

Reflection of Indian Consciousness in the Short Stories of Rabindranath Tagore

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Abstract - In the late nineteenth century, Rabindranath Tagore brought Indian life to the forefront of Indian life by writing wonderful literature against the backdrop of Indian life. The decline of Indian national life under British rule, as well as the greatness of his life, was clearly and accurately reflected in literature by Rabindranath Tagore. Every story of Rabindranath Tagore has been able to successfully express that era because the society is an integral part of history. His literary art is brilliant in keeping the demands of the society intact. The main reason why Tagore's literature gained worldwide recognition was his personal and exclusively Indian thought and his style of thinking. He was influenced by European Romanticism, but by absorbing its elements, Rabindranath expressed his Indian characters through his writings. Due to the extraordinary talent of Rabindranath, the Bengali short stories gained immense vitality from birth. The author's intimacy with nature in "Postmaster", "Dena Paona" (Debt Receipt) shows how the social system in our society has accumulated so much misery in the individual's life, as well as "Bicharok" (Judge), "Sasti"(Punishment), "Megh O Rodro"(Cloud and Sunshine) is difficult. How did the land system in the permanent settlement intensify the oppression? This is the first time when I am reading stories on this subject. On the other hand, the politics reflected in the stories named "Durbuddhi" and "Rajatika" have also beautifully reflected the Indian consciousness.

Index Terms - Reflection, Indian Consciousness, Short Stories

INTRODUCTION

During the last decade of 19th century and the first half of 20th century, Rabindranath Tagore brought a Renaissance to Indian unity and dignity by reflecting Indian lifestyle through his writings. Because of his closeness and respect towards Indian norms and lifestyle, he was able to introduce literature to every Indian. On the other hand, through his writings, he very vividly portrayed the downfall of Indian national life under the British rule. He also portrayed a very

true picture of the society of that time artistically. Again, we can sense a sense of rebellious attitude towards the foreign rulers which can be understood from the following comment of the famous short-story writer, critic K.S. Duggal- "The short story came to India at a crucial period in the history of Indian letters. A massive movement for liberation from foreign rule was raging in the country. The British were no mood to withdraw easily. The struggle was long and gruelling it involved in particular the imaginative youth and the creative talent of the country. As the suppression increased the movement tended to go underground. The writers and artist become more subtle and more insidious. They resorted to symbols and imagery. These are some of the ingredients of great art. A large number of short stories written in Hindi, Urdu and Panjabi during the period reflected mainly the struggle for freedom"¹

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Rabindranath Tagore was a prominent writer of his age. His literature found its identity just because of his own continuous thinking about Indian notion and his creative effort to exhibit that Indian ideology. He showcased his expertise by setting a new trend in short story writing along with poems, plays and novels. Arrangement of story, gentleness of thought, fluency of diction and language, fascinating narration about the beauty of Mother Nature are some of the features of his writings. Hence, to reflect the Indian consciousness in the short stories of Rabindranath Tagore is the main objective of the study.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study paper is descriptive and theoretically analytical nature. The study is mainly based on secondary data. Specially data are to be collected from

various published and unpublished records, books, journals and different sources.

DISCUSSION OF THE RESEARCH PAPER

Rabindranath Tagore contributed in almost every aspect of Indian literature, but his contribution towards short story is remarkable. His characters became lively and attractive with the touch of his hands. His vivid depiction of urban and rural lives made his description more realistic. The realistic side of his writings encouraged his other contemporaries also. Though his writings were realistic, but he was highly influenced by Romanticism. His romantic imagination about the rural Indian life paved a new way.

With the touch of Tagore's extraordinary talent, Bengali short story found endless energy from the time of its beginning. He got international recognition by establishing Indian ideology of unity in his short stories. "Rabindranath Tagore wrote 84 short stories, but three stories from the book 'Tinsangee' and some other stories also found their place in his collection of short stories called "Golpoguccho, vol.4". Then, came a turning point to his stories. While writing in a magazine called 'Sabujpatra', from the year 1914, some changes occurred both in his lifestyle and in the field of his imagination. But it is also worthy to be mentioned here that some elements from rural Bengal life started influencing the elements of his short stories. In the year 1901, Boarding School and Brahma Charyashram was established in ShantiNiketan and in the beginning of the same year also he left his place Sealdah and moved to the dull environment of Radhbanga. It brought great changes to his stories also. Despite of the problems and struggle of life, one can observe changes in the themes and subject-matter of his stories which were written from 1901."2

He had to stay at Sealdah for the management of the estate. At that time, he went more and closer towards men and nature. As a result, he could interact more precisely with common people, peasants, labourers, vaishnavas etc." In one hand, there was the excitement of the love for nature, while on the other hand, there was realistic picture of the real life- and both these feelings helped to give birth to an artistic mind within him. He was aware of the oppression done by the British and most of his short stories reflect his protest the British rule in India. The white people were successful to break the unity among the Indians by

keeping some Indians in their hands. That is why, those Indians started to think their brothers as their enemies. A very definite reflection of that situation can be seen in his short story "Megh O Rodro". In this story, Shashibhushan, one of the central characters, tried to make people aware to protest against the British. Unfortunately, the natives helped the enemy part instead of Shashibhushan as they had already lost their thinking capacity and courage to go against authority. Again, in one instance, he tried to help the fishermen and tried to make them free from the domination of white party, but unfortunately the fishermen admitted in front of the police officer that the British Officer did not do any kind of harm or torture upon them. As a result, Shashibhushan was arrested and sent to jail. His father wanted to appeal but Shashi stopped his father and said:

Jail is good. The bangles made with iron cannot talk but the freedom and liberty that people are enjoying outside the jail, that deceives us and puts us in danger and when it comes to Satsangs, there are fewer lions, ungrateful cowards, in poison, because the space is too much out of moderation.

On the other hand, Tagore's other story "Dena-Paona" shows what kind of misery was accumulated in the lives of individuals as a result of social norms in the families of our society.

"Now, Nirupama's marriage proposal is going on. Her father Ramsundar Mishra does a lot of searching but the boy does not suit him at all. Finally, he finds the only child of a Raybahadur's family. The groom's family asked for ten thousand rupees along with other things as dowry. Without thinking for a second Ramsundar agreed to what they demanded, such a boy can never be lost."

Again, his another story "Rajatika" depicts some Indians forgetting their duties to their country, obsessed with the English title. In this story, the germination of national consciousness in the character of Pramath has germinated in humiliation. When Pramath Nath Daroga got several other Indians out of the car, he became proud, but after a while he was offended and took off his English clothes.

"Things are kept for Europeans separately," saying this; I got up without any fear or hesitation. They also accepted me without any objection thinking that no Englishman is my friend. But, with the coming of a Bengali dressed as a native or a foreigner, a dhoti-clad

Bengali or any Indian traveler in that compartment, in fact, the couple behaved like fierce snakes.”

Rabindranath Tagore’s stories depict the unjust oppression of the Indian people by the British as well as the opportunistic Indians who have exploited others for their own benefit. On the other hand, the picture of political situation of that time can be seen in his stories. In his story “PonRokkha”, the question about the protection of the indigenous weaving industry has been raised. Here the lack of knowledge of indigenous weaving teachers has been mocked. In the story “Sanskar”, the freedom fighters’ luxurious desire for khadi clothes is ridiculed with intense satire.

“In our country, wearing khaddar has become a kind of reform like the garland wearing religious people and that is why girls are so fond of it.”

English rule was the root cause of many problems in Indian national life. In order to please the foreign masters, the native bureaucrats and aristocrats elite class created a lot of troubles in the lives of the common people. In particular, how the zamindari system exploited the common men can be seen very beautifully in Rabindranath’s story. We can see how these greedy landlords exploited the common men as well as their own people in his stories, named ‘Haldar Gosthi’, ‘Streer Potro’ and ‘Jibito O Mrito’. In his other stories like ‘Ulukhorer Bipod’, ‘Sasti’ etc. also reflect the village life under the manipulated social system.

The story ‘Sasti’ vividly portray the picture of the exploitation that was done to the common people by the zamindars. In this story, the character Dukhiram murdered his wife as a result of frustration and anxiety which was created by the exploitation of the British rule. Some people of the zamindar caught Dukhiram and his brother while they are going to cut their paddy and forced them to work. When he returned home without pay, he cut off his wife’s head in anger. The anger that was accumulated in his heart and the pain of not being able to do anything against the zamindari system seemed to have fueled him to kill his wife.

“Hungry Dukhiram said without wasting time ‘Give rice’. The elder wife said in a moment, like a spark in a sack of gunpowder, “Where is the rice? Did you bring rice? Will I earn it myself?” He roared like an angry tiger, “What did you say?” In a moment, without thinking anything, he put the knife on his wife’s head. On the other hand, Tagore’s another story “Durbuddhi” also portrays the picture of exploitation

and manipulation of the common people. In this story, he has shown that the only way to prevent the exploitation is to protest against the pain and humiliation of the oppressed. After torturing the general public, the doctor realized his mistake and came back from the wrong path. The doctor had to lose his everything as a result of his protest against the military activities. Though this story does not contain any poetic or romantic element, but it can be taken as Tagore’s fictional genius.

CONCLUSION

The stories of Rabindranath Tagore reflect the history of the formation of the independence movement, the picture of political life, the rhetoric of the extremist leaders, the boycott of foreign goods and the reality of indigenous propaganda program. As a result, the dream of the emancipation of Indian national life is illuminated in the stories. On the other hand, his deep respect for the Indian ideology and his deep acquaintance with the Indian way of life can be seen. The identity of a collective consciousness is reflected in the stories lamenting the petty national consciousness.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Bhattayacharya, Parag Kumar.: Rabindranath Aru Asomiya Suti Golpa, p. 17.
2. Gogoi, Aambeshar.: Suti Galpar Bisar, Bamuni Prakashan, p.75.

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