to new and vigorous influences which once again revived the dry sources revitalising them with creative energy. On one hand this contact with English and their language broadened the Indian horizon and on the other hand it helped the earnest scholars to re-interpret the spirit of Indian thought and mind and also paved way for modification and subsequent absorption of new trends. Under this impact many savants turned to the manifold beauties of Sanskrit literature and drew inspiration from early classics as well as from Upanishadic philosophy. In Bengal Bankim Chandra Chatterji was the foremost pioneer of the generation, who drawing from the deep sources of Sanskrit classics enriched Bengali language and literature by his writings. In his stories, novels and essays, while he mainly dwelt on the past-masters, he welcomed the new trends in a modified form. By his epoch making style he laid the foundation of the classical school. He exercised tremendous influence on Bengali and also on contemporary Indian literature and his novels coming in quick succession left the readers enthralled and fascinated. In short, he gave a positive expression to the modern attitude to life without sacrificing the spirit of the past. When Rabindranath appeared on the scene the stage was already set and the renaissance was in the swing. In him the style, mood, tradition and spirit found highest culmination. Discarding the worn and beaten path, he embarked on the career of a rebel introducing new technique and breaking new grounds. In