

The Complex Web of Human Relations in Tagore's Works

Abstract

Human emotions are wide ranging and complex. They are the key factors in the whole drama of human existence. Human experiences are unpredictable by their very nature, and different human beings experience the same situation in varied ways. Rabindranath Tagore, the doyen of Indian literature is a master par excellence at the depiction of human emotions.

Keywords: Literature, Experience, Human, Emotions, Novels, Stories, Characters, Theme, Complexities.

Introduction

Literature is the mirror of human experiences taken as a whole. Novels, short stories and the other works of literature are windows to the journey of life. They are glimpses of variety that life provides. Indian literature is a vast ocean of varied situations faced by variety of characters. The great masters of Indian literature draw exquisite pictures of various human concerns and situations. Tagore is the one of the most prolific of Indian writers, and his works continue to interest readers even today. Man, nature and society are perennial themes of Tagore, and these themes allowed Tagore to explore a wide range of human emotions.

Review of Literature

The full or complete and integrated man, with a mind of the widest perception. [Iyenger, 10]

Rabindranath Tagore was the legendary figure of Bengal with the charismatic presence. He became the visionary poet, who not only made a notable contribution to Bengali literature, but also sculpted and craved Indian English literature by providing it added breath of vision. This creative artist was an epochal figure, acclaimed and feted throughout the world.

Tagore, the educationist of human thought behavior coloured the canvas of the life with such vibrant colours that evoked a lot many speculation over his works of art. He is one of the pillars of the heritage of culture and creativity. He modernized Bengali literature by spurning typical classical forms and defying strictures. His works such as novels, stories, songs, dramas and essays discussed the topics of political and personal. *Gitangali: Song Offerings (1912)*, *Gora (1909) (Fair-Faced)* and *Ghare-Baire (1916) (The Home and The World)*, *Jan Gan Man* are his notable works. In *Tagore and Nationalism [2015]*:

Tagore post-1917, emerged as the critic of the modern idea of nation/ nation-state and shared the deep unease that Romain-Rolland and Albert Einstein also felt. The Three Novels – *Gora*, *Char Adhyay* and *Ghare –Baire* - where he unraveled the dangers of hyper – masculine aggressiveness cum hyper sexuality reflect his dis-ease with nationalism. Tagore, in his *Nationalism (1917)* criticized not only the organizing selfishness of nationalism in the west, but also the replication of this alien concept of nationalism in India by the nationalists. He observed that India never had a real sense of nationalism and that India's reverence for God and the ideal of humanity need not be replaced by the European concept of a limited national identity. [<https://networks.h-net.org/node/3911/discussions/71552/tagoreandnationalism>]

Aim of the study

The aim of paper is to research the idea that the emotions portrayed in Tagore's works as are triggered by unusual situations thrown up by fate. The more complex the situation, the more complex is the emotional response to the situation.

Hypothesis

The literary works of Tagore are rich breeding grounds for complex emotions. These emotions are thought, provoking; and serve as eye openers for the members of human society.

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Life experiences are colourful, varied and often unexpected. The unpredictability of human experiences often throws individuals off gear, with the result that the individual is overwhelmed.

No one can deny the persisting continuities of long traditions, sustained habitations, natural languages, and cultural geographies, but there seems no reason except fear and prejudice, to keep insisting on their separation and distinctiveness as if that was all human life was about. Survival in fact is about connections between things. [Das, 150]

Unexpected situations bring up unexpected emotional responses and teach human beings to look beyond morals and moral judgments. Both men and women are given opportunities to plumb their emotional depths in the works of Tagore. Conventional setups and situations often give way in Tagore's works to unconventional and even surprising situations.

Culture consists of the language, values, beliefs, behaviours and physical artefacts of a society colouring everything we experience. Emotions expressed through language relates to ethics and power. Core values are fundamental beliefs which guide us towards what is right and what is wrong. [Ramesh Kal, Vol. 5]

Fate is at its most unpredictable in Tagore's works. He discusses a wide range of themes in his works and his characters are bound to a narrow segment of society that of the upper middle class.

Tagore explores the entire gamut of human emotions in his stories and novels. These emotions are often subtly studied, and subtly presented. In the short stories *Kabuliwala*, the reader is introduced to two fathers – the narrator who has a daughter called Mini, and the Afghan dry fruit seller Rahmat Khan, who is the *Kabuliwala* referred to in the title of the story. The narrator is a refined and respectable father, who conscientiously performs his duties towards his daughter Mini. It is easy to see that he loves his daughter Mini unconditionally. But the love of a parent for the child is even more clearly brought out in the case of *Kabuliwala*, and Tagore makes a brilliant use of emotions by actions of the *Kabuliwala*:

I learnt that this was not the second meeting with the *Kabuliwallah*. He had been visiting Mini almost daily, and by offering her pistachio nuts. He had already won a large part of the girl's childish heart. The two friends had a few stock phrases and jokes which were repeated in their conversations. For example, the moment she saw Rahamat, my daughter would ask with a hearty laugh, "Kabuliwallah O Kabuliwallah what is in your sack?"

Adding an unnecessary nasal tone to the word, Rahamat would roar "Hanti". The essence of the joke was that the man has an elephant in his sack.

Not that the joke was very witty, but it caused the two friends to double up in laughter and the sight of that innocent joy between a little girl and a grown man on autumn morning used to move me deeply.

<http://fhrc.flinders.edu.au/transnational/home.html>

The emotionality in other stories of Tagore is equally commendable. In the novel *A Grain of Sand*, the emotions of Asha, Binodini and Mahendra present a tangled web, and it is easy to see the helplessness of the individual in the face of strong and often unfamiliar emotions.

Because of the way the *femme fatale* uses her sexuality and breaks with the Hollywood convention of depicting women as passive; (mother, whore, wife or mistress) she has been subjected to considerable theoretical attention. [Buchanan, 171]

Tagore looks beyond morals and the ethicality of human actions. He is more concerned with the individual and his experience, and the manner in which emotions are savoured.

Asha could not wish upon her worst enemy the agony that Binodini was bound to feel as she left Mahendra forever; the very thought brought tears to Asha's eyes. In the past she had loved Binodini and that love touched her heart again. Slowly she walked up to Binodini and with great compassion, affection and sadness, she said, "Didi, so you are leaving?" Binodini held up Asha's chin and said, "Yes my sister, it's time for me to leave. Once in the past you had loved me- now in times of joy, set aside a bit of that love for me, my friend and forget everything else" [Tagore, 286-287].

Tagore chooses settings which are complex and unusual, yet they are not completely improbable situations.

What exactly is meant by the term 'fusion of horizons'? It does not mean a total agreement with the text on the part of the reader nor does it mean subjecting the text to the reader's times and horizon. The fusion of horizons refers to the process of negotiation of meanings which results in some harmony without "a flattening out of the historical and perspectival differences". [Chandra & Samy]

In *The Wreck*, yet another complex situation has been explored. Love triangles are all too common in the human world; but this situation seems to be a quirk of fate and so the characters find themselves at crossroads, helplessly trying to find a workable solution to the problem created by destiny:

"Ramesh read between these few lines the pain that Hemnalini's gentle sympathetic heart had suffered, and tears came to his eyes. Since the evening before she had longed passionately to pour balm on his wound, and this craving had remained unabated with

her throughout the night and the morning until, unable to restrain it any longer, she had given it expression in this note. He saw it all clearly. [Tagore, *The Wreck*, 50]

In the other story titled *The Postmaster* [2010], an affectionate parent child bond grows between the young girl Ratan and postmaster. Ratan is an orphan and the postmaster was posted in her village. Ratan dutifully severs him as a servant and a delicate human relation develops between them. Rattan finds it quite difficult when Postmaster gets a transfer.

But Ratan had no Philosophy. She was wondering about the post-office in a flood of tears. It may be that she had still a lurking hope in some corner of her heart that her Dada would return, and that is why she could not tear herself away. Alas for our foolish human nature! Its fond mistakes are persistent. The dictates of reason take a long time to assert their own sway. [Tagore, *The Postmaster*, 17]

The delicate web of human emotions emerges in practically every story of Tagore.

Conclusion

To sum up, it can be said that the human relationships with all the nuances of human emotions form the corner stone of Tagore's writings. The full range of emotions and the complications arising from them find superb portrayal in his works.

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