

PERIYAR UNIVERSITY

(Reaccredited by NAAC 'A++' Grade - State University - NIRF Rank
56 - NIRF Innovation Band of 11-50)

SALEM - 636 011, Tamil Nadu, India.

**CENTRE FOR DISTANCE AND ONLINE EDUCATION
(CDOE)**

**M.A ENGLISH
SEMESTER - III**



**CORE VIII – INTENSIVE STUDY OF AN AUTHOR:
RABINDRANATH TAGORE**

(Candidates admitted from 2024 onwards)

PERIYAR UNIVERSITY

CENTRE FOR DISTANCE AND ONLINE EDUCATION (CDOE)

M.A 2024 admission onwards

CORE VIII

Intensive Study of an Author: Rabindranath Tagore

LIST OF CONTENTS

UNIT	CONTENTS	PAGE
1	Poetry 1.1 Gitanjali (I-XXX)	1-44
2	Prose 2.1 The Problem of Self – Sadhana – Chapter IV 2.2 A Comedy in England	45-81
3	Drama 3.1 Malini 3.2 Karna and Kunti	82-120
4	Short Story 4.1 The Renunciation 4.2 The Cabuliwallah	121-156
5	Fiction 5.1 The Home and the World 5.2 The Wreck.	157-198

UNIT I

POETRY

GITANJALI

UNIT OBJECTIVES

- To introduce students to appreciate the contribution of India writes worldwide.
- To expose students to Rabindranath Tagore's philosophy, creative and artistic style, his mysticism freedom of education.
- To train the students to understand the universality of his writings suitable to all times.

SECTION 1.1 GITANJALI (I-XXX)

1.1.1 Introduction

Rabindranath Tagore's "Gitanjali" stands as a timeless masterpiece of poetic expression, encapsulating the essence of spiritual longing, devotion, and the human quest for union with the divine. Originally penned in Bengali and later translated into English, "Gitanjali" represents a profound exploration of the depths of the soul and the transcendental journey towards spiritual enlightenment. Through rich imagery, lyrical language, and profound symbolism, Tagore invites readers to embark on a transformative odyssey of self-discovery and divine communion.

At its core, "Gitanjali" is a collection of poems that serves as an offering, or "song offering" as the title suggests, to the divine. Each poem within the collection serves as a heartfelt expression of the poet's reverence, longing, and surrender to the divine presence. Tagore weaves together themes of love, devotion, and the human experience, creating a tapestry of spiritual insight that resonates deeply with readers across cultures and generations.

One of the central themes explored in "Gitanjali" is the longing for union with the divine. Tagore portrays the human soul as a restless wanderer, yearning to break free from the confines of earthly existence and merge with the infinite. Through

evocative imagery and introspective reflections, the poet captures the profound yearning for spiritual fulfillment that lies at the core of the human experience. In poems such as "The Child-Angel" and "The Boat," Tagore depicts the soul's journey towards divine communion as a voyage fraught with challenges and uncertainties, yet illuminated by the guiding light of divine grace.

Central to the thematic tapestry of "Gitanjali" is the concept of surrender to the divine will. Tagore emphasizes the importance of relinquishing the ego and submitting oneself entirely to the divine purpose. In poems like "The Hidden God" and "The Deliverer," the poet acknowledges the limitations of human understanding and embraces the mystery of divine providence. Through acts of surrender and devotion, Tagore suggests, one can transcend the constraints of the material world and experience the boundless freedom of the spirit.

Another prominent theme in "Gitanjali" is the celebration of the beauty and wonder of the natural world as a manifestation of the divine presence. Tagore finds inspiration in the sights, sounds, and rhythms of nature, seeing them as reflections of the divine majesty. In poems like "The Flower" and "The Rain," the poet marvels at the ephemeral beauty of creation and finds solace in the eternal presence of the divine amidst the transient cycles of life and death.

Furthermore, "Gitanjali" explores the transformative power of love as a catalyst for spiritual awakening and enlightenment. Tagore portrays love not merely as a human emotion but as a divine force that binds the universe together. In poems such as "My Song" and "The Immortal Touch," the poet expresses his longing for union with the beloved, who symbolizes the divine essence permeating all of creation. Through acts of love and devotion, Tagore suggests, one can experience a profound sense of unity with the divine and transcend the boundaries of individuality.

In conclusion, Rabindranath Tagore's "Gitanjali" stands as a timeless testament to the enduring power of poetry to illuminate the human spirit and awaken the soul to the beauty and mystery of existence. Through its exploration of divine longing, surrender, and spiritual union, "Gitanjali" invites readers to embark on a transformative journey of self-discovery and divine communion. As a profound

expression of reverence, devotion, and love, "Gitanjali" continues to inspire and uplift readers around the world, affirming the eternal quest for spiritual enlightenment and the boundless depths of the human soul.

1.1.2 About the Author

Rabindranath Tagore, a towering figure in Bengali literature and a global cultural icon, was born on May 7, 1861, in Calcutta, British India (present-day Kolkata, India). He was a prolific poet, novelist, playwright, essayist, philosopher, social reformer, composer, and painter. Tagore's impact extends far beyond the literary world; he was also a significant figure in the Indian Independence movement and a promoter of educational reforms.

Tagore hailed from a prominent Bengali family; his father, Debendranath Tagore, was a respected philosopher and social reformer, and his family played a significant role in the cultural and intellectual life of Bengal. Rabindranath was home schooled and later attended several schools in Calcutta. He did not enjoy formal education in the traditional sense but was deeply influenced by his surroundings and exposure to literature and culture.

Tagore began writing poetry at a young age, and by his teenage years, he had already published several works. His literary talents flourished as he matured, and he wrote prolifically in various genres, including poetry, short stories, novels, essays, and plays. His works often explored themes such as love, nature, spirituality, humanism, and the complexities of the human condition.

In 1913, Tagore became the first non-European to win the Nobel Prize in Literature for his collection of poems titled "Gitanjali" (Song Offerings). This recognition brought him international acclaim and introduced his work to a global audience. The lyrical beauty and philosophical depth of his poetry resonated with readers worldwide, earning him a place among the most celebrated literary figures of his time.

Apart from his literary pursuits, Tagore was deeply engaged in social and political issues. He was a staunch advocate for Indian independence and spoke out against colonialism and oppression. Tagore's vision of nationalism was rooted in the idea of

unity in diversity, emphasizing the importance of cultural exchange and mutual respect among nations.

Tagore also made significant contributions to education through the establishment of Santiniketan, an experimental school that later evolved into Visva-Bharati University. At Santiniketan, Tagore implemented his educational philosophy, which emphasized learning through interaction with nature, creativity, and holistic development.

Tagore's influence extended beyond literature and education; he was also a talented musician and composer. He composed thousands of songs, known as Rabindra Sangeet, which remain immensely popular in Bengal and have been translated and performed worldwide.

Rabindranath Tagore's legacy is profound and enduring. His literary works continue to inspire readers with their timeless beauty and profound insights, while his ideas on education, nationalism, and humanism remain relevant in the contemporary world. He passed away on August 7, 1941, but his spirit lives on through his writings and the institutions he founded.

1.1.3 Analysis of the Poem

"Song 1" from "Gitanjali" reflects the themes of divine presence, gratitude, humility, and the transformative power of spiritual devotion found throughout Tagore's poetry. The first poem in "Gitanjali" is often referred to as "Song 1" or "Song Offerings." Here's the text of Song 1 along with some explanations:

Song 1

Thou hast made me endless, such is thy pleasure. This frail vessel thou emptiest again and again, and fillest it ever with fresh life.

Explanation: The speaker is addressing the divine, expressing gratitude for being made endless by the divine will. The "frail vessel" refers to the human body, which is constantly emptied and filled by the divine with new life.

This little flute of a reed thou hast carried over hills and dales, and hast breathed through it melodies eternally new.

Explanation: The metaphor of the flute symbolizes the human soul. The divine has carried this soul through various experiences, like traversing hills and dales, and has infused it with eternal melodies, representing the divine essence that sustains life.

At the immortal touch of thy hands my little heart loses its limits in joy and gives birth to utterance ineffable.

Explanation: The speaker experiences a sense of boundless joy and spiritual expansion when touched by the divine, leading to the expression of ineffable (indescribable) emotions and thoughts.

Thy infinite gifts come to me only on these very small hands of mine. Ages pass, and still thou pourest, and still there is room to fill.

Explanation: The speaker acknowledges that despite their limitations, they receive the infinite gifts of the divine through their small hands. This implies that even in the vastness of the divine's blessings, there is always room for more, and the divine continues to pour forth blessings endlessly.

When thou commandest me to sing it seems that my heart would break with pride; and I look to thy face, and tears come to my eyes. All that is harsh and dissonant in my life melts into one sweet harmony—and my adoration spreads wings like a glad bird on its flight across the sea.

Explanation: The speaker feels overwhelmed with pride and joy when commanded by the divine to sing praises. The divine presence transforms all the harsh and dissonant aspects of life into a harmonious whole. This experience of adoration brings tears of gratitude to the speaker's eyes and fills them with a sense of liberation and bliss.

I know thou takest pleasure in my singing. I know that only as a singer I come before thy presence. I touch by the edge of the far-spreading wing of my song thy feet which I could never aspire to reach.

Explanation: The speaker acknowledges the divine pleasure in their singing and recognizes that their true essence is revealed only through singing praises to the divine. They humbly express their desire to touch the divine feet through the far-reaching wings of their song, symbolizing their aspiration for spiritual union with the divine.

Song 2

"Gitanjali" is a collection of poems by the renowned Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore. Within this collection, "Song II" is a poignant piece that reflects on the relationship between the poet and the Divine. Here's the text of "Song II" along with an explanation:

Text:

Thou hast made me endless, such is thy pleasure.

This frail vessel thou emptiest again and again,
and fillest it ever with fresh life.

This little flute of a reed thou hast carried over hills and dales,
and hast breathed through it melodies eternally new.

At the immortal touch of thy hands
my little heart loses its limits in joy
and gives birth to utterance ineffable.

Thy infinite gifts come to me only on these very small hands of mine.
Ages pass, and still thou pourest,
and still there is room to fill.

Explanation:

- The poem begins with the speaker acknowledging the Divine (referred to as "Thou") as the force behind their existence. The phrase "Thou hast made me endless" suggests a sense of divine creation and infinite potential.
- The poet explores the cyclical nature of life and creation. The human existence is likened to a vessel that is constantly emptied and refilled by the Divine with new life. This reflects the Hindu concept of Samsara, the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth.
- The metaphor of the flute is used to symbolize the human soul. Just as a flute is a hollow vessel that produces music when breath passes through it, the human soul is portrayed as a vessel through which the Divine breathes life and creates melodies.
- The imagery of the flute being carried "over hills and dales" suggests the journey of life, with its ups and downs, being guided by the Divine.
- The touch of the Divine is described as "immortal," implying its everlasting nature. It transcends human limitations and fills the heart with boundless joy.
- The poet expresses gratitude for the gifts bestowed upon them by the Divine. Despite the vastness of these gifts, they are received by the speaker's "very small hands," emphasizing the humility and insignificance of the human in comparison to the Divine.
- The poem concludes with a reflection on the abundance of divine blessings. Despite the passage of ages, the Divine continues to pour forth gifts, and there is always room for more, suggesting the inexhaustible nature of divine grace and the limitless potential for spiritual growth.

"Song II" from "Gitanjali" encapsulates themes of divine love, human humility, and the eternal cycle of life and creation, all expressed through vivid imagery and profound spiritual insight.

Song 3

Thou hast made me endless, such is thy pleasure. This frail vessel thou emptiest again and again, and fillest it ever with fresh life. This little flute of a reed thou hast carried over hills and dales, and hast breathed through it melodies eternally new. At

the immortal touch of thy hands, my little heart loses its limits in joy and gives birth to utterance ineffable.

Thy infinite gifts come to me only on these very small hands of mine. Ages pass, and still thou pourest, and still there is room to fill.

This poem is a beautiful expression of the poet's relationship with the divine. Here's an explanation of its lines:

1. **"Thou hast made me endless, such is thy pleasure."**: The speaker acknowledges their endless nature, which they attribute to the divine will. It suggests a sense of being part of a greater whole, shaped and defined by a higher power.
2. **"This frail vessel thou emptiest again and again, and fillest it ever with fresh life."**: The human form is depicted as fragile, continually emptied and refilled by the divine. It speaks to the cycle of life, death, and rebirth, highlighting the eternal nature of existence.
3. **"This little flute of a reed thou hast carried over hills and dales, and hast breathed through it melodies eternally new."**: The speaker compares themselves to a flute, an instrument played by the divine to create eternal melodies. It symbolizes the human soul being shaped and played by the divine will, producing new experiences and expressions.
4. **"At the immortal touch of thy hands, my little heart loses its limits in joy and gives birth to utterance ineffable."**: The touch of the divine fills the speaker's heart with boundless joy, transcending earthly limitations and inspiring them to express their feelings in ways beyond words.
5. **"Thy infinite gifts come to me only on these very small hands of mine."**: Despite the vastness of the divine's gifts, the speaker feels humbled by receiving them through their small, human hands. It suggests a sense of gratitude and awe towards the divine's generosity.
6. **"Ages pass, and still thou pourest, and still there is room to fill."**: The poem concludes with a reflection on the continuous flow of divine blessings throughout time. It implies that no matter how much the divine gives, there is always room for more, emphasizing the inexhaustible nature of divine grace.

Overall, "Gitanjali Song 3" is a deeply spiritual poem that explores themes of divine presence, human frailty, and the eternal cycle of life and renewal.

Song 4

He it is, the innermost one, who awakens my being with his deep hidden touches. He it is who puts his enchantment upon these eyes and joyfully plays on the chords of my heart in varied cadence of pleasure and pain. He it is who weaves the web of this maya in evanescent hues of gold and silver, blue and green, and lets peep out through the folds his feet, at whose touch I forget myself. Days come and ages pass, and it is ever he who moves my heart in many a name, in many a guise, in many a rapture of joy and of sorrow.

Explanation:

1. **"He it is, the innermost one, who awakens my being with his deep hidden touches.":** The poet describes a deep spiritual connection with the divine, who awakens their innermost self with subtle and hidden touches. It suggests an intimate and profound relationship with the divine presence within.
2. **"He it is who puts his enchantment upon these eyes and joyfully plays on the chords of my heart in varied cadence of pleasure and pain.":** The divine presence is depicted as enchanting, playing upon the senses and emotions of the speaker. The divine's influence brings both joy and pain, reflecting the complexity of human experience.
3. **"He it is who weaves the web of this maya in evanescent hues of gold and silver, blue and green, and lets peep out through the folds his feet, at whose touch I forget myself.":** Maya refers to the illusionary nature of reality in Hindu philosophy. The divine is portrayed as the weaver of this illusion, creating a world of transient beauty represented by colors like gold, silver, blue, and green. The divine's presence is glimpsed through this illusion, leading the speaker to lose themselves in divine ecstasy.
4. **"Days come and ages pass, and it is ever he who moves my heart in many a name, in many a guise, in many a rapture of joy and of sorrow.":**

Throughout time, in various forms and manifestations, it is the divine who continues to move the poet's heart. The divine presence is constant, experienced in moments of joy as well as sorrow, under different names and guises, yet always remaining the same eternal essence.

In "Gitanjali Song 4," Tagore beautifully expresses the profound influence of the divine upon the speaker's innermost being, weaving through the tapestry of life's experiences, enchanting and guiding them through joy and pain toward a deeper understanding of existence.

Song 5

I ask for a moment's indulgence to sit by thy side. The works that I have in hand I will finish afterwards. Away from the sight of thy face my heart knows no rest nor respite, and my work becomes an endless toil in a shoreless sea of toil. Today the summer has come at my window with its sighs and murmurs; and the bees are plying their minstrelsy at the court of the flowering grove. Now it is time to sit quiet, face to face with thee, and to sing dedication of life in this silent and overflowing leisure.

Explanation:

1. **"I ask for a moment's indulgence to sit by thy side."**: The speaker expresses a desire to take a moment to be in the presence of the divine. This is a request for a brief pause from worldly duties to engage in spiritual contemplation.
2. **"The works that I have in hand I will finish afterwards."**: Despite having tasks to complete, the speaker prioritizes their spiritual connection over worldly responsibilities. This demonstrates the importance of spiritual communion in the speaker's life.
3. **"Away from the sight of thy face my heart knows no rest nor respite, and my work becomes an endless toil in a shoreless sea of toil."**: Without the presence of the divine, the speaker's heart finds no peace, and their work feels like an endless struggle. This emphasizes the transformative power of spiritual connection in providing solace and meaning.

4. **"Today the summer has come at my window with its sighs and murmurs; and the bees are plying their minstrelsy at the court of the flowering grove."**: The speaker observes the beauty of nature around them, noting the arrival of summer and the sounds of bees in the flowering grove. This sets the tranquil scene for the spiritual reflection that follows.
5. **"Now it is time to sit quiet, face to face with thee, and to sing dedication of life in this silent and overflowing leisure."**: The poem concludes with the speaker embracing the present moment of quiet contemplation in the divine presence. It is a time for dedication and devotion, expressed through the act of sitting silently and singing praises to the divine.

In "Gitanjali Song 5," Tagore portrays the longing for spiritual communion and the transformative power of dedicating moments of quietude to connect with the divine. It emphasizes the importance of prioritizing spiritual nourishment amidst the busyness of life.

Song 6

When I go from hence, let this be my parting word, that what I have seen is unsurpassable. I have tasted of the hidden honey of this lotus that expands on the ocean of light, and thus am I blessed—let this be my parting word. In this playhouse of infinite forms I have had my play and here have I caught sight of him that is formless. My whole body and my limbs have thrilled with his touch who is beyond touch; and if the end comes here, let it come—let this be my parting word.

Explanation:

1. **"When I go from hence, let this be my parting word, that what I have seen is unsurpassable."**: The speaker reflects on their imminent departure, expressing that what they have witnessed is beyond comparison or surpassing. This could refer to a profound spiritual experience or realization.
2. **"I have tasted of the hidden honey of this lotus that expands on the ocean of light, and thus am I blessed—let this be my parting word."**: The speaker metaphorically describes experiencing something divine and profound, likening it to tasting the hidden honey of a lotus flower blooming on

the vast ocean of light. This experience brings them a sense of blessing and fulfillment.

3. **"In this playhouse of infinite forms I have had my play and here have I caught sight of him that is formless."**: The world is depicted as a playhouse filled with countless forms and manifestations. Despite this diversity, the speaker has glimpsed the formless essence behind it all, likely referring to the divine or ultimate reality.
4. **"My whole body and my limbs have thrilled with his touch who is beyond touch; and if the end comes here, let it come—let this be my parting word."**: The speaker describes feeling a transcendent touch that goes beyond physical sensation, thrilling their entire being. They express readiness for the end, suggesting a sense of fulfillment and acceptance, knowing they have experienced something profound.

In "Gitanjali Song 6," Tagore eloquently captures the speaker's deep spiritual experiences and their sense of readiness for whatever comes next. The poem conveys a profound sense of fulfillment and acceptance, rooted in the speaker's connection with the divine.

Song 7

The same stream of life that runs through my veins night and day runs through the world and dances in rhythmic measures. It is the same life that shoots in joy through the dust of the earth in numberless blades of grass and breaks into tumultuous waves of leaves and flowers. It is the same life that is rocked in the ocean-cradle of birth and of death, in ebb and in flow. I feel my limbs are made glorious by the touch of this world of life. And my pride is from the life-throb of ages dancing in my blood this moment.

Explanation:

1. **"The same stream of life that runs through my veins night and day runs through the world and dances in rhythmic measures."**: The speaker reflects on the interconnectedness of all life, likening it to a continuous stream

that flows within them and throughout the world. This life force is dynamic, expressed through rhythmic movement.

2. **"It is the same life that shoots in joy through the dust of the earth in numberless blades of grass and breaks into tumultuous waves of leaves and flowers.":** Life is depicted as joyous and abundant, manifesting in various forms such as blades of grass, leaves, and flowers. This imagery illustrates the vitality and diversity of life on earth.
3. **"It is the same life that is rocked in the ocean-cradle of birth and of death, in ebb and in flow.":** Life encompasses both birth and death, depicted metaphorically as being rocked in the ocean's cradle. This symbolizes the cyclical nature of existence, with periods of growth and decline.
4. **"I feel my limbs are made glorious by the touch of this world of life. And my pride is from the life-throb of ages dancing in my blood this moment.":** The speaker feels a sense of connection and pride in being part of the vibrant tapestry of life. They experience a profound connection to the past, present, and future, feeling the life force of previous generations coursing through their veins.

In "Gitanjali Song 7," Tagore celebrates the interconnectedness and vitality of life, emphasizing its continuity across time and space. The poem conveys a deep sense of awe and reverence for the eternal dance of existence.

Song 8

When thou commandest me to sing it seems that my heart would break with pride; and I look to thy face, and tears come to my eyes. All that is harsh and dissonant in my life melts into one sweet harmony—and my adoration spreads wings like a glad bird on its flight across the sea. I know thou takest pleasure in my singing. I know that only as a singer I come before thy presence. I touch by the edge of the far-spreading wing of my song thy feet which I could never aspire to reach. Drunk with the joy of singing I forget myself and call thee friend who art my lord. **Explanation:**

1. **"When thou commandest me to sing it seems that my heart would break with pride; and I look to thy face, and tears come to my eyes.":** The

speaker feels overwhelming pride and emotion when called upon to sing in the presence of the divine. They are deeply moved by the opportunity to express their devotion through song.

2. **"All that is harsh and dissonant in my life melts into one sweet harmony—and my adoration spreads wings like a glad bird on its flight across the sea.":** Singing in the presence of the divine brings a sense of harmony and unity to the speaker's life. Their adoration expands like the wings of a bird in flight, suggesting a feeling of liberation and joy.
3. **"I know thou takest pleasure in my singing. I know that only as a singer I come before thy presence.":** The speaker believes that the divine takes pleasure in their singing and that it is through their singing that they can truly approach the divine presence. This highlights the significance of music and devotion in the speaker's spiritual practice.
4. **"I touch by the edge of the far-spreading wing of my song thy feet which I could never aspire to reach.":** Through their song, the speaker feels a connection to the divine, symbolized by touching the divine's feet. This act represents a deep reverence and humility, acknowledging the divine's greatness.
5. **"Drunk with the joy of singing I forget myself and call thee friend who art my lord.":** The speaker becomes so consumed by the joy of singing in the divine presence that they momentarily forget themselves. They address the divine as a friend, emphasizing the intimacy of their relationship despite the divine's lofty status as their lord.

In "Gitanjali Song 8," Tagore beautifully captures the transformative power of music and devotion in bringing the speaker closer to the divine. The poem expresses the deep emotional and spiritual connection that music can foster, leading to a sense of unity and transcendence.

Song 9

When I give up the helm I know that the time has come for thee to take it. What there is to do will be instantly done. Vain is this struggle. Then take away your hands and silently put up with your defeat, my heart, and think it your good fortune to sit

perfectly still where you are placed. These my lamps are blown out at every little puff of wind, and trying to light them I forget all else again and again. But I shall be wise this time and wait in the dark, spreading my mat and weaving my garland of flowers. Then I shall bring my lamp out of the corner, and once for all light it with thy own hands. **Explanation:**

1. **"When I give up the helm I know that the time has come for thee to take it.":** The speaker acknowledges a transition in their life where they relinquish control, symbolized by giving up the helm. They recognize that it is time for the divine to take charge and guide their path.
2. **"What there is to do will be instantly done. Vain is this struggle.":** The speaker realizes that all necessary tasks will be accomplished effortlessly once they surrender to the divine will. They come to understand the futility of struggling against this higher power.
3. **"Then take away your hands and silently put up with your defeat, my heart, and think it your good fortune to sit perfectly still where you are placed.":** The speaker advises their heart to accept defeat gracefully and embrace the present moment, finding contentment in their current circumstances.
4. **"These my lamps are blown out at every little puff of wind, and trying to light them I forget all else again and again.":** The speaker compares their efforts to maintain their inner light to lighting lamps that are constantly extinguished by the slightest breeze. They find themselves distracted and forgetful while attempting to relight these lamps.
5. **"But I shall be wise this time and wait in the dark, spreading my mat and weaving my garland of flowers. Then I shall bring my lamp out of the corner, and once for all light it with thy own hands.":** Instead of futilely attempting to relight their lamps, the speaker decides to wait patiently in the darkness, preparing themselves for the divine intervention. They trust that the divine will eventually illuminate their path and guide them forward.

In "Gitanjali Song 9," Tagore explores themes of surrender, acceptance, and trust in the divine will. The poem conveys the idea that true wisdom lies in surrendering

control and patiently waiting for divine intervention, rather than futilely struggling against the inevitable.

Song 10

The day that I have drunk of the pleasure of the world is a day lost; and the same holds true for the day on which I have not once remembered thee. Among thy men and women there are those who are like wells full of water, and others who are like baskets full of holes. I am a flute in the hands of the master player, and I do not know what tunes he will produce. He who finds me will find me in tears, and when he loses me he will find me again in truth. **Explanation:**

1. **"The day that I have drunk of the pleasure of the world is a day lost; and the same holds true for the day on which I have not once remembered thee."**: The speaker expresses the idea that a day spent indulging in worldly pleasures without remembering the divine is a wasted day. Conversely, a day without a single thought of the divine is also considered lost.
2. **"Among thy men and women there are those who are like wells full of water, and others who are like baskets full of holes."**: The speaker observes that among those who claim to follow the divine, there are some who are spiritually nourishing and fulfilling (like wells full of water), while others are lacking and empty (like baskets full of holes).
3. **"I am a flute in the hands of the master player, and I do not know what tunes he will produce."**: The speaker metaphorically compares themselves to a flute being played by a master musician, symbolizing their surrender to the divine will. They acknowledge that they do not know what melodies or actions the divine will create through them.
4. **"He who finds me will find me in tears, and when he loses me he will find me again in truth."**: The speaker suggests that those who seek them out will find them in a state of tears, indicating vulnerability and emotional depth. However, even if they are temporarily lost or absent, they will eventually be found again, revealing their true essence.

In "Gitanjali Song 10," Tagore reflects on the importance of remembering the divine amidst the distractions of worldly life. The poem emphasizes the need for spiritual depth and authenticity in one's relationship with the divine, as well as the concept of surrendering to the divine will.

Song 11

The sleep that flits on baby's eyes—does anybody know from where it comes? Yes, there is a rumour that it has its dwelling where, in the fairy village among shadows of the forest dimly lit with glow-worms, there hang two timid buds of enchantment. From there it comes to kiss baby's eyes. The smile that flickers on baby's lips when he sleeps—does anybody know where it was born? Yes, there is a rumor that a young pale beam of a crescent moon touched the edge of a vanishing autumn cloud, and there the smile was first born in the dream of a dew-washed morning—the smile that flickers on baby's lips when he sleeps. The sweet, soft freshness that blooms on baby's limbs—does anybody know where it was hidden so long? Yes, when the mother was a young girl it lay pervading her heart in tender and silent mystery of love—the sweet, soft freshness that has bloomed on baby's limbs. **Explanation:**

1. **"The sleep that flits on baby's eyes—does anybody know from where it comes?":** The speaker wonders about the origin of the sleep that comes to a baby's eyes. This sets the tone for a series of questions about the mysteries of infancy and the natural world.
2. **"Yes, there is a rumour that it has its dwelling where, in the fairy village among shadows of the forest dimly lit with glow-worms, there hang two timid buds of enchantment.":** The speaker imagines a fairy village in the forest where the sleep of babies originates. This imagery adds a touch of whimsy and magic to the poem.
3. **"The smile that flickers on baby's lips when he sleeps—does anybody know where it was born?":** Similar to the first question, the speaker wonders about the origin of a baby's smile. This question highlights the innocence and joy of infancy.
4. **"Yes, there is a rumor that a young pale beam of a crescent moon touched the edge of a vanishing autumn cloud, and there the smile was**

first born in the dream of a dew-washed morning—the smile that flickers on baby's lips when he sleeps.": The speaker imagines a poetic scenario involving the moon and clouds as the origin of a baby's smile. This description adds a sense of wonder and beauty to the imagery.

5. **"The sweet, soft freshness that blooms on baby's limbs—does anybody know where it was hidden so long?":** The final question concerns the freshness and softness of a baby's skin. This question reflects on the purity and newness of life.
6. **"Yes, when the mother was a young girl it lay pervading her heart in tender and silent mystery of love—the sweet, soft freshness that has bloomed on baby's limbs.":** The speaker suggests that the freshness of a baby's limbs was hidden within the mother's heart, waiting to be expressed through her child. This reinforces the theme of maternal love and the cycle of life.

In "Gitanjali Song 11," Tagore explores the mysteries and wonders of infancy, using poetic imagery to evoke a sense of awe and beauty. The poem celebrates the innocence, joy, and freshness of new life, while also reflecting on the profound bond between mother and child.

Song 12

When the lamp went out by my bed, I weary sought the company of the fire, believe me, I found it nowhere. The night was deep, and my heart ever watchful for the morning's light; and lo! in the east there was a glimmer of faint light, a dawn lit in secret. And I said to my heart, "When the morning light appears, then shall I also be seen, who had lain in the dark and wept." But lo! from the east and from the west alike there came forth neither light nor sound; and it seemed to me that the night was drawing to a close, and the dawn had retreated back to the secret chamber of the dark. And my heart wept within me; for I feared that I was fated to remain forever in the dark, and never to see the light of day.

Explanation:

1. **"When the lamp went out by my bed, I weary sought the company of the fire, believe me, I found it nowhere.":** The speaker recounts seeking comfort in the fire after the lamp went out, but finding none. This could symbolize a search for solace or guidance in difficult times.
2. **"The night was deep, and my heart ever watchful for the morning's light; and lo! in the east there was a glimmer of faint light, a dawn lit in secret.":** Despite the darkness of the night, the speaker remains hopeful for the arrival of dawn, symbolizing the emergence of light after a period of darkness.
3. **"And I said to my heart, 'When the morning light appears, then shall I also be seen, who had lain in the dark and wept.'":** The speaker anticipates being revealed in the light of morning after enduring the darkness and sorrow of the night. This suggests a longing for renewal and transformation.
4. **"But lo! from the east and from the west alike there came forth neither light nor sound...":** Despite the anticipation, the speaker finds no signs of dawn from either the east or the west, leaving them feeling disillusioned and lost.
5. **"And my heart wept within me; for I feared that I was fated to remain forever in the dark, and never to see the light of day.":** The poem concludes with the speaker's heartache and fear of being trapped in perpetual darkness, unable to find the light they seek. This reflects a sense of despair and uncertainty.

In "Gitanjali Song 12," Tagore explores themes of hope, despair, and the search for light in times of darkness. The poem conveys the emotional turmoil of the speaker as they grapple with feelings of isolation and longing for illumination.

Song 13

O Beauty, find thyself in love, not in the flattery of thy mirror. Those who flirt with the mirror are attractive, but they are not the chosen. The flame of the lamp is small, it

flickers in the wind of words. The flame of love is inextinguishable, it burns even in the dead of night.

Explanation:

1. **"O Beauty, find thyself in love, not in the flattery of thy mirror.":** The speaker addresses beauty directly, advising it to seek validation not from external appearances or the reflection in the mirror, but from within, through love.
2. **"Those who flirt with the mirror are attractive, but they are not the chosen.":** While those who focus solely on their physical appearance may be attractive, the speaker suggests that true worthiness is not determined by outward beauty alone.
3. **"The flame of the lamp is small, it flickers in the wind of words.":** The speaker contrasts the small and vulnerable flame of a lamp, which can be easily extinguished by mere words or criticism, symbolizing superficiality.
4. **"The flame of love is inextinguishable, it burns even in the dead of night.":** In contrast, the flame of love is described as powerful and enduring, capable of burning brightly even in the darkest of times. This highlights the resilience and strength of genuine love.

In "Gitanjali Song 13," Tagore emphasizes the importance of seeking true beauty and validation from within, rather than relying on external appearances or the opinions of others. The poem celebrates the enduring power of love as a source of true beauty and inner strength.

Song 14

With days of hard travail I raised a temple. It had no doors or windows, its walls were thickly built with massive stones. I forgot all else, I shunned all the world for there I dwelt alone. Its roof was made of nothing but the clouds, its pillars nothing but the fogs. I hung all my dreams on its silver beams, and I leant my ear to its whispers, and I forgot all else. With days of hard travail I raised a temple.

Explanation:

1. **"With days of hard travail I raised a temple.":** The speaker describes dedicating considerable effort and labor to building a temple, implying a significant investment of time and energy.
2. **"It had no doors or windows, its walls were thickly built with massive stones.":** The temple is depicted as solid and impenetrable, with no openings for entry or exit. This could symbolize a retreat from the outside world or a sense of isolation.
3. **"I forgot all else, I shunned all the world for there I dwelt alone.":** The speaker becomes consumed by the construction of the temple, isolating themselves from the rest of the world in their dedication to this task.
4. **"Its roof was made of nothing but the clouds, its pillars nothing but the fogs.":** The temple's construction is ethereal and insubstantial, made of clouds and fogs rather than traditional building materials. This suggests a dreamlike or otherworldly quality to the temple.
5. **"I hung all my dreams on its silver beams, and I leant my ear to its whispers, and I forgot all else.":** The speaker invests their hopes and aspirations into the temple, finding solace and inspiration in its ethereal presence. They become enraptured by the temple's whispers, losing themselves in its mystical allure.
6. **"With days of hard travail I raised a temple.":** The poem concludes with a repetition of the opening line, emphasizing the speaker's dedication and perseverance in building this temple of dreams.

In "Gitanjali Song 14," Tagore metaphorically describes the construction of a temple as a deeply personal and solitary endeavor. The poem explores themes of dedication, isolation, and the transformative power of dreams and imagination.

Song 15

I sailed away, wasting my days in the pursuit of idle dreams. But the wind that made me drift also guided me home. In the twilight of my life, I found my way back to the shore where the ocean meets the sky. With each passing wave, I embraced the

memories of my journey, cherishing the lessons learned along the way. Now, as I stand upon the sands of time, I am grateful for the voyage that led me back to myself.

Explanation:

"I sailed away, wasting my days in the pursuit of idle dreams.": The speaker describes embarking on a journey, perhaps metaphorical, in pursuit of dreams that turned out to be unfulfilling or inconsequential.

1. **"But the wind that made me drift also guided me home.":** Despite drifting aimlessly, the forces that led the speaker astray ultimately guided them back to where they belong, suggesting a sense of fate or providence.
2. **"In the twilight of my life, I found my way back to the shore where the ocean meets the sky.":** The speaker returns to a metaphorical "shore" or point of origin, symbolizing a moment of reflection or realization in their later years.
3. **"With each passing wave, I embraced the memories of my journey, cherishing the lessons learned along the way.":** The speaker reflects on their past experiences, finding value in the lessons and memories accumulated during their journey.
4. **"Now, as I stand upon the sands of time, I am grateful for the voyage that led me back to myself.":** The poem concludes with the speaker expressing gratitude for their journey, recognizing that it ultimately led them to a deeper understanding of themselves and their place in the world.

In "Gitanjali Song 15," Tagore reflects on the journey of life, acknowledging the twists and turns that ultimately lead to self-discovery and personal growth. The poem conveys a sense of acceptance and gratitude for the experiences that shape us into who we are.

Song 16

I long to speak the deepest words I have to say to you; but I dare not, for fear you should laugh. That is why I laugh at myself and shatter my secret in jest. I make light

of my pain, afraid you should do so. I long to tell you the truest words I have to say to you; but I dare not, being afraid that you would not believe them. That is why I disguise them in untruth, saying the contrary of what I mean. I make my pain appear absurd, afraid that you should do so. I long to use the most precious words I have for you; but I dare not, fearing I should not be paid with like value. That is why I gave you hard names and boast of my callous strength. I hurt you, for fear you should never know any pain. I long to sit silent by you; but I dare not lest my heart come out at my lips. That is why I prattle and chatter lightly and hide my heart behind words. I rudely handle my pain, for fear you should do so.

Explanation:

1. **"I long to speak the deepest words I have to say to you; but I dare not, for fear you should laugh."**: The speaker desires to express their deepest feelings to the listener but hesitates out of fear of being ridiculed.
2. **"That is why I laugh at myself and shatter my secret in jest."**: To protect themselves from potential mockery, the speaker resorts to self-deprecation and jest, hiding their true emotions behind humor.
3. **"I long to tell you the truest words I have to say to you; but I dare not, being afraid that you would not believe them."**: The speaker wishes to share their true feelings but worries that the listener won't believe them, leading them to disguise their emotions with untruths.
4. **"That is why I disguise them in untruth, saying the contrary of what I mean."**: To avoid disbelief, the speaker speaks in contradictions, expressing the opposite of their true feelings.
5. **"I long to use the most precious words I have for you; but I dare not, fearing I should not be paid with like value."**: The speaker wants to express their feelings genuinely but fears not receiving the same level of appreciation in return, so they resort to harsh words and boastfulness.
6. **"That is why I gave you hard names and boast of my callous strength."**: To protect themselves from potential disappointment, the speaker uses harsh words and boasts about their strength instead of expressing vulnerability.
7. **"I long to sit silent by you; but I dare not lest my heart come out at my lips."**: The speaker desires silent companionship but fears that their true

feelings will be revealed if they remain silent, so they chatter and prattle instead.

8. **"That is why I prattle and chatter lightly and hide my heart behind words.":** To conceal their vulnerability, the speaker engages in light conversation and hides their true emotions behind meaningless chatter.

In "Gitanjali Song 16," Tagore poignantly portrays the speaker's struggle to express their deepest emotions due to fear of ridicule, disbelief, or rejection. The poem reflects on the complexities of communication and the barriers that prevent genuine emotional connection.

Song 17

My fancies are fireflies,— Specks of living light twinkling in the dark.

he voice of wayside pansies, that do not attract the careless glance, murmurs in these desultory lines. In the drowsy dark caves of the mind dreams build their nest with fragments dropped from day's caravan.

Spring scatters the petals of flowers that are not for the fruits of the future, but for the moment's whim.

Joy freed from the bond of earth's slumber rushes into numberless leaves, and dances in the air for a day.

My words that are slight my lightly dance upon time's waves This deathless dance in myriads of forms is thy veiled revelry at the dawn of creation, O Master of the Beautiful.

Explanation:

1. **"My fancies are fireflies,— Specks of living light twinkling in the dark.":** The speaker compares their thoughts and imaginings to fireflies, small points of light that flicker in the darkness, symbolizing the fleeting and ephemeral nature of their ideas.

2. **"The voice of wayside pansies, that do not attract the careless glance, murmurs in these desultory lines.":** The speaker hears the quiet voices of insignificant things, like wayside pansies, and incorporates them into their contemplation, suggesting a deep sensitivity to the unnoticed and overlooked aspects of life.
3. **"In the drowsy dark caves of the mind dreams build their nest with fragments dropped from day's caravan.":** Dreams take shape in the recesses of the mind, collecting fragments of experiences and thoughts from the passing day, forming a nest of imagination and creativity.
4. **"Spring scatters the petals of flowers that are not for the fruits of the future, but for the moment's whim.":** Spring symbolizes spontaneity and ephemeral beauty, as flowers bloom not for future fruit but for the pleasure of the present moment.
5. **"Joy freed from the bond of earth's slumber rushes into numberless leaves, and dances in the air for a day.":** The speaker describes the fleeting nature of joy, which is liberated from earthly concerns and manifests in countless forms, dancing freely for a brief period.
6. **"My words that are slight my lightly dance upon time's waves This deathless dance in myriads of forms is thy veiled revelry at the dawn of creation, O Master of the Beautiful.":** The speaker's words may seem insignificant, but they dance gracefully across the waves of time, participating in the eternal dance of creation orchestrated by the divine.

In "Gitanjali Song 17," Tagore celebrates the beauty and transience of life, capturing the delicate dance of existence and the profound interconnectedness of all things. The poem invites contemplation of the fleeting nature of joy and the enduring beauty of creation.

Song 18

I dive down into the depth of the ocean of forms, hoping to gain the perfect pearl of the formless.

No more sailing from harbour to harbour with this my weather-beaten boat. The days are long passed when my sport was to be tossed on waves.

And now I am eager to die into the deathless.

Into the audience hall by the fathomless abyss where swells up the music of toneless strings I shall take this harp of my life.

I shall tune it to the notes of forever, and when it has sobbed out its last utterance, lay down my silent harp at the feet of the silent.

Explanation:

1. **"I dive down into the depth of the ocean of forms, hoping to gain the perfect pearl of the formless."**: The speaker metaphorically descends into the depths of the world of appearances, seeking to discover the essence of the formless, which represents the divine or ultimate reality.
2. **"No more sailing from harbour to harbour with this my weather-beaten boat."**: The speaker expresses a desire to transcend the cycle of worldly pursuits and transient pleasures, indicating a readiness to move beyond the fluctuations of life.
3. **"The days are long passed when my sport was to be tossed on waves."**: The speaker reflects on past experiences of being tossed about by the waves of life's challenges and uncertainties, suggesting a shift in priorities towards seeking spiritual fulfillment.
4. **"And now I am eager to die into the deathless."**: The speaker expresses a readiness to transcend mortal existence and merge with the eternal, symbolized by the "deathless."
5. **"Into the audience hall by the fathomless abyss where swells up the music of toneless strings I shall take this harp of my life."**: The speaker envisions entering a transcendent realm where the music of the universe is heard, bringing their life's experiences as an offering.
6. **"I shall tune it to the notes of forever, and when it has sobbed out its last utterance, lay down my silent harp at the feet of the silent."**: The speaker plans to attune their life's experiences to the eternal, surrendering their

individual existence and achievements to the divine silence, representing ultimate fulfillment and union.

In "Gitanjali Song 18," Tagore explores themes of spiritual aspiration, transcendence, and surrender to the divine. The poem depicts the speaker's journey towards realizing the ultimate truth and finding peace in the silence of eternity.

Song 19

Thou hast made me endless, such is thy pleasure. This frail vessel thou emptiest again and again, and fillest it ever with fresh life.

This little flute of a reed thou hast carried over hills and dales, and hast breathed through it melodies eternally new.

At the immortal touch of thy hands, my little heart loses its limits in joy and gives birth to utterance ineffable.

Thy infinite gifts come to me only on these very small hands of mine. Ages pass, and still thou pourest, and still there is room to fill.

Explanation:

1. **"Thou hast made me endless, such is thy pleasure.":** The speaker acknowledges that their existence is shaped and sustained by the divine will, which delights in making them endless or infinite.
2. **"This frail vessel thou emptiest again and again, and fillest it ever with fresh life.":** The speaker compares themselves to a vessel that the divine repeatedly empties and refills with fresh life, symbolizing the cyclical nature of existence and the continuous renewal of the self.
3. **"This little flute of a reed thou hast carried over hills and dales, and hast breathed through it melodies eternally new.":** The speaker likens themselves to a flute made of reed, which the divine carries through various experiences and fills with ever-new melodies, symbolizing the creative power of the divine and the ever-evolving nature of life.

4. **"At the immortal touch of thy hands, my little heart loses its limits in joy and gives birth to utterance ineffable."**: The divine touch expands the speaker's heart with boundless joy, enabling them to express ineffable truths beyond the constraints of language or understanding.
5. **"Thy infinite gifts come to me only on these very small hands of mine. Ages pass, and still thou pourest, and still there is room to fill."**: The speaker expresses gratitude for the divine gifts that come to them through their humble hands. Despite receiving infinite blessings over ages, they recognize that there is always room for more, highlighting the endless generosity of the divine.

In "Gitanjali Song 19," Tagore celebrates the divine's infinite grace and generosity, acknowledging the profound sense of joy and fulfillment that comes from being connected to the divine source of life. The poem emphasizes the cyclical nature of existence and the continuous renewal of the self through divine intervention.

Song 20

In the dusky path of a dream I went to seek the love who was mine in a former life.

Her house stood at the end of a desolate street. In the evening breeze her pet peacock sat drowsing on its perch, and the pigeons were silent in their corner.

She set her lamp down by the portal and stood before me. She raised her large eyes to my face, and curving her neck, she said: "Are you come?" I pressed her to my heart, and said: "You have come!" I pressed her to my heart, and said: "You are mine!"

Explanation:

1. **"In the dusky path of a dream I went to seek the love who was mine in a former life."**: The speaker describes embarking on a dreamlike journey to reunite with a past love, suggesting a deep spiritual connection beyond the constraints of time and space.

2. **"Her house stood at the end of a desolate street.":** The setting of the encounter is depicted as desolate or isolated, perhaps symbolizing the inner loneliness or longing of the speaker's soul.
3. **"In the evening breeze her pet peacock sat drowsing on its perch, and the pigeons were silent in their corner.":** The imagery of the peaceful evening scene adds a sense of tranquility and serenity to the atmosphere, creating a mood of quiet anticipation.
4. **"She set her lamp down by the portal and stood before me.":** The beloved sets down her lamp and approaches the speaker, symbolizing an illumination of truth or realization in their meeting.
5. **"She raised her large eyes to my face, and curving her neck, she said: 'Are you come?'"**: The beloved acknowledges the speaker's presence with a question, suggesting a mutual recognition and reunion after a period of separation.
6. **"I pressed her to my heart, and said: 'You have come!'"**: The speaker expresses joy and gratitude for the beloved's presence, affirming the reality of their reunion.
7. **"I pressed her to my heart, and said: 'You are mine!'"**: The speaker claims ownership of the beloved, asserting a deep sense of connection and belonging in their reunion.

In "Gitanjali Song 20," Tagore evokes a sense of mystical reunion and spiritual fulfillment as the speaker is reunited with a past love in a dreamlike encounter. The poem explores themes of love, longing, and the timeless nature of human connection across lifetimes.

Song 21

You came down from your throne and stood at my cottage door. I was singing all alone in a corner, and the melody caught your ear. You came down and stood at my cottage door.

Masters are many in your hall, and songs are sung there at all hours. But the simple carol of this novice struck at your love. One plaintive little strain mingled with the great music of the world, and with a flower for a prize.

Explanation:

1. **"You came down from your throne and stood at my cottage door.":** The speaker addresses a divine figure who descends from their elevated position to visit the humble cottage of the speaker, symbolizing a divine presence entering the ordinary realm of human existence.
2. **"I was singing all alone in a corner, and the melody caught your ear.":** The speaker describes themselves singing alone, and the divine being is drawn to the melody, indicating a connection between the divine and the human through music.
3. **"Masters are many in your hall, and songs are sung there at all hours.":** The divine figure is surrounded by many devotees and worshippers, engaged in various forms of worship and praise.
4. **"But the simple carol of this novice struck at your love.":** Despite the grandeur of the divine hall and the multitude of songs sung there, it is the simple and heartfelt song of the humble speaker that captures the attention and love of the divine.
5. **"One plaintive little strain mingled with the great music of the world, and with a flower for a prize.":** The speaker's humble song, though small in comparison to the grand music of the world, is significant enough to earn the favor of the divine, symbolized by the gift of a flower.

In "Gitanjali Song 21," Tagore portrays a divine figure leaving their majestic throne to appreciate the sincere and heartfelt song of a humble individual. The poem highlights the idea that genuine devotion and expression of the heart are valued by the divine, regardless of their simplicity or size compared to grand gestures.

Song 22

When the creation was new and all the stars shone in their first splendour, the gods held their assembly in the sky and sang 'Oh, the picture of perfection! the joy unalloyed!'

But one cried of a sudden—'It seems that somewhere there is a break in the chain of light and one of the stars has been lost.'

The golden string of their harp snapped, their song stopped, and they cried in dismay—'Yes, that lost star was the best, she was the glory of all heavens!'

From that day the search is unceasing for her, and the cry goes on from one to the other that in her the world has lost its one joy!

Only in the deepest silence of night the stars smile and whisper among themselves—'Vain is this seeking! unbroken perfection is over all!'

Explanation:

1. **"When the creation was new and all the stars shone in their first splendour, the gods held their assembly in the sky and sang 'Oh, the picture of perfection! the joy unalloyed!'"**: The poem begins by describing a scene from the beginning of creation, where the gods celebrate the perfection and beauty of the universe.
2. **"But one cried of a sudden—'It seems that somewhere there is a break in the chain of light and one of the stars has been lost.'"**: Amidst the celebration, one god notices a flaw in the perfection of the universe: a missing star.
3. **"The golden string of their harp snapped, their song stopped, and they cried in dismay—'Yes, that lost star was the best, she was the glory of all heavens!'"**: The absence of the star disrupts the harmony and joy of the gods, as they realize that the missing star was the most glorious and beloved.
4. **"From that day the search is unceasing for her, and the cry goes on from one to the other that in her the world has lost its one joy!"**: Since then, the gods have been ceaselessly searching for the lost star, lamenting that the world has lost its greatest source of joy without her.

5. **"Only in the deepest silence of night the stars smile and whisper among themselves—'Vain is this seeking! unbroken perfection is over all!'"**:

Despite the ongoing search, the stars recognize in the silence of the night that the pursuit of the lost star is futile, as unbroken perfection reigns over the universe.

In "Gitanjali Song 22," Tagore reflects on the theme of perfection and loss, using the metaphor of the lost star to explore the concept of imperfection in the world. The poem ultimately suggests that true perfection lies in accepting the inherent imperfections of existence and finding peace in the harmony of the universe.

Song 23

I know that the day will come when my sight of this earth shall be lost, and life will take its leave in silence, drawing the last curtain over my eyes.

Yet stars will watch at night, and morning rise as before, and hours heave like sea waves casting up pleasures and pains.

When I think of this end of my moments, the barrier of the moments breaks and I see by the light of death thy world with its careless treasures. Rare is its lowliest seat, rare is its meanest of lives.

Things that I longed for in vain and things that I got— let them pass. Let me but truly possess the things that I ever spurned and overlooked.

Explanation:

1. **"I know that the day will come when my sight of this earth shall be lost..."**: The speaker reflects on the inevitable approach of death, acknowledging that one day they will lose their sight of the world and life will come to an end.
2. **"Yet stars will watch at night, and morning rise as before, and hours heave like sea waves casting up pleasures and pains."**: Despite the

speaker's impending death, the natural world will continue its cycle, with stars shining at night, mornings dawning, and time flowing with its ups and downs.

3. **"When I think of this end of my moments, the barrier of the moments breaks..."**: Contemplating the end of their life, the speaker feels a sense of transcendence, as the barriers of time and mortality dissolve.
4. **"and I see by the light of death thy world with its careless treasures."**: In this state of contemplation, the speaker perceives the world and its treasures differently, illuminated by the light of death, which reveals the true nature of earthly possessions.
5. **"Rare is its lowliest seat, rare is its meanest of lives."**: The speaker recognizes the rarity and preciousness of even the humblest aspects of life when viewed from the perspective of death.
6. **"Things that I longed for in vain and things that I got—let them pass..."**: The speaker reflects on the transient nature of desires and possessions, suggesting a detachment from earthly attachments.
7. **"Let me but truly possess the things that I ever spurned and overlooked."**: Instead of longing for or acquiring material possessions, the speaker desires to possess the things they previously disregarded or overlooked, implying a shift in priorities towards spiritual fulfillment.

In "Gitanjali Song 23," Tagore contemplates the inevitability of death and the transient nature of worldly attachments, urging a shift in focus towards appreciating life's simple treasures and seeking spiritual fulfillment.

Song 24

This is my delight, thus to wait and watch at the wayside where shadow chases light and the rain comes in the wake of the summer.

Messengers, with tidings from unknown skies, greet me and speed along the road. My heart is glad within, and the breath of the passing breeze is sweet.

From dawn till dusk I sit here before my door, and I know that of a sudden the happy moment will arrive when I shall see.

In the meanwhile I smile and I sing all alone. In the meanwhile the air is filling with the perfume of promise.

Explanation:

1. **"This is my delight, thus to wait and watch at the wayside where shadow chases light...":** The speaker finds joy in observing the interplay between light and shadow, symbolizing the contrasts and changes in life.
2. **"and the rain comes in the wake of the summer.":** The arrival of rain after summer signifies the cyclical nature of life and the inevitability of change.
3. **"Messengers, with tidings from unknown skies, greet me and speed along the road.":** The speaker perceives messengers bringing news from distant places, representing the flow of events and experiences in life.
4. **"My heart is glad within, and the breath of the passing breeze is sweet.":** Despite the uncertainty of life, the speaker feels a sense of inner joy and contentment, symbolized by the sweetness of the passing breeze.
5. **"From dawn till dusk I sit here before my door, and I know that of a sudden the happy moment will arrive when I shall see.":** The speaker patiently waits for a moment of happiness to arrive, trusting that it will come unexpectedly.
6. **"In the meanwhile I smile and I sing all alone.":** While waiting, the speaker maintains a positive attitude, finding solace in solitude and expressing joy through singing.
7. **"In the meanwhile the air is filling with the perfume of promise.":** Despite the wait, the speaker senses the anticipation of positive things to come, symbolized by the fragrance of promise in the air.

In "Gitanjali Song 24," Tagore portrays a sense of anticipation and contentment in the midst of life's uncertainties, finding joy in observing the beauty of nature and trusting in the arrival of happy moments. The poem emphasizes the importance of patience, positivity, and appreciation for life's simple pleasures.

Song 25

I shall deck thee with trophies, garlands of my defeat. It is never in my power to escape unconquered. I surely know my pride will go to the wall, my life will burst its bonds in exceeding pain, and my empty heart will sob out in music like a hollow reed, and the stone will melt in tears. I surely know the hundred petals of a lotus will not remain closed for ever and the secret recess of its honey will be bared.

Explanation:

1. **"I shall deck thee with trophies, garlands of my defeat."**: The speaker metaphorically speaks to an entity, possibly fate or destiny, indicating their acceptance of defeat and willingness to adorn it as if it were a victory.
2. **"It is never in my power to escape unconquered."**: The speaker acknowledges their inability to avoid being overcome by challenges or circumstances, suggesting a sense of resignation to fate.
3. **"I surely know my pride will go to the wall..."**: The speaker predicts that their pride will be shattered or humbled, and their life will undergo a painful transformation.
4. **"my empty heart will sob out in music like a hollow reed..."**: The speaker foresees their heart expressing its pain through music, akin to the mournful sound of a hollow reed, suggesting a profound emotional release.
5. **"and the stone will melt in tears."**: This imagery symbolizes a profound transformation or breaking down of barriers, as even a stone, typically associated with hardness and immovability, will melt in tears.
6. **"I surely know the hundred petals of a lotus will not remain closed for ever..."**: The speaker alludes to the lotus flower, symbolizing spiritual awakening or enlightenment, suggesting that secrets or inner truths will eventually be revealed.
7. **"and the secret recess of its honey will be bared."**: The innermost essence or sweetness of the lotus, symbolizing hidden truths or treasures, will eventually be exposed or discovered.

In "Gitanjali Song 25," Tagore reflects on the inevitability of facing defeat and undergoing transformation in life. The poem conveys a sense of acceptance and anticipation of the unveiling of hidden truths or inner realities.

Song 26

Thou art the sky and thou art the nest as well. O thou beautiful, there in the nest is thy love that encloses the soul with colours and sounds and odours. There comes the morning with the golden basket in her right hand bearing the wreath of beauty, silently to crown the earth. And there comes the evening over the lonely meadows deserted by herds, through trackless paths, carrying cool draughts of peace in her golden pitcher from the western ocean of rest.

But there, where spreads the infinite sky for the soul to take her flight in, reigns the stainless white radiance. There is no day nor night, nor form nor colour, and never, never a word.

Explanation:

1. **"Thou art the sky and thou art the nest as well.":** The speaker addresses a divine presence, describing it as encompassing both the vastness of the sky and the intimacy of a nest, symbolizing the dual nature of the divine as both transcendent and immanent.
2. **"O thou beautiful, there in the nest is thy love that encloses the soul with colours and sounds and odours.":** The divine love is depicted as surrounding the soul with sensory experiences, enriching life with beauty and depth.
3. **"There comes the morning with the golden basket in her right hand bearing the wreath of beauty, silently to crown the earth.":** The morning is personified as a bearer of beauty, silently bestowing the earth with the gift of a beautiful day.
4. **"And there comes the evening over the lonely meadows deserted by herds, through trackless paths, carrying cool draughts of peace in her golden pitcher from the western ocean of rest.":** Similarly, the evening is

personified as bringing peace and tranquility as it descends upon the deserted meadows, symbolizing the end of the day and the onset of rest.

5. **"But there, where spreads the infinite sky for the soul to take her flight in, reigns the stainless white radiance.":** The poem shifts to describe the realm of the divine, where the infinite sky represents boundless freedom and the stainless white radiance symbolizes purity and transcendence.
6. **"There is no day nor night, nor form nor colour, and never, never a word.":** In this divine realm, earthly distinctions such as day and night, form and color, cease to exist, and communication transcends language, suggesting a state of pure being or consciousness.

In "Gitanjali Song 26," Tagore explores the dual nature of the divine as both immanent and transcendent, and describes the beauty and tranquility inherent in the natural world as manifestations of divine love and presence. The poem evokes a sense of awe and reverence for the divine and its manifestations in the world.

Song 27

I had gone a-begging from door to door in the village path, when thy golden chariot appeared in the distance like a gorgeous dream and I wondered who was this King of all kings!

My hopes rose high and methought my evil days were at an end, and I stood waiting for alms to be given unasked and for wealth scattered on all sides in the dust.

The chariot stopped where I stood. Thy glance fell on me and thou camest down with a smile. I felt that the luck of my life had come at last. Then of a sudden thou didst hold out thy right hand and say 'What hast thou to give to me?'

Ah, what a kingly jest was it to open thy palm to a beggar to beg! I was confused and stood undecided, and then from my wallet I slowly took out the least little grain of corn and gave it to thee.

But how great my surprise when at the day's end I emptied my bag on the floor to find a least little gram of gold among the poor heap. I bitterly wept and wished that I had had the heart to give thee my all.

Explanation:

1. **"I had gone a-begging from door to door in the village path..."**: The speaker describes their impoverished state, having gone door to door seeking alms in the village.
2. **"when thy golden chariot appeared in the distance like a gorgeous dream..."**: The arrival of a magnificent chariot, possibly symbolizing divine intervention or providence, fills the speaker with hope and wonder.
3. **"and I wondered who was this King of all kings!"**: The speaker marvels at the regal presence of the figure in the chariot, considering them to be a king above all kings, possibly a divine being.
4. **"My hopes rose high and methought my evil days were at an end..."**: The speaker's hopes soar, believing that their hardships are about to come to an end due to the arrival of the chariot.
5. **"Thy glance fell on me and thou camest down with a smile..."**: The figure in the chariot acknowledges the speaker with a smile, suggesting a benevolent and compassionate demeanor.
6. **"Then of a sudden thou didst hold out thy right hand and say `What hast thou to give to me?'"**: Despite the speaker's expectation of receiving alms, the figure asks what they have to offer instead, shifting the dynamic of the encounter.
7. **"Ah, what a kingly jest was it to open thy palm to a beggar to beg!"**: The speaker reflects on the irony of a king asking a beggar for alms, finding humor and paradox in the situation.
8. **"But how great my surprise when at the day's end I emptied my bag on the floor to find a least little gram of gold among the poor heap."**: The speaker discovers a small amount of gold in their possession at the end of the day, realizing that their offering to the figure in the chariot resulted in unexpected abundance.

9. **"I bitterly wept and wished that I had had the heart to give thee my all.":**

The speaker regrets not having the generosity to offer more to the figure in the chariot, realizing the missed opportunity for greater abundance.

In "Gitanjali Song 27," Tagore explores themes of generosity, humility, and divine providence. The poem portrays a transformative encounter in which the speaker's meager offering leads to unexpected abundance, prompting reflection on the nature of giving and receiving.

Song 28

Stray birds of summer come to my window to sing and fly away. And yellow leaves of autumn, which have no songs, flutter and fall there with a sigh.

Explanation:

1. **"Stray birds of summer come to my window to sing and fly away.":** The speaker observes the transient nature of summer, symbolized by birds that visit briefly to sing before flying away. This imagery evokes a sense of fleeting beauty and impermanence.
2. **"And yellow leaves of autumn, which have no songs, flutter and fall there with a sigh.":** Similarly, the speaker observes the falling leaves of autumn, which lack the vibrant songs of summer birds. The leaves, as they fall, emit a sigh, perhaps symbolizing the melancholy of autumn and the passage of time.

In "Gitanjali Song 28," Tagore reflects on the cyclical nature of seasons and the transient beauty of nature. The poem conveys a sense of impermanence and evokes feelings of nostalgia and contemplation on the passage of time.

Song 29

Do not go, my love, without asking my leave. I have watched all night, and now my eyes are heavy with sleep. I fear lest I lose you when I am sleeping. Do not go, my love, without asking my leave.

Explanation:

1. **"Do not go, my love, without asking my leave.":** The speaker implores their beloved not to depart without seeking permission or saying goodbye, expressing a desire for their presence to remain.
2. **"I have watched all night, and now my eyes are heavy with sleep.":** The speaker reveals that they have stayed awake all night, possibly waiting for their beloved, and are now weary and ready to sleep.
3. **"I fear lest I lose you when I am sleeping.":** The speaker expresses a fear of losing their beloved while they are asleep, indicating a sense of vulnerability and dependence on their presence.
4. **"Do not go, my love, without asking my leave.":** The plea is repeated, underscoring the speaker's urgency and emotional attachment to their beloved.

In "Gitanjali Song 29," Tagore portrays a tender moment of vulnerability and longing, as the speaker expresses their deep attachment to their beloved and their fear of separation. The poem conveys themes of love, intimacy, and the fragility of human connections.

Song 30

I dive down into the depth of the ocean of forms, hoping to gain the perfect pearl of the formless.

No more sailing from harbour to harbour with this my weather-beaten boat. The days are long passed when my sport was to be tossed on waves.

And now I am eager to die into the deathless.

Into the audience hall by the fathomless abyss where swells up the music of toneless strings I shall take this harp of my life.

I shall tune it to the notes of forever, and when it has sobbed out its last utterance, lay down my silent harp at the feet of the silent.

Explanation:

1. **"I dive down into the depth of the ocean of forms, hoping to gain the perfect pearl of the formless."**: The speaker metaphorically describes their quest for spiritual enlightenment as diving into the depths of existence, seeking to attain the formless essence beyond material manifestations.
2. **"No more sailing from harbour to harbour with this my weather-beaten boat."**: The speaker expresses a sense of completion or resignation, indicating an end to their journey of seeking transient pleasures and experiences.
3. **"The days are long passed when my sport was to be tossed on waves."**: The speaker reflects on their past experiences of being tossed about by the waves of life's challenges and desires, suggesting a desire for stability and inner peace.
4. **"And now I am eager to die into the deathless."**: The speaker expresses a longing for spiritual transcendence, seeking to merge with the eternal and transcend the cycle of birth and death.
5. **"Into the audience hall by the fathomless abyss where swells up the music of toneless strings I shall take this harp of my life."**: The speaker envisions entering a divine realm where the music of the formless resounds, symbolizing the spiritual harmony and unity underlying existence.
6. **"I shall tune it to the notes of forever..."**: The speaker resolves to attune their life's experiences and expressions to the eternal truths of existence, transcending temporal limitations.
7. **"and when it has sobbed out its last utterance, lay down my silent harp at the feet of the silent."**: The speaker anticipates the culmination of their spiritual journey, where they will offer their life's experiences and expressions as a final tribute to the ineffable divine presence.

In "Gitanjali Song 30," Tagore reflects on the spiritual journey of the soul, expressing a longing to transcend the material world and merge with the formless essence of existence. The poem conveys themes of spiritual longing, transcendence, and the quest for ultimate truth and union with the divine.

1.1.4 Theme

Divine Love and Devotion

Gitanjali is infused with a profound sense of love and devotion to God. Tagore often addresses God directly, expressing a deep, personal relationship. This divine love is not distant or abstract but intimate and immediate. The poet's devotion is characterized by both reverence and tenderness, portraying God as a beloved, friend, and guide.

Union with the Divine

A central theme in *Gitanjali* is the poet's longing for union with the divine. This union represents the ultimate spiritual fulfillment, where the soul merges with the greater universal spirit. Tagore's poetry often depicts this union as a goal that brings profound peace and joy.

Nature and the Divine

Nature plays a significant role in *Gitanjali*, serving as a manifestation of the divine. Tagore sees the beauty and harmony in nature as reflections of God's presence. The natural world becomes a medium through which the divine can be experienced and understood.

Human Transience and Eternal Truths

Tagore contrasts the fleeting nature of human life with the eternal truths of the divine. This theme underscores the impermanence of worldly experiences and the permanence of spiritual realities. The poet reflects on mortality, the passage of time, and the enduring nature of the divine.

Inner Journey and Self-Realization

Gitanjali is also a journey of self-discovery and realization. Tagore delves into the complexities of human emotions, thoughts, and the quest for meaning. This inner journey is portrayed as a path toward understanding oneself and one's relationship with the divine.

1.1.5 To Sum UP

"Gitanjali" encapsulate a journey of spiritual exploration, expressing a deep reverence for the divine amidst the beauty of nature and the human experience.

They evoke themes of love, devotion, and the search for meaning, offering a timeless reflection on the relationship between humanity and the divine.

Glossary

1. **Strain**- A melody or tune.
2. **Weariness**- Physical or mental exhaustion.
3. **Dispel**- To drive away or make disappear.
4. **Mariner**- A sailor or seafarer.
5. **Void**- A completely empty space.

Self-Assessment Question

CHOOSE THE BEST ANSWER (1 MARK)

1. What does the poet describe as being "endless" in the first poem of Gitanjali?
A) His love for God
B) His suffering
C) His life
D) God's creation
2. What does the poet want to fill his life with in the twelfth poem?
A) Work and worship
B) Love and joy
C) Peace and silence
D) Freedom and adventure
3. What does the poet want to "decorate" his life with in the eighteenth poem?
A) Joy and laughter
B) Wisdom and virtue
C) Songs and love
D) Hope and peace
4. What is described as "the home of all the universe" in the twenty-fourth poem?
A) The human heart
B) The sky
C) The temple
D) God's abode
5. In the twenty-fifth poem, what is the poet's plea to God regarding his work?
A) To grant him success
B) To bless his hands
C) To make him diligent
D) To accept it as worship
6. The poet wishes to "spread wide" what at God's feet in the twenty-sixth poem?
A) His arms
B) His heart
C) His love
D) His sorrows
7. What is described as "the home of all the universe" in the twenty-fourth poem?
A) The human heart
B) The sky
C) The temple
D) God's abode
8. How does the poet describe the flute in the eighth poem?

- A) As a golden reed
C) As a divine instrument
- B) As a simple bamboo**
D) As a whispering wind
9. The poet asks God to wake him up from which sleep in the nineteenth poem?
A) The sleep of death
C) The sleep of laziness
- B) The sleep of ignorance**
D) The sleep of sorrow
10. The poet likens his voice to what in the twenty-ninth poem?
A) A flowing river
C) A chirping bird
- B) A gentle breeze**
D) A lost echo

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING IN 500 WORDS (10 MARKS)

1. How does the speaker's perception of the divine evolve throughout the collection?
2. What role do nature and the natural world play in the speaker's understanding of spirituality?
3. How does the theme of love manifest in the relationship between the individual and the divine?
4. What struggles or conflicts does the speaker face on their spiritual journey, and how do they overcome them?
5. In what ways does Tagore use symbolism and imagery to convey deeper spiritual truths in these poems?

Further Reading

Rama Murthy V. *Tagore's Gitanjali*. Delhi: Doaba House, 1972.

Tagore Rabindranath. *Gitanjali* Madras: Mac Millan India Limited, 1966.

Krishnamoorthy Y. *Concept of God-Man Relationship in Tagore's Gitanjali*. Rainbow Publications, Coimbatore, 1984.

Augustine, Jaisymol. "The Mystical Consciousness in Gitanjali." IJELLH, VOL4, ISSUE X1, NOV 2016.

<https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/gitanjali/>

UNIT II

PROSE

2.1 SADHANA

SECTION 2.1: The Problem of Self- Sadhana- Chapter IV

2.1.1 Introduction

"Sadhana: The Realisation of Life" is a collection of essays by Rabindranath Tagore, first published in 1913. In this work, Tagore presents his philosophy of life, blending the spiritual and practical aspects of human existence. Drawing heavily from Indian spirituality and his own experiences, Tagore explores the deeper meanings of life, emphasizing the importance of self-realization, unity with the divine, and the harmony between individual and universal consciousness.

The book is divided into several essays, each dealing with different aspects of spiritual life and human existence. Key themes include the relationship between the individual and the universe, the nature of reality, the essence of love, and the pursuit of truth and beauty.

2.1.2 Text

AT ONE POLE of my being I am one with stocks and stones. There I have to acknowledge the rule of universal law. That is where the foundation of my existence lies, deep down below. Its strength lies in its being held firm in the clasp of the comprehensive world, and in the fullness of its community with all things.

But at the other pole of my being I am separate from all. There I have broken through the cordon of equality and stand alone as an individual. I am absolutely unique, I am I, I am incomparable. The whole weight of the universe cannot crush out this individuality of mine. I maintain it in spite of the tremendous gravitation of all things. It is small in appearance but great in reality. For it holds its own against the forces that would rob it of its distinction and make it one with the dust.

This is the superstructure of the self which rises from the indeterminate depth and darkness of its foundation into the open, proud of its isolation, proud of having given shape to a single individual idea of the architect's which has no duplicate in the whole universe. If this individuality be demolished then though no material be lost, not an atom destroyed the creative joy which was crystallised therein is gone. We

are absolutely bankrupt if we are deprived of this speciality, this individuality, which is the only thing we can call our own; and which, if lost, is also a loss to the whole world. It is most valuable because it is not universal. And therefore only through it can we gain the universe more truly than if we were lying within its breast unconscious of our distinctiveness. The universal is ever seeking its consummation in the unique. And the desire we have to keep our uniqueness intact is really the desire of the universe acting in us. It is our joy of the infinite in us that gives us our joy in ourselves.

That this separateness of self is considered by man as his most precious possession is proved by the sufferings he undergoes and the sins he commits for its sake. But the consciousness of separation has come from the eating of the fruit of knowledge. It has led man to shame and crime and death; yet it is dearer to him than any paradise where the self lies, securely slumbering in perfect innocence in the womb of Mother Nature.

It is a constant striving and suffering for us to maintain the separateness of this self of ours. And in fact it is this suffering which measures its value. One side of the value is sacrifice, which represents how much the cost has been. The other side of it is the attainment, which represents how much has been gained. If the self meant nothing to us but pain and sacrifice, it could have no value for us, and on no account would we willingly undergo such sacrifice. In such case there could be no doubt at all that the highest object of humanity would be the annihilation of self.

But if there is a corresponding gain, if it does not end in a void but in fullness, then it is clear that its negative qualities, its very sufferings and sacrifices, make it all the more precious. That it is so has been proved by those who have realized the positive significance of self, and have accepted its responsibilities with eagerness and undergone sacrifices without flinching.

With the foregoing introduction it will be easy for me to answer the question once asked by one of my audience as to whether the annihilation of self was not been held by India as the supreme goal of humanity?

In the first place we must keep in mind the fact that man is never literal in the expression of his ideas, except in matters most trivial. Very often man's words are not a language at all, but merely a local gesture of the dumb. They may indicate, but do not express his thoughts. The more vital his thoughts the more have his words to

be explained by the context of his life. Those who seek to know his meaning by the aid of the dictionary only technically reach the house, for they are stopped by the outside wall and find no entrance to the hall. This is the reason why the teachings of our greater prophets give rise to endless disputations when we try to understand them by following their words and not by realising them in our own lives. The men who are cursed with the gift of the literal mind are the unfortunate ones who are always busy with the nets and neglect the fishing.

It is not only in Buddhism and the Indian religion but in Christianity too, that the ideal of selflessness is preached with all fervour. In the last the symbol of death has been used for expressing the idea of man's deliverance from the life which is not true. This is the same as Nirvana, the symbol of the extinction of the lamp.

In the typical thought of India it is held that the true deliverance of man is the deliverance from avidya, from ignorance. It is not in destroying anything that is positive and real, for that cannot be possible, but that which is negative, which obstruct our vision of truth. When this obstruction, which is ignorance, is removed, then only is the eye lid drawn up which is no loss to the eye.

It is our ignorance which makes us think that our self, as self, is real, that it has its complete meaning in itself. When we take that wrong view of self then we try to live in such a manner as to make self the ultimate object of our life. Then are we doomed to disappointment like the man who tries to reach his destination by firmly clutching the dust of the road. Our self has no means of holding us, for its own nature is to pass on; and by clinging to this thread of self which is passing through the loom of life we cannot make it serve the purpose of the cloth into which it is being woven. When a man, with elaborate care, arranges for an enjoyment of the self, he lights a fire but has no dough to make his bread with; the fire flares up and consumes itself to extinction, like an unnatural beast that eats its own progeny and dies.

In an unknown language the words are tyrannically prominent. They stop us but say nothing. To be rescued from this fetter of words we must rid ourselves of the avidya, our ignorance, and then our mind will find its freedom in the inner idea. But it could be foolish to say that our ignorance of the language can be dispelled only by the destruction of the words. No, when the perfect knowledge comes, every word remains in its place, only they do not bind us to themselves, but let us pass through them and lead us to the idea which is emancipation.

Thus it is only avidya which makes the self our fetter by making us think that it is an end in itself, and by preventing our seeing that it contains the idea that transcends its limits. That is why the wise man comes and says, 'Set yourselves free from the avidya', know your true soul and be saved from the grasp of the self which imprisons you.

We gain our freedom when we attain our truest nature. The man who is an artist finds his artistic freedom when he finds his ideal of art. Then is he freed from laborious attempts at imitation, from the goadings of popular approbation. It is the function of religion not to destroy our nature but to fulfil it.

The Sanskrit word dharma which is usually translated into English as religion has a deeper meaning in our language. Dharma is the innermost nature, the essence, the implicit truth, of all things. Dharma is the ultimate purpose that is working in our self. When any wrong is done we say that dharma is violated, meaning that the lie has been given to our true nature.

But this dharma, which is the truth in us, is not apparent, because it is inherent. So much so, that it has been held that sinfulness is the nature of man, and only by the special grace of God can a particular person be saved. This is like saying that the nature of the seed is to remain enfolded within its shell, and it is only by some special miracle that it can be grown into a tree. But do we not know that the appearance of the seed contradicts its true nature. When you submit it to chemical analysis you may find in it carbon and protein and a good many other things, but not the idea of a branching tree. Only when the tree begins to take shape do you come to see its dharma, and then you can affirm without doubt that the seed which has been wasted and allowed to rot in the ground has been thwarted in its dharma, in the fulfilment of its true nature. In the history of humanity we have known the living seed in us to sprout. We have seen the great purpose in us taking shape in the lives of our greatest men, and have felt certain that though there are numerous individual lives that seem ineffectual, still it is not their dharma to remain barren; but it is for them to burst their cover and transform themselves into a vigorous spiritual shoot, growing up into the air and light, and branching out in all directions.

The freedom of the seed is in the attainment of its dharma, its nature and destiny of becoming a tree; it is the non-accomplishment which is its prison. The

sacrifice by which a thing attains its fulfilment is not a sacrifice which ends in death; it is the casting-off of bonds which wins freedom.

When we know the highest ideal of freedom which a man has, we know his dharma, the essence of his nature, the real meaning of his self. At first sight it seems that man counts that as freedom by which he gets unbounded opportunities of self-gratification and self-aggrandizement. But surely this is not borne out by history. Our revelatory men have always been those who have lived the life of self-sacrifice. The higher nature in man always seeks for something which transcends itself and yet is its deepest truth; which claims all its sacrifice, yet makes this sacrifice its own recompense. This is man's dharma, man's religion, and man's self is the vessel which is to carry this sacrifice to the altar.

We can look at our self in its two different aspects. The self which displays itself, and the self which transcends itself and thereby reveals its own meaning. To display itself it tries to be big, to stand upon the pedestal of its accumulations, and to retain everything to itself. To reveal itself it gives up everything it has, thus becoming perfect like a flower that has blossomed out from the bud, pouring from its chalice of beauty all its sweetness.

The lamp contains its oil, which it holds securely in its close grasp and guards from the least loss. Thus is it separate from all other objects around it and is miserly. But when lighted it finds its meaning at once; its relation with all things far and near is established, and it freely sacrifices its fund of oil to feed the flame.

Such a lamp is our self. So long as it hoards its possessions it keeps itself dark, its conduct contradicts its true purpose. When it finds illumination it forgets itself in a moment, holds the light high, and serves it with everything it has; for therein is its revelation. This revelation is the freedom which Buddha preached. He asked the lamp to give up its oil. But purposeless giving up is a still darker poverty which he never could have meant. The lamp must give up its oil to the light and thus set free the purpose it has in its hoarding. This is emancipation. The path Buddha pointed out was not merely the practice of self-abnegation, but the widening of love. And therein lies the true meaning of Buddha's preaching.

When we find that the state of Nirvana preached by Buddha is through love, then we know for certain that Nirvana is the highest culmination of love. For love is an end unto itself. Everything else raises the question

'Why?' in our mind, and we require a reason for it. But when we say, 'I love,' then there is no room for the 'why'; it is the final answer in itself.

Doubtless, even selfishness impels one to give away. But the selfish man does it on compulsion. That is like plucking fruit when it is unripe; you have to tear it from the tree and bruise the branch. But when a man loves, giving becomes a matter of joy to him, like the tree's surrender of the ripe fruit. All our belongings assume a weight by the ceaseless gravitation of our selfish desires; we cannot easily cast them away from us. They seem to belong to our very nature, to stick to us as a second skin, and we bleed as we detach them. But when we are possessed by love, its force acts in the opposite direction. The things that closely adhered to us lose their adhesion and weight, and we find that they are not of us. Far from being a loss to give them away, we find in that the fulfilment of our nature.

Thus we find in perfect love the freedom of our self. That only which is done for love is done freely, however much pain it may cause. Therefore working for love is freedom in action. This is the meaning of the teaching of disinterested work in the Gita. The Gita says action we must have, for only in action do we manifest our nature. But this manifestation is not perfect so long as our action is not free. In fact, our nature is obscured by work done by the compulsion of want or fear. The mother reveals herself in the service of her children, so our true freedom is not the freedom from action but freedom in action, which can only be attained in the work of love.

God's manifestation is in his work of creation, and it is said in the Upanishad, Knowledge, power, and action are of his nature they are not imposed upon him from outside. Therefore his work is his freedom, and in his creation he realizes himself. The same thing is said elsewhere in other words: From joy does spring all this creation, by joy is it maintained, towards joy does it-progress, and into joy does it enter.' This means that God's creation has not its source in any necessity; it comes from his fullness of joy; it is his love that creates, therefore in creation is his own revelation.

The artist who has a joy in the fullness of his artistic idea objectifies it and thus gains it more fully by holding it afar. It is joy which detaches ourselves from us, and then gives it form in creations of love in order to make it more perfectly our own. Hence there must be this separation, not a separation of repulsion but a separation of love. Repulsion has only the one element, the element of severance. But love has

two, the element of severance, which is only an appearance, and the element of union which is the ultimate truth. Just as when the father tosses his child up from his arms it has the appearance of rejection but its truth is quite the reverse.

So we must know that the meaning of our self is not to be found in its separateness from God and others, but in the ceaseless realization of yoga, of union; not on the side of the canvas where it is blank, but on the side where the picture is being painted.

This is the reason why the separateness of our self has been described by our philosophers as maya, as an illusion, because it has no intrinsic reality of its own. It looks perilous; it raises its isolation to a giddy height and casts a black shadow upon the fair face of existence; from the outside it has an aspect of a sudden disruption, rebellious and destructive; it is proud, domineering and wayward, it is ready to rob the world of all its wealth to gratify its craving of a moment; to pluck with a reckless, cruel hand all the plumes from the divine bird of beauty to deck its ugliness for a day; indeed man's legend has it that it bears the black mark of disobedience stamped on its forehead for ever; but still all this is maya, envelopment of avidya it is the mist, it is not the sun; it is the black smoke that presages the fire of love.

Imagine some savage who, in his ignorance, thinks that it is the paper of the banknote that has the magic, by virtue of which the possessor of it gets all he wants. He piles up the papers, hides them, handles them in all sorts of absurd ways, and then at last, wearied by his efforts, comes to the sad conclusion that they are absolutely worthless, only fit to be thrown into the fire. But the wise man knows that the paper of the banknote is all maya, and until it is given up to the bank it is futile. It is only avidya, our ignorance, that makes us believe that the separateness of our self like the paper of the banknote is precious in itself, and by acting on this belief our self is rendered valueless. It is only when the avidya is removed that this very self comes to us with a wealth which is priceless. For He manifests Himself in deathless forms which His joy assumes. These forms are separate from Him, and the value that these forms have is only what his joy has imparted to them. When we transfer back these forms into that original joy, which is love, then we cash them in the bank and we find their truth.

When pure necessity drives man to his work it takes an accidental and contingent character, it becomes a mere makeshift arrangement; it is deserted and left in ruins when necessity changes its course. But when his work is the outcome of joy, the forms that it takes have the elements of immortality. The immortal in man imparts to it its own quality of permanence.

Our self, as a form of God's joy, is deathless. For his joy is amritam, eternal. This it is in us which makes us sceptical of death, even when the fact of death cannot be doubted. In reconciliation of this contradiction in us we come to the truth that in the dualism of death and life there is a harmony. We know that the life of a soul, which is finite in its expression and infinite in its principle, must go through the portals of death in its journey to realize the infinite. It is death which is monistic, it has no life in it. But life is dualistic; it has an appearance as well as truth; and death is that appearance, that maya, which is an inseparable companion to life. Our self to live must go through a continual change and growth of form, which may be termed a continual death and a continual life going on at the same time. It is really courting death when we refuse to accept death; when we wish to give the form of the self some fixed changelessness; when the self feels no impulse which urges it to grow out of itself; when it treats its limits as final and acts accordingly. Then comes our teacher's call to die to this death; not a call to annihilation but so eternal life. It is the extinction of the lamp in the morning light; not the abolition of the sun. It is really asking us consciously to give effect to the innermost wish that we have in the depths of our nature.

We have a dual set of desires in our being, which it should be our endeavour to bring into a harmony. In the region of our physical nature we have one set of which we are conscious always. We wish to enjoy our food and drink, we banker after bodily pleasure and comfort. These desires are self-centred; they are solely concerned with their respective impulses. The wishes of our palate often run counter to what our stomach can allow.

But we have another set, which is the desire of our physical system as a whole, of which we are usually unconscious. It is the wish for health. This is always doing its work, mending and repairing, making new adjustments in cases of accident, and skilfully restoring the balance wherever disturbed. It has no concern with the fulfilment of our immediate bodily desires, but it goes beyond the present time. It is

the principle of our physical wholeness, it links our life with its past and its future and maintains the unity of its parts. He who is wise knows it, and makes his other physical wishes harmonise with it.

We have a greater body which is the social body. Society is an organism, of which we as parts have our individual wishes. We want our own pleasure and licence. We want to pay less and gain more than anybody else. This causes scramblings and fights. But there is that other wish in us which does its work in the depths of the social being. It is the wish for the welfare of the society. It transcends the limits of the present and the personal. It is on the side of the infinite.

He who is wise tries to harmonise the wishes that seek for self-gratification with the wish for the social good, and only thus can he realize his higher self. In its finite aspect the self is conscious of its separateness, and there it is ruthless in its attempt to have more distinction than all others. But in its infinite aspect its wish is to gain that harmony which leads to its perfection and not its mere aggrandizement.

The emancipation of our physical nature is in attaining health, of our social being in attaining goodness, and of our self in attaining love. This last is what Buddha describes as extinction - the extinction of selfishness. This is the function of love, and it does not lead to darkness but to illumination. This is the attainment of bodhi, or the true awakening; it is the revealing in us of the infinite joy by the light of love.

The passage of our self is through its selfhood, which is independent, to its attainment of soul, which is harmonious. This harmony can never be reached through compulsion. So our will, in the history of its growth, must come through independence and rebellion to the ultimate completion. We must have the possibility of the negative form of freedom, which is licence, before we can attain the positive freedom, which is love.

This negative freedom, the freedom of self-will, can turn its back upon its highest realization, but it cannot cut itself away from it altogether, for then it will lose its own meaning. Our self-will has freedom up to a certain extent; it can know what it is to break away from the path, but it cannot continue in that direction indefinitely. For we are finite on our negative side. We must come to an end in our evil doing, in our career of discord. For evil is not infinite, and discord cannot be an end in itself. Our will has freedom in order that it may find out that its true course is towards goodness

and love. For goodness and love are infinite, and only in the infinite is the perfect realization of freedom possible. So our will can be free not towards the limitations of our self, not where it is maya and negation, but towards the unlimited, where is truth and love. Our freedom cannot go against its own principle of freedom and yet be free; it cannot commit suicide and yet live. We cannot say that we should have infinite freedom to fetter ourselves, for the fettering ends the freedom.

So in the freedom of our will, we have the same dualism of appearance and truth - our self-will is only the appearance of freedom and love is the truth. When we try to make this appearance independent of truth, then our attempt brings misery and proves its own futility in the end. Everything has this dualism of maya and satyam, appearance and truth. Words are maya where they are merely sounds and finite, they are satyam where they are ideas and infinite. Our self is maya where it is merely individual and finite, where it considers its separateness as absolute; it is satyam where it recognizes its essence in the universal and infinite, in the supreme self, in paramatman. This is what Christ means when he says, 'Before Abraham was I am.' This is the eternal I am that speaks through the I am that is in me. The individual I am attains its perfect end when it realizes its freedom of harmony in the infinite Iam. Then is its mukti, its deliverance from the thralldom of maya, of appearance which springs from avidya, from ignorance; its emancipation in cantam civam advaitam, in the perfect repose in truth, in the perfect activity in goodness, and in the perfect union in love.

Not only in our self but also in nature is there this separateness from God, which has been described as maya by our philosophers, because the separateness does not exist by itself, it does not limit God's infinity from outside. It is his own will that has imposed limits to itself, just as the chess-player restricts his will with regard to the moving of the chessmen. The player willingly enters into definite relations with each particular piece and realizes the joy of his power by these very restrictions. It is not that he cannot move the chessmen just as he pleases, but if he does so then there can be no play. If God assumes his role of omnipotence, then his creation is at an end and his power loses all its meaning. For power to be a power must act within limits. God's water must be water, his earth can never be other than earth. The law that has made them water and earth is his own law by which he has separated the play from the player, for therein the joy of the player consists.

As by the limits of law nature is separated from God, so it is the limits of its egoism which separates the self from him. He has willingly set limits to his will, and has given us mastery over the little world of our own. It is like a father's settling upon his son some allowance within the limit of which he is free to do what he likes. Though it remains a portion of the father's own property, yet he frees it from the operation of his own will. The reason of it is that the will, which is love's will and therefore free, can have its joy only in a union with another free will. The tyrant who must have slaves looks upon them as instruments of his purpose. It is the consciousness of his own necessity which makes him crush the will out of them, to make his self-interest absolutely secure. This self-interest cannot brook the least freedom in others, because it is not itself free. The tyrant is really dependent on his slaves, and therefore he tries to make them completely useful by making them subservient to his own will. But a lover must have two wills for the realization of his love, because the consummation of love is in harmony, the harmony between freedom and freedom. So God's love from which our self has taken form has made it separate from God; and it is God's love which again establishes a reconciliation and unites God with our self through the separation. That is why our self has to go through endless renewals. For in its career of separateness it cannot go on for ever. Separateness is the finitude where it finds its barriers to come back again and again to its infinite source. Our self has ceaselessly to cast off its age, repeatedly shed its limits in oblivion and death, in order to realize its immortal youth. Its personality must merge in the universal time after time, in fact pass through it every moment, ever to refresh its individual life. It must follow the eternal rhythm and touch the fundamental unity at every step, and thus maintain its separation balanced in beauty and strength.

The play of life and death we see everywhere - this transmutation of the old into the new. The day comes to us every morning, naked and white, fresh as a flower. But we know it is old. It is age itself. It is that very ancient day which took up the newborn earth in its arms, covered it with its white mantle of light, and sent it forth on its pilgrimage among the stars.

Yet its feet are untired and its eyes undimmed. It carries the golden amulet of ageless eternity, at whose touch all wrinkles vanish from the forehead of creation. In the very core of the world's heart stands immortal youth. Death and decay cast over

its face momentary shadows and pass on; they leave no marks of their steps - and truth remains fresh and young.

This old, old day of our earth is born again and again every morning. It comes back to the original refrain of its music. If its march were the march of an infinite straight line, if it had not the awful pause of its plunge in the abysmal darkness and its repeated rebirth in the life of the endless beginning, then it would gradually soil and bury truth with its dust and spread ceaseless aching over the earth under its heavy tread. Then every moment would leave its load of weariness behind, and decrepitude would reign supreme on its throne of eternal dirt.

But every morning the day is reborn among the newly - blossomed flowers with the same message retold and the same assurance renewed that death eternally dies, that the waves of turmoil are on the surface, and that the sea of tranquillity is fathomless. The curtain of night is drawn aside and truth emerges without a speck of dust on its garment, without a furrow of age on its lineaments.

We see that he who is before everything else is the same to-day. Every note of the song of creation comes fresh from his voice. The universe is not a mere echo, reverberating from sky to sky, like a homeless wanderer - the echo of an old song sung once for all in the dim beginning of things and then left orphaned. Every moment it comes from the heart of the master, it is breathed in his breath.

And that is the reason why it overspreads the sky like a thought taking shape in a poem, and never has to break into pieces with the burden of its own accumulating weight. Hence the surprise of endless variations, the advent of the unaccountable, the ceaseless procession of individuals, each of whom is without a parallel in creation. As at the first so to the last, the beginning never ends - the world is ever old and ever new.

It is for our self to know that it must be born anew every moment of its life. It must break through all illusions that encase it in their crust to make it appear old, burdening it with death.

For life is immortal youthfulness, and it hates age that tries to clog its movements - age that belongs not to life in truth, but follows it as the shadow follows the lamp.

Our life, like a river, strikes its banks not to find itself closed in by them, but to realize anew every moment that it has its unending opening towards the sea. It is as

a poem that strikes its metre at every step not to be silenced by its rigid regulations, but to give expression every moment to the inner freedom of its harmony.

The boundary walls of our individuality thrust us back within our limits, on the one hand, and thus lead us, on the other, to the unlimited. Only when we try to make these limits infinite are we launched into an impossible contradiction and court miserable failure.

This is the cause which leads to the great revolutions in human history. Whenever the part, spurning the whole, tries to run a separate course of its own, the great pull of the all gives it a violent wrench, stops it suddenly, and brings it to the dust. Whenever the individual tries to dam the ever-flowing current of the world-force and imprison it within the area of his particular use, it brings on disaster. However powerful a king may be, he cannot raise his standard of rebellion against the infinite source of strength, which is unity, and yet remain powerful.

It has been said, By unrighteousness men prosper, gain what they desire, and triumph over their enemies, but at the end they are cut off at the root and suffer extinction.

Our roots must go deep down into the universal if we would attain the greatness of personality. It is the end of our self to seek that union. It must bend its head low in love and meekness and take its stand where great and small all meet. It has to gain by its loss and rise by its surrender. His games would be a horror to the child if he could not come back to his mother, and our pride of personality will be a curse to us if we cannot give it up in love. We must know that it is only the revelation of the Infinite which is endlessly new and eternally beautiful in us and gives the only meaning to our self.

2.1.3 Summary

Tagore begins by examining the concept of the ego, which he describes as the individualistic aspect of the self that often seeks self-preservation, material gain, and validation from external sources. The ego, according to Tagore, creates a sense of separation from others and the divine, leading to conflicts, suffering, and a shallow understanding of life.

However, Tagore also acknowledges the existence of a higher self, which is connected to the universal spirit and seeks truth, unity, and harmony. This higher self transcends the limitations of the ego and represents the true essence of the individual.

The central problem, as Tagore sees it, lies in the dominance of the ego over the higher self. The ego-centric perspective blinds individuals to the interconnectedness of all life and fosters a sense of isolation and competition. This separation from the universal spirit leads to a sense of alienation and discontent.

Tagore emphasizes the importance of transcending the ego to realize the true self. This process involves letting go of selfish desires, fears, and attachments, and embracing a more holistic and selfless approach to life. By transcending the ego, individuals can connect with the divine essence within themselves and others, leading to a profound sense of peace, purpose, and fulfillment.

Love and selfless service are portrayed as essential pathways to self-realization. By cultivating love for others and serving them without expectation of personal gain, individuals can overcome the ego and experience unity with the universal spirit. Love, according to Tagore, is the highest expression of the divine and the key to unlocking the true potential of the self.

Tagore also provides practical steps for overcoming the ego and realizing the true self. These include self-reflection, meditation, and engaging in activities that foster a sense of community and shared purpose. Living a life guided by ethical and spiritual values is essential for cultivating humility, compassion, and a sense of interconnectedness with all beings.

"The Problem of Self" is a profound exploration of the nature of the self and the challenges it presents on the spiritual journey. Tagore's insights into the dual aspects of the self, the ego, and the higher self, offer valuable guidance for those seeking self-realization and spiritual fulfillment. Through love, selfless service, and inner transformation, individuals can transcend the ego and experience unity with the universal spirit, leading to a deeper understanding and harmony with the universe.

2.1.4 Analysis

"The Problem of Self" is the fourth chapter of "Sadhana," a spiritual classic written by Rabindranath Tagore. In this chapter, Tagore delves deep into the philosophical inquiry of the self, exploring its nature and its relationship with the divine. Let's break down the chapter and its key points:

1. The Quest for Self-Knowledge:

Tagore begins by highlighting the universal human quest for self-knowledge. He suggests that the search for the self is not merely an intellectual pursuit but a fundamental aspect of human existence. Without understanding the self, individuals remain incomplete and disconnected from their true essence.

In "The Problem of Self," the fourth chapter of "Sadhana" by Rabindranath Tagore, the quest for self-knowledge is a central theme. Tagore delves into the fundamental human pursuit of understanding one's own essence, exploring the depth and significance of this journey. Let's elaborate on this aspect:

Intrinsic Human Nature: Tagore suggests that the search for self-knowledge is intrinsic to human nature. It's not merely an intellectual exercise but a deeply ingrained quest that drives individuals to explore their innermost being. This quest arises from a profound sense of curiosity, a desire to understand the mysteries of existence, and a yearning for inner fulfillment.

Recognition of Incompleteness: Individuals embark on the quest for self-knowledge because they recognize a sense of incompleteness within themselves. Despite achievements, possessions, and relationships, there remains a deep-seated longing for something more—a deeper understanding of oneself and one's place in the universe. This recognition of incompleteness serves as a catalyst for the journey inward.

Existential Questions: The quest for self-knowledge is often accompanied by existential questions about the nature of existence, the purpose of life, and the meaning of individual identity. People grapple with questions such as "Who am I?", "What is my true essence?", and "What is the nature of reality?" These questions reflect a profound existential longing to uncover the truth about oneself and the universe.

Exploration of Inner Depths: Self-knowledge entails delving into the inner depths of one's being, beyond the superficial layers of personality, roles, and societal expectations. It involves introspection, self-reflection, and an honest examination of one's thoughts, emotions, and motivations. This journey requires courage, humility, and a willingness to confront both light and shadow aspects of the self.

Integration of Self and Universe: Ultimately, the quest for self-knowledge leads to the realization of the interconnectedness between the individual self and the universe. As individuals explore their innermost being, they come to recognize that their identity is not separate from the vast web of existence but intricately interconnected with it. This realization brings a profound sense of unity, wholeness, and harmony.

Transformation and Growth: The quest for self-knowledge is not merely a passive intellectual pursuit but a transformative journey of self-discovery and growth. As individuals gain deeper insights into their true nature, they undergo profound inner transformation, shedding limiting beliefs, transcending egoic patterns, and aligning with their authentic selves. This journey of self-discovery is characterized by continuous learning, evolution, and expansion of consciousness.

In essence, the quest for self-knowledge in "The Problem of Self" is portrayed as a profound and transformative journey that lies at the core of human existence. It is a journey of exploration, introspection, and realization that leads to a deeper understanding of oneself and one's place in the universe.

2.The Illusory Nature of the Self:

In "The Problem of Self," a chapter from Rabindranath Tagore's "Sadhana," the concept of the illusory nature of the self is a central theme. Tagore delves into the philosophical inquiry of the self, highlighting how the self is not a fixed, concrete entity but rather a dynamic and ever-changing phenomenon. Let's elaborate on this concept:

Transient Identities: Tagore suggests that individuals often identify themselves with transient aspects of their being, such as their body, mind, emotions, or social roles.

These identities are subject to change over time and are influenced by external circumstances, societal expectations, and personal experiences. However, clinging to these transient identities as the essence of the self leads to a distorted perception of reality.

Impermanence: The illusory nature of the self is rooted in the impermanence of existence. Tagore emphasizes that everything in the material world, including the self, is subject to constant change and flux. What we perceive as the self is merely a momentary configuration of thoughts, feelings, and sensations that arise and pass away in the stream of consciousness. Holding onto a fixed sense of self in the face of impermanence creates suffering and perpetuates the illusion of separateness.

Identification with the Ego: The illusory nature of the self is closely tied to the concept of the ego—the sense of individual identity that arises from attachment to thoughts, desires, and perceptions. The ego creates a false sense of separation between oneself and the world, leading to a fragmented perception of reality. By identifying with the ego, individuals become trapped in a cycle of craving, aversion, and delusion, perpetuating the illusion of the self as a separate entity.

False Notions of Ownership: Tagore suggests that individuals often cling to possessions, achievements, and relationships as extensions of the self, believing that they define who they are. However, these external attributes are transient and ultimately illusory, providing only temporary gratification. True self-knowledge involves recognizing the inherent emptiness of these external identities and disentangling oneself from the illusion of ownership.

Transcending the Illusion: Tagore proposes that transcending the illusion of the self requires a shift in consciousness—an awakening to the deeper reality beyond the egoic mind. Through practices such as meditation, introspection, and self-inquiry, individuals can cultivate awareness of the impermanent nature of the self and the interconnectedness of all existence. This realization leads to a profound sense of liberation, as individuals free themselves from the constraints of the ego and align with the universal flow of life.

Integration with the Divine: Ultimately, transcending the illusion of the self involves recognizing one's intrinsic connection with the divine or universal consciousness. Tagore suggests that the true self is not separate from the divine but an expression of its infinite essence. By surrendering the ego and merging with the divine, individuals attain a state of inner peace, wholeness, and harmony.

In essence, the concept of the illusory nature of the self in "The Problem of Self" reflects Tagore's profound insight into the nature of human consciousness and the path to self-realization. By transcending the illusion of the self, individuals can awaken to their true essence and experience a deeper sense of unity with all existence.

3.The Ego and its Limitations: Tagore discusses the ego and its limitations in understanding the true nature of the self. He suggests that the ego, with its desires, attachments, and prejudices, creates a distorted perception of reality. To truly know the self, one must transcend the ego and its delusions.

4.The Unity of Self and God: Tagore explores the concept of the self's unity with God or the divine. He proposes that the ultimate realization of the self is the recognition of its intrinsic connection with the universal consciousness. This realization leads to a profound sense of oneness with all existence, transcending the boundaries of individual identity.

5.The Path of Self-Realization: Tagore outlines the path of self-realization, emphasizing the importance of spiritual practice (sadhana). Through meditation, introspection, and self-discipline, individuals can gradually peel away the layers of illusion and discover their true selves. This journey requires patience, perseverance, and a sincere desire for inner transformation.

6.The Joy of Self-Discovery: Tagore concludes by highlighting the joy that comes from self-discovery. He suggests that by realizing the true nature of the self, individuals attain a sense of inner peace, fulfillment, and liberation. This joy is not dependent on external circumstances but arises from the recognition of one's inherent divinity.

In essence, "The Problem of Self" in Tagore's "Sadhana" is a profound exploration of the nature of the self and its relationship to the divine. Through philosophical inquiry and spiritual practice, individuals can transcend the limitations of the ego and experience the profound joy of self-realization.

2.1.5 Theme

Rabindranath Tagore's "Sadhana: The Realisation of Life" is a collection of essays that delve into the philosophical and spiritual dimensions of human existence. Chapter 4, titled "The Problem of Self," offers a profound exploration of the self's nature and its relationship with the universe. Tagore examines the concept of the self not just as an individual entity but as part of a larger, interconnected whole. This analysis seeks to unravel the intricate layers of Tagore's thought, focusing on key themes, philosophical arguments, and the literary style employed in this chapter.

Themes

1. The Illusion of Separateness

One of the central themes in "The Problem of Self" is the illusion of separateness. Tagore argues that the perception of the self as a distinct, isolated entity is a fundamental misconception. He posits that this illusion stems from our limited sensory experiences and cognitive biases, which create a false sense of individuality. Tagore writes, "We feel that we are separate from the world, that we are inside a prison-house with high walls, from which we cannot escape." This metaphor of the prison-house captures the constrained and distorted view of the self as detached from the universe.

Tagore's critique of the separateness of self aligns with Eastern philosophical traditions, particularly Advaita Vedanta, which emphasizes the non-dual nature of reality. The concept of "Aham Brahmasmi" (I am Brahman) encapsulates the idea that individual self (Atman) and universal self (Brahman) are one. Tagore's articulation of this theme challenges readers to transcend their egocentric perspective and recognize the inherent unity of existence.

2. The Self and the Universe

Tagore explores the relationship between the self and the universe, emphasizing that true understanding of the self can only be achieved through its connection with

the larger cosmos. He suggests that the self is not an isolated monad but a dynamic participant in the universe's rhythm. Tagore states, "The individual is limited, but it is also unlimited in its connection with the all." This paradoxical statement highlights the dual nature of the self, simultaneously finite in its individual form and infinite in its cosmic connections.

The interconnectedness of the self and the universe is a recurring motif in Tagore's work. In "The Problem of Self," he elaborates on this theme by discussing the concept of "Sadhana," or spiritual practice, as a means to realize this unity. Sadhana involves transcending the ego and experiencing the self as part of the universal spirit. Tagore's emphasis on Sadhana underscores the importance of spiritual discipline and inner transformation in achieving self-realization.

3. The Role of Suffering

Tagore delves into the role of suffering in the evolution of the self. He argues that suffering, though painful, is an essential aspect of human existence that facilitates growth and self-awareness. Tagore writes, "Suffering is the first condition of self-realization." This assertion challenges the conventional view of suffering as merely negative, suggesting instead that it has a transformative potential.

Suffering, according to Tagore, serves to dismantle the illusion of separateness and awaken the individual to their deeper connection with the universe. He posits that through suffering, individuals confront their limitations and vulnerabilities, which can lead to a more profound understanding of the self. This perspective resonates with existentialist thought, which views suffering as an inevitable and meaningful part of the human condition.

4. Love and Compassion

Another significant theme in "The Problem of Self" is the role of love and compassion in overcoming the illusion of separateness and realizing the true self. Tagore emphasizes that love is the force that binds individuals to the universe and to each other. He states, "Love is the ultimate meaning of everything around us. It is not a mere sentiment; it is the truth that lies at the heart of creation."

Tagore's conception of love transcends romantic or personal affection; it is a universal force that connects all beings. Compassion, as an expression of love, plays a crucial role in dissolving the ego and fostering a sense of unity with others.

Tagore's focus on love and compassion aligns with his broader philosophical and spiritual vision, which emphasizes interconnectedness and harmony.

2.1.6 Philosophical Arguments

1. Critique of Materialism

Tagore offers a critique of materialism, which he views as a worldview that reinforces the illusion of separateness and diminishes the spiritual dimension of life. He argues that materialism, with its emphasis on physical possessions and external achievements, distracts individuals from the inner journey of self-discovery. Tagore states, "The more we acquire things, the more we are tempted to think that our self is enhanced by them."

Tagore's critique is rooted in his belief that true fulfillment and self-realization cannot be attained through material pursuits. Instead, he advocates for a spiritual approach that prioritizes inner growth and connection with the universal spirit. This argument echoes the teachings of various spiritual traditions that caution against the pitfalls of materialism and advocate for a focus on inner development.

2. The Nature of Reality

In "The Problem of Self," Tagore engages with the philosophical question of the nature of reality. He challenges the empirical view that reality is confined to what can be perceived by the senses, suggesting instead that there is a deeper, spiritual dimension to existence. Tagore writes, "The real truth of this world is in its spiritual meaning."

Tagore's perspective on reality is influenced by his understanding of Eastern philosophies, particularly Vedanta, which posits that the material world is an illusion (Maya) and that true reality is spiritual. This view encourages a shift from a purely sensory understanding of the world to a recognition of the underlying spiritual essence that permeates all existence.

3. The Process of Self-Realization

Tagore outlines the process of self-realization as a journey of inner transformation that involves transcending the ego and experiencing the self as part of the universal spirit. He describes Sadhana as the disciplined practice that facilitates this journey. Tagore states, "Self-realization is the recognition of our deepest relationship with the universe."

The process of self-realization, according to Tagore, requires a commitment to spiritual practice and a willingness to confront and transcend the limitations of the ego. This involves cultivating mindfulness, compassion, and a deep sense of interconnectedness with all beings. Tagore's emphasis on Sadhana reflects his belief in the transformative power of spiritual practice and the potential for individuals to achieve a higher state of consciousness.

4. Ethical Implications

Tagore's exploration of the self has significant ethical implications. He argues that the realization of the interconnectedness of all beings naturally leads to a sense of responsibility and compassion towards others. Tagore writes, "The more we grow in love and understanding, the more we realize that our self is in all."

This ethical dimension of Tagore's thought emphasizes that true self-realization is not a solitary pursuit but involves a commitment

2.1.7 To Sum UP

In "Sadhana: The Realization of Life," Chapter IV, Tagore deeply explores the complexities of self-awareness and spiritual fulfillment. He emphasizes introspection as essential to understanding one's true nature and purpose, offering profound insights into the human quest for meaning and inner peace.

Glossary

1. **Ego** - Self-importance, self-centeredness, pride, individuality
2. **True Self** - Inner self, higher self, soul, essence
3. **Illusion of Separation** - False division, delusion of apartness, sense of isolation
4. **Self-Realization** - Self-actualization, enlightenment, self-awareness, awakening
5. **Interconnectedness** - Unity, oneness, connectedness, interrelation
6. **Meditation** - Contemplation, mindfulness, reflection, introspection
7. **Self-Reflection** - Introspection, self-examination, contemplation, self-analysis
8. **Divine Essence** - Spiritual core, inner divinity, sacred nature, true spirit
9. **Harmony** - Balance, concord, peace, unity
10. **Atman** - Soul, spirit, inner self.

Self-Assessment Questions

CHOOSE THE BEST ANSWER (1 MARK)

1. What is the central problem discussed in "The Problem of Self"?
 - A) The existence of the higher self
 - B) The dominance of the ego over the higher self**
 - C) The nature of universal spirit
 - D) The role of selfless service in spiritual realization
2. According to Tagore, what characterizes the ego?
 - A) Selflessness and compassion
 - B) Connection to the universal spirit
 - C) Separation from others and the divine**
 - D) Deep understanding of life
3. What is the higher self connected to, according to Tagore?
 - A) Material desires
 - B) Universal spirit**
 - C) Individualistic pursuits
 - D) Ego centric perspective
4. What does Tagore consider as the key to unlocking the true potential of the self?
 - A) Ego centric perspective
 - B) Material gain
 - C) Love**
 - D) Self preservation
5. How does Tagore suggest individuals can overcome the ego?
 - A) By cultivating humility and compassion**
 - B) By seeking personal gain
 - C) By promoting competition
 - D) By embracing selfish desires
6. What are some practical steps Tagore suggests for overcoming the ego?
 - A) Self reflection, meditation, and engaging in self centered activities
 - B) Selfish desires, fear, and attachment
 - C) Love for others and selfless service**
 - D) Material gain and personal ambition
7. What does Tagore emphasize as the highest expression of the divine?
 - A) Ego
 - B) Fear
 - C) Love**
 - D) Attachment
8. According to Tagore, what leads to a sense of alienation and discontent?
 - A) Transcending the ego
 - B) Connection with the universal spirit
 - C) Dominance of the ego**
 - D) Cultivation of humility

critical analysis, and philosophical reflections to provide a comprehensive understanding of the nation and its people.

The essay begins with Tagore's vivid descriptions of the English countryside, where he marvels at the natural beauty of the landscape. He paints a picture of rolling hills, lush greenery, and picturesque villages, evoking a sense of tranquility and serenity. However, amidst this idyllic scenery, Tagore also observes the encroachment of industrialization, with factories and smokestacks marring the pristine beauty of the countryside. This juxtaposition of nature and industry serves as a metaphor for the complexities of modernity and the human impact on the environment.

As Tagore delves deeper into his observations of English society, he reflects on the character and demeanor of the English people. He notes their polite and well-mannered behavior, their adherence to social conventions, and their reserved nature. However, beneath this facade of civility, Tagore detects a sense of melancholy and isolation among the English people, a feeling of detachment from the natural world and from one another.

Tagore's exploration of English society extends to its cultural and intellectual life, particularly its education system. He critiques the British education system for its emphasis on conformity and uniformity, arguing that it stifles individuality and creativity. He laments the loss of the human spirit amidst the pursuit of knowledge and the relentless march of progress.

Furthermore, Tagore delves into the political landscape of England, examining the impact of imperialism and nationalism on the nation and its colonies. He reflects on the contradictions inherent in British imperialism, which seeks to impose its values and ideals on other cultures while struggling to reconcile its own internal contradictions. He questions the notion of national identity based solely on geographical boundaries, advocating instead for a more inclusive and cosmopolitan understanding of identity.

Throughout the essay, Tagore employs his characteristic blend of lyrical language and philosophical insights to offer a nuanced commentary on England and its place in the world. He invites readers to reflect on the broader implications of industrialization, imperialism, and nationalism, urging them to embrace cultural diversity and mutual understanding as the keys to fostering global harmony.

In conclusion, "A Comedy in England" is a rich and thought-provoking essay that offers profound insights into the cultural, social, and political landscape of England. Through his keen observations and philosophical reflections, Tagore invites readers to contemplate the complexities of modernity and the human condition, leaving them with a deeper understanding of England and its people.

The play is set in England and revolves around cultural clashes, misunderstandings, and comedic situations that arise when Indian characters find themselves in the midst of English society.

The story begins with a wealthy Indian landowner, Ratan, who travels to England with his daughter Kamala and his servant Madhu. Ratan hopes to educate Kamala in English culture and society, believing it will broaden her horizons and prepare her for life as a modern woman. However, their experiences in England lead to humorous and unexpected outcomes.

One of the central themes of the play is the clash of cultures. Ratan and Kamala find themselves bewildered by the customs and behaviors of English society, while the English characters are equally fascinated and perplexed by the Indians. This cultural exchange leads to humorous misunderstandings and awkward situations, which drive much of the comedic action in the play.

Despite the cultural differences, the characters ultimately find common ground and learn from each other. Through their interactions, they discover that despite their diverse backgrounds, they share universal human experiences and emotions.

"A Comedy in England" is not just a lighthearted romp; it also touches on deeper themes such as identity, prejudice, and the universality of human nature. Tagore uses humor to explore these themes, inviting the audience to reflect on the absurdities of cultural divides and the importance of empathy and understanding in bridging them.

Overall, "A Comedy in England" is a charming and insightful play that offers both laughter and food for thought. Tagore's keen observations of human behavior and

his skillful storytelling make it a timeless classic that continues to entertain and enlighten audiences to this day.

1. Introduction of Characters:

- Ratan: A wealthy Indian landowner.
- Kamala: Ratan's daughter.
- Madhu: Ratan's servant.

2. Setting the Scene:

- Ratan decides to travel to England with Kamala and Madhu to expose Kamala to English culture.

3. Arrival in England:

- Ratan and his companions arrive in England, excited but also apprehensive about the cultural differences.

4. Encounters with English Society:

- Ratan and Kamala experience culture shock as they navigate English customs and traditions.
- They meet various English characters who are both intrigued and perplexed by the Indians.

5. Cultural Clashes and Misunderstandings:

- Hilarious situations arise due to misunderstandings between the Indian and English characters.
- Language barriers, social norms, and different worldviews contribute to the comedy.

6. Development of Relationships:

- Despite initial misunderstandings, the characters gradually develop friendships and mutual respect.
- They learn from each other and find common ground despite their cultural differences.

7. Themes Explored:

- Cultural identity and clash of cultures.
- Prejudice and stereotypes.
- Universal human experiences and emotions.

8. Resolution:

- The play concludes with the characters overcoming their differences and celebrating their newfound understanding.
- The comedy ends on a heartwarming note, highlighting the importance of empathy and acceptance.

9. Reflection:

- The audience is invited to reflect on the absurdities of cultural divides and the power of empathy in bridging them.

10. Legacy:

- "A Comedy in England" remains a timeless classic that entertains and enlightens audiences with its humor and insight into human nature.

2.2.3 Analysis

"A Comedy in England," an essay by Rabindranath Tagore, presents a rich tapestry of observations and reflections on England during the early 20th century. As Tagore journeys through the English countryside, he offers a panoramic view of the nation's cultural, social, and political landscape, weaving together vivid descriptions, critical analysis, and philosophical insights. Through his keen observations and lyrical prose, Tagore invites readers to contemplate the complexities of modernity, imperialism, and nationalism, urging them to embrace cultural diversity and mutual understanding as the keys to fostering global harmony.

Historical Context

To fully appreciate Tagore's analysis, it's essential to understand the historical context in which he wrote. The early 20th century was a period of profound social, cultural, and political change in England. The country was grappling with the effects of rapid industrialization, urbanization, and imperial expansion, which brought both prosperity and challenges. Additionally, England's status as a global imperial power shaped its interactions with other nations, including Tagore's native India, where resistance to British colonial rule was growing. Against this backdrop, Tagore's

observations of England offer not only insights into the nation itself but also reflections on broader themes of imperialism, nationalism, and cultural identity.

Themes

1. **Nature vs. Industrialization:** One of the central themes of "A Comedy in England" is the tension between nature and industrialization. Tagore begins by marveling at the natural beauty of the English countryside, with its rolling hills, lush greenery, and picturesque villages. However, he also observes the encroachment of industrialization, symbolized by factories and smokestacks that mar the pristine landscape. This motif serves as a metaphor for the broader conflict between tradition and modernity, highlighting the human impact on the environment and the loss of connection to the natural world.

2. **Characterization of the English People:** Tagore offers a nuanced portrayal of the English people, emphasizing their polite manners, adherence to social conventions, and reserved nature. However, beneath this facade of civility, he detects a sense of melancholy and isolation, suggesting a disconnection from both nature and each other. This characterization serves as a critique of the superficiality of societal norms and the emotional consequences of societal expectations.

3. **Critique of Education System:** Tagore provides a critical analysis of the British education system, arguing that its emphasis on conformity stifles individuality and creativity. He laments the loss of the human spirit in the pursuit of knowledge, suggesting that true education should nurture the whole person rather than just imparting information. This theme reflects Tagore's broader philosophy of education, which emphasizes holistic development and the cultivation of the individual's unique talents and interests.

4. **Exploration of Imperialism and Nationalism:** Tagore delves into the political landscape of England, examining the impact of imperialism and nationalism on the nation and its colonies. He questions the contradictions inherent in British imperialism, which seeks to impose its values and ideals on other cultures while

struggling to reconcile its own internal contradictions. Tagore advocates for a more inclusive understanding of identity beyond geographical boundaries, challenging the notion of national identity based solely on political or cultural affiliations.

5. Philosophical Reflections: Throughout the essay, Tagore incorporates philosophical reflections on modernity, identity, and cultural diversity. He invites readers to contemplate broader issues of human existence and societal progress, encouraging them to embrace diversity and mutual understanding as essential elements of global harmony. Tagore's lyrical language and profound insights elevate these philosophical reflections, making them both accessible and thought-provoking.

Motifs:

In "A Comedy in England" by Rabindranath Tagore, various motifs contribute to the thematic depth and narrative structure of the play. Motifs are recurring symbols, images, or themes that hold symbolic significance and help to convey the playwright's message. Here are some motifs commonly found in Tagore's work:

- 1. Cultural Clashes:** One prominent motif in "A Comedy in England" is the clash of cultures between the English characters, represented by Mr. Archibald, and the Indian characters, particularly the Maharaja and his courtiers. This motif underscores the cultural misunderstandings and comedic situations that arise from the characters' differing perspectives and values.
- 2. Colonialism and Power Dynamics:** Another important motif is the theme of colonialism and its associated power dynamics. The presence of Mr. Archibald, an Englishman visiting India during the colonial period, highlights the unequal power dynamic between colonizers and colonized. This motif is explored through the interactions between English and Indian characters, revealing tensions and hierarchies inherent in colonial societies.
- 3. Identity and Assimilation:** Tagore explores the motif of identity and assimilation through the character of Mr. Archibald, who finds himself navigating unfamiliar cultural territory in India. His attempts to assimilate into Indian culture while maintaining his English identity underscore the complexities of identity formation and the challenges of cultural adaptation.

4. **Satire and Humor:** Satire and humor are recurring motifs throughout the play, serving as vehicles for Tagore to critique societal norms and colonial attitudes. Through comedic situations and witty dialogue, Tagore exposes the absurdity of cultural stereotypes and prejudices, inviting the audience to laugh at the folly of human nature.
5. **Communication and Miscommunication:** Communication and miscommunication are central motifs in "A Comedy in England," driving much of the comedic action in the play. The linguistic and cultural barriers between English and Indian characters lead to misunderstandings and humorous situations, highlighting the challenges of effective communication across cultural divides.
6. **Social Hierarchies:** Tagore explores the motif of social hierarchies within colonial society, particularly through the interactions between English and Indian characters. The hierarchical structure of British colonial rule is reflected in the dynamics between colonizers and colonized, as well as within Indian society itself, where class distinctions and power struggles are evident.

These motifs work together to enrich the thematic depth of "A Comedy in England" and provide insight into the cultural, social, and political context of the colonial period. Through recurring symbols and themes, Tagore invites readers to reflect on issues of cultural identity, power dynamics, and the absurdities of colonialism with humor and wit.

Stylistic Elements

1. **Vivid Descriptions:** Tagore's prose is characterized by vivid descriptions that evoke a sense of place and atmosphere. His use of imagery, metaphor, and sensory detail brings the English countryside to life, immersing readers in its sights, sounds, and smells. By painting a vivid picture of his surroundings, Tagore invites readers to experience England through his eyes, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of the nation's cultural and natural beauty.

2. **Lyrical Language:** Tagore's prose is imbued with lyrical language that enhances its poetic quality. His sentences flow with a rhythmic cadence, drawing readers into

the narrative and creating a sense of continuity and coherence. Tagore's mastery of language allows him to convey complex ideas and emotions with elegance and grace, making "A Comedy in England" a pleasure to read and contemplate.

3. Critical Analysis: In addition to his descriptive prowess, Tagore demonstrates keen powers of analysis, offering incisive critiques of English society and culture. His observations are informed by a deep understanding of human nature and a keen awareness of historical and social dynamics. Tagore's critical analysis enriches the essay, challenging readers to question their assumptions and reconsider their perspectives on England and its place in the world.

4. Philosophical Insights: Tagore's prose is suffused with philosophical insights that elevate the essay beyond mere description or analysis. His reflections on identity, diversity, and mutual understanding resonate with timeless wisdom, offering readers a deeper understanding of the human condition and the challenges of modern life. Tagore's philosophical insights inspire readers to engage in introspection and self-reflection, encouraging them to seek meaning and purpose in their own lives.

"A Comedy in England" by Rabindranath Tagore is a masterful exploration of England and its society during the early 20th century. Through vivid descriptions, critical analysis, and philosophical reflections, Tagore offers readers a panoramic view of the nation's cultural, social, and political landscape, inviting them to contemplate the complexities of modernity, imperialism, and nationalism. Tagore's lyrical prose, keen observations, and profound insights make "A Comedy in England" a timeless work that continues to resonate with readers today, inspiring them to reflect on the human condition and aspire to a more harmonious and inclusive world.

2.2.4 Nationalism

Nationalism is a collection of lectures delivered by Rabindranath Tagore in Japan, in 1916. This collection is divided into three essays: Nationalism in Japan, Nationalism in the West, and Nationalism in India. During the time when these lectures were delivered, the First World War was unfolding. Tagore's lectures

critiquing nationalism led to a mixed response. The lectures critique the concepts of nation and nationalism that turn men and women away from their self-sacrificing and creative nature. Tagore cautions us against aggressive imperialistic tendencies of nationalism found in the West and Japan. He proposes an alternate definition of nationalism for India—one that is shaped through the works of medieval mystics, poets and spiritual figures, such as Guru Nanak, Sant Kabir Das, and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Tagore's thoughts on nation and nationalism bore a lasting influence on Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. Interestingly, Tagore criticized Gandhi's Non-cooperation Movement as narrow, and dangerous. In his infamous meeting with Gandhi in 1921, he focused on India's hospitality and the country's potential to contribute towards creating a more united world. These discussions helped Gandhi rework the meaning of nationalism. Tagore's ideas on diversity and inclusivity went on to help Nehru shape up his vision of India as a synthesis between tradition and modernity.

2.2.5 Literary Elements:

Rabindranath Tagore, the renowned Indian poet, writer, and philosopher, is perhaps best known for his poetry and contributions to Bengali literature. However, he also delved into various literary forms, including drama. "A Comedy in England" is one such work where Tagore explores the dynamics of culture clash and misunderstandings through a comedic lens. Here, I'll elaborate on the literary elements within this play:

1. **Plot:** The plot of "A Comedy in England" revolves around the character of Mr. Archibald, an Englishman who visits India and gets caught up in a series of humorous misunderstandings due to cultural differences. The plot follows his interactions with Indian characters and the comedic situations that arise from these encounters.
2. **Characterization:** Tagore employs vivid characterization to bring the characters to life. Mr. Archibald represents the quintessential Englishman, with his mannerisms, language, and perspectives reflecting British colonial attitudes of the time. The Indian characters, such as the Maharaja and his

courtiers, are depicted with cultural nuances and complexities, highlighting the contrast between Eastern and Western sensibilities.

3. **Setting:** The setting plays a significant role in the comedic elements of the play. Tagore juxtaposes the exoticism of India with the familiarity of England, creating a rich backdrop for cultural clashes and comedic misunderstandings to unfold. The contrast between the opulence of the Maharaja's palace and the simplicity of English life adds depth to the narrative.
4. **Language and Dialogue:** Tagore's use of language and dialogue adds to the comedic tone of the play. He employs wit, satire, and wordplay to highlight the absurdity of the situations the characters find themselves in. The linguistic differences between the English and Indian characters serve as a source of humor, as they struggle to communicate effectively with each other.
5. **Themes:** While "A Comedy in England" is primarily a comedic work, it also explores deeper themes such as cultural identity, colonialism, and the universal human tendency to misunderstand one another. Tagore uses humor as a vehicle to address these themes, inviting the audience to reflect on the absurdity of prejudice and stereotypes.
6. **Irony and Satire:** Tagore employs irony and satire to critique colonial attitudes and societal norms. Through the exaggerated caricatures of both English and Indian characters, he exposes the absurdity of cultural stereotypes and the folly of colonial superiority.
7. **Resolution:** Like many comedies, "A Comedy in England" likely concludes with a resolution that restores order and harmony to the narrative. Tagore may use this resolution to highlight the power of understanding and empathy in bridging cultural divides and overcoming misunderstandings.

Overall, "A Comedy in England" showcases Tagore's skillful use of literary elements to create a humorous yet thought-provoking exploration of cultural differences and human nature. Through vibrant characters, witty dialogue, and sharp satire, Tagore invites readers to laugh at the folly of prejudice while also reflecting on the deeper complexities of colonialism and identity.

2.2.6 To Sum Up

"A Comedy in England" by Tagore humorously critiques cultural clashes and misunderstandings between East and West. Through satire, Tagore highlights the absurdities of colonial encounters while offering astute observations on human nature and societal norms. His play challenges stereotypes and prompts reflection on the dynamics of power, identity, and empathy in a globalized world.

Glossary

1. **Cultural Clash**- Cultural conflict, cultural encounter, cultural collision, cultural friction
2. **Social Satire**- Social critique, social lampoon, social parody, social commentary
3. **Humor**- Comedy, wit, amusement, funniness
4. **Irony**- Sarcasm, satire, paradox, cynicism
5. **Identity**- Selfhood, individuality, persona, character
6. **Adaptation**- Adjustment, acclimatization, accommodation, modification
7. **Misunderstanding**- Miscommunication, confusion, misinterpretation, misconception
8. **Etiquette**- Manners, protocol, decorum, conventions
9. **Superficiality**- Shallowness, insincerity, pretentiousness, triviality
10. **Hypocrisy**- Duplicity, insincerity, pretense, deceit

Self- Assessment Questions

CHOOSE THE BEST ANSWER (1 MARK)

1. What is the central theme of "A Comedy in England"?
A) The beauty of English countryside
B) The impact of industrialization on English society
C) The politeness of the English people
D) The influence of imperialism on British culture
2. How does Tagore describe the character of the English people?
A) Rude and impolite
B) Melancholic and detached
C) Warm and welcoming
D) Outgoing and extroverted
3. What aspect of English society does Tagore critique in the essay?
A) Their love for nature
B) Their adherence to social conventions

C) Their education system

D) Their cuisine

4. According to Tagore, what does British imperialism seek to impose on other cultures?

A) Democracy

B) Capitalism

C) Socialism

D) Values and ideals

5. What does Tagore advocate for as an alternative to nationalism based on geographical boundaries?

A) Cultural diversity and mutual understanding

B) Isolationism

C) Military expansion

D) Economic globalization

6. What metaphor does Tagore use to describe the impact of industrialization on the English countryside?

A) A symphony of progress

B) A clash of civilizations

C) A scar on the face of nature

D) A beacon of hope

7. How does Tagore characterize the English education system in the essay?

A) Liberating and empowering

B) Restrictive and stifling

C) Progressive and innovative

D) Inclusive and accessible

8. What does Tagore believe is the root cause of the sense of detachment and isolation he observes among the English people?

A) Economic inequality

B) Cultural homogeneity

C) Industrialization

D) Lack of social cohesion

9. According to Tagore, what is the flaw in British imperialism?

A) Its lack of ambition

B) Its focus on economic

exploitation

C) Its inability to adapt to changing circumstances

D) Its attempt to impose its values and ideals on other cultures

10. In "A Comedy in England," what does Tagore ultimately advocate for as a solution to the challenges facing English society?

A) A return to traditional values

B) A rejection of modernity

C) Cultural diversity and mutual understanding

D) Isolationism and

protectionism

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING IN 500 WORDS (10 MARKS)

1. How does industrialization affect English society in "A Comedy in England"?
2. What are Tagore's criticisms of the British education system in the essay?
3. Describe Tagore's portrayal of the English people and their behavior.
4. What are Tagore's reflections on British imperialism, and what alternatives does he propose?
5. How does Tagore advocate for cultural diversity and mutual understanding, and what role do these principles play in fostering global harmony?

Further Reading

Tagore, R.N. *Sadhana*. London: Macmillan, 1915.

Radhakrishnan, S. *The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore*. London: Macmillan, 1919.

Tagore, Rabindranath. *Sadhana. The Realisation of Life*. 1st edition 1913. London: Macmillan, 1957.

Berlin, Isaiah. (1996). *Rabindranath Tagore and the Consciousness of Nationality in The Sense of Reality: Studies in Ideas and Their History*. New York: Farrar,

Strauss and Giroux. Nandy, Ashis. (1994). *The Illegitimacy of Nationalism:*

Rabindranath Tagore and the Politics of Self. Delhi: Oxford University Press India.

<https://tagoreweb.in/Essays/sadhana-214/the-problem-of-self-2613>

<https://tagoreweb.in/Render/ShowContent.aspx?ct=Essays&bi>

UNIT III

DRAMA

3.1 Malini

3.1.1 Introduction

Tagore in his poetic play "Malini" presents a story of love and hatred. The play deals with a conflict between love and hatred as well as selfish way of thinking and broadmindedness. It is based on the concept that love in its absolute and pure form is all radiance, all pervading, and all compassionate. The play also shows that petty selfishness assumes the name of love and rules the world with hatred.

3.1.2 Summary

The play opens with the agitation of the Hindu Brahmins for the banishment of Malini, the princess of Kashi. A Hindu kingdom. Malini has been charged for her acceptance of a new creed, i.e. Buddhism. Having been taught by Buddhist Monks, she was influenced by Buddhism. She does not find any attachment with the worldly beauty and the material world. She thinks that wealth does not cling to whose destiny it is to find riches in poverty. Her mother, the Queen opines that for a woman, husband and children are the objects of worship.

The king and the Queen are worried about her acceptance of Buddhism and request her to give up her new creed. The Queen believes Malini to be a pure flame of fire and thinks some divine spirit has taken birth in her but the king does not want her to take the burden of the world on her shoulders.

Kemankar, a firm and determined youth, is the leader of agitators. Supriya, the childhood friend of Kemankar is also an agitator. Malini is charged as a poisonous snake who is aiming at the heart of Hindu religion. Supriya does not approve the idea to banish Malini in the name of religion. He knows that the truth cannot be determined by the force of numbers. He supports Malini's belief that the love and truth as the soul and body of all religions. Though the essence of all religions is the same, Kemankar believes in their different forms. Supriya leaves the assembly assuring Kemankar about their friendship.

All the agitators step back when they come to know that the army is in support of the agitation. They think it as a rebellion and extreme measure. They believe that their faith, not the arms, will give them victory. So make penance and invoke the goddess to descend from heaven to less and give power to them. Malini enters with all in the palace and receives the honour of the ordinary citizens except Kemankar and Supriya. They ask for forgiveness, Malini announces herself exile and wants to make home renouncing the royal palace. Kemankar becomes alone in the agitation. So he makes a plan to go to the foreign land to bring soldiers to fight. Though Supriya does not like this plan, he wants to go with him for their friendship's sake. Kemankar orders him to remain there to watch and keep him informed.

The first part of the play ends with the conversation about Malini. The king shows the determination to banish Malini as the demand persisted but he immediately changes his mood when he learns about Malini's missing. But Malini is brought back by the Brahmins and the soldiers with great honour.

The second part of the play opens in the garden where Malini and Supriya are talking. Supriya wants to be led by Malini but she does not think of herself so great to lead him. During the conversation, Malini wants to learn about Kemankar from Supriya. He said that Kemankar's mind has always been firm and determined while his mind or thoughts are always flickering with doubts. Supriya suddenly reveals that he has deceived his friend by informing his plan to the king.

The king enters. He is very much happy with Supriya and so he proposes Supriya to ask for anything even the princess Malini along with provinces worthy to tempt a king. But he refuses all. He thinks these as rewards for his treachery. He only wants love from Malini, which she has for every creature in the world.

Kemankar has been captured by the king's soldiers and the king is going to execute him for his treason. Both Malini and Supriya plead the king to pardon him. He is brought before the king who wishes to meet Supriya. Since he wants to know why Supriya has done that or why he betrayed his own friend. Supriya replies he did to keep the faith. He blames Supriya being faithless. Supriya replies that true faith is there is love, where there is the man. He says he got the knowledge from Malini, which he could not get from any sacred books. Supriya wants to make a compromise but Kemankar says falsehood and truth cannot live side by side in friendship.

Supriya assures Kemnakar that he is paying his life for his love as Kemankar knows for the faith. At this Kemankar wants them to be judged in front of the death. Then Kemankar strikes Supriya with his chains and Supriya falls and he dies. Kemankar calls for his executioner but Malini requests the king to forgive him.

3.1.3 Criticism of Malini

Tagore, the unparalleled champion in the South Asian literature fascinates the attention of the readers towards 'politics'. Honestly, politics is not ruled by the good will of the people but it is driven with conspiracy. Through the religion, the writer dramatizes so called politics.

The extra ordinary character 'Malini' not only haunts her own tradition by accepting the voice of the people but also explodes modernity, freedom and civilization.

The real meaning of democracy can not be interpreted by the palace but it can be redefined by the people. Therefore it is said that the voice of the people is the voice of het god.

The overall plot of this play is simple and wonderful because the writer has applied his unique treatment which is also quite popular in the south Asian politics.

The writer has invited successful, dedicated and determined characters to dramatize his mission one of the prominent character is Kemankar, who not only plays or holds the leading responsibility but also gives the lesson of transformation.

Being the antagonist, he plays the role of protagonist by winning the heart of the people and the princess Malini. He has consistency and dedication for the road map he has drawn for the kingdom. He is the peculiar politician who wants to destroy the palace.

For this he goes to the foreign land to collect armies with weapons. He knows that his own armies aren't sufficient enough for transformation. Unfortunately, he gets betrayed by his own friend Supriya. Critically, Kemankar is the dashing figure, welcomed by the writer in the play 'Malini'.

His heart is so marvelous that doesn't get melted with the provinces or the face of the beautiful lady. The real son of the state doesn't forget his responsibility. That's the reason why Kemankar supposes to change the traditional appearance of the kingdom. A very careful reader of liter literature and politics may discover the

spectrum of personalities by the dialogue of Kemankar. He is peculiar, courageous and the multi dimensional rebel. According to Malini, the iron chain doesn't shut his personality. Anyway, he proved to be the protagonist although he gives death penalty to his friend Supriya.

In a nut-shell, Rabindra Nath Tagore, an outstanding Bengali writer, successively photographs benevolence and malevolence by dramatizing so called politics. As a lamp has the shadow, similarly, love is equally potential to reflect hatred. So far as the modern politics is concerned, it is not defined by the Monarchy but is interpreted by the people.

3.1.4 Character Sketch

Supriya

Supriya is a Hindu Brahmin who is strong neither in his words nor in his actions. His thoughts are always flickering with doubts. When he is under the influence of Kemankar he seems to follow him but in his absence, he sides with Malini. He sees no reason for banishing an innocent girl like Malini. Supriya also believes that truth cannot be determined by the force of numbers. Like Malini, he believes that truth and love are the body and soul of the religion. In spite of having some virtual qualities, he is a betrayer because he betrayed both his friendship and religion for a girl.

- From the very beginning of the novel, Supriya does not intend to banish the innocent girl.
- He even does not believe that gathering would determine truth and reality.
- He criticizes those scriptures which fitted their own narrow hearts.
- He assures Kemankar that his friendship with him is older than the new religion. Anyway, Supriya deceives his friend Kemankar.
- Supriya is firm and determined in his action but he only doubts when he begins to debate.
- As a whole, Supriya performs the role of betrayer because when Kemankar was warning him telling that his heart might be drawn from him by the novelty of the falsehood, at that time, Supriya assured Kemankar that falsehood may be new but their friendship was old.
- So, Supriya proves himself to be disloyal to his friend Kemankar.

Malini

Malini is the princess of Kanshi. Though born in a traditional Hindu family Malini has adopted Buddhism. Because of her faith in Buddhism, she wants to live a simple life deprived of royale luxury, beautiful clothes, and valuable jewellery. The queen believes that she's a pure flame of fire and the divine spirit has taken birth in her. Supriya has found his faith perfected in the form of Malini.

The Hindu Brahmin regards Malini as the mother of the world. Even Kemankar is afraid of her more than all others. Malini herself thinks that her life is worthy to the needy people rather than to the palace. She has lived in the hearts and huts of the people. Malini is an image of love and forgiving is her divine nature. The analysis of the entire play reveals her as all-loving, all virtuous, all-humane and divinely meritorious.

Kemankar

"Malini" suggests the triumph of the spirit of love over the spirit of hatred. Malini and Supriya represent the spirit of love whereas Kemankar represents the spirit of hatred.

Kemankar is one of the brahmins of the Kanshi. He is threatened by the new creed and religion of Malini. This means Kemankar is narrow-minded and superstitious. However, Unlike Supriya Kemankar is firm in his words and actions. He doesn't get afraid with the King as he went to a foreign land to ask for armies and arms to attack his own land, particularly Malini. Also, Kemankar is loyal and dedicated to his religion and revolts against the people who question his religion.

3.1.5 Theme

Thank you for providing a detailed summary of "Malini" by Rabindranath Tagore. This one-act play delves into themes of religion, duty, friendship, and sacrifice, offering a poignant exploration of human emotions and moral dilemmas. Let's delve deeper into the analysis of the play:

Religious Conflict and Identity:

The central conflict of "Malini" revolves around Malini's acceptance of Buddhism amidst the predominantly Hindu society. Her conversion to Buddhism is seen as a threat to Hinduism by the Brahmins and the king, leading to her banishment. This religious conflict reflects the tension between tradition and change, as well as the struggle to reconcile individual beliefs with societal expectations. Malini's adherence to Buddhism symbolizes her quest for spiritual enlightenment and inner peace, even at the cost of societal approval.

Friendship and Loyalty:

The relationship between Kemankar and Supriya serves as a focal point in the play, highlighting the complexities of friendship and loyalty. Despite their differing beliefs and actions, Kemankar and Supriya share a deep bond of friendship. However, their friendship is tested when Supriya betrays Kemankar by revealing his plans to the king. This betrayal raises questions about the nature of loyalty and the sacrifices individuals are willing to make for their beliefs or personal gain.

Sacrifice and Redemption:

The climax of the play revolves around Kemankar's impending execution and the role of forgiveness and redemption. Despite his betrayal, Supriya demonstrates remorse and a desire for redemption, ultimately sacrificing his life to save Kemankar. This act of selflessness highlights the transformative power of love and forgiveness, as well as the possibility of redemption even in the face of betrayal.

Gender Roles and Agency:

Malini's character challenges traditional gender roles and expectations, particularly regarding women's autonomy and agency. Despite being a princess, Malini asserts her independence and refuses to conform to societal norms that dictate her behavior and beliefs. Her decision to embrace Buddhism and assert her individuality reflects a desire for personal freedom and self-expression, highlighting the limitations imposed by patriarchal structures.

Symbolism and Allegory:

Throughout the play, Tagore employs symbolism and allegory to convey deeper themes and meanings. For example, Malini's acceptance of Buddhism symbolizes a departure from societal conventions and a search for spiritual truth. Similarly, the garden setting serves as a metaphor for growth, renewal, and transformation, reflecting the inner journeys of the characters as they grapple with moral dilemmas and personal conflicts.

In conclusion, "Malini" is a compelling exploration of religious conflict, friendship, sacrifice, and redemption. Through its richly drawn characters, nuanced dialogue, and thought-provoking themes, Tagore's play offers timeless insights into the complexities of human nature and the enduring quest for meaning and purpose in life.

3.1.6 Analysis

"Malini," a one-act play by Rabindranath Tagore, explores themes of religious conflict, moral ambiguity, and the struggle for personal autonomy within the context of Indian society. Set against the backdrop of Hindu-Buddhist tensions in ancient India, the play follows the journey of Malini, a young princess who defies societal norms and embraces Buddhism, much to the dismay of her family and community. As Malini navigates the complexities of her beliefs and relationships, she grapples with questions of identity, loyalty, and the pursuit of personal truth. Through its richly drawn characters, intricate plot, and thought-provoking themes, "Malini" offers readers a compelling exploration of the human condition and the enduring quest for meaning and purpose in life.

Religious Conflict and Cultural Identity:

Central to the narrative of "Malini" is the exploration of religious conflict and its impact on individual identity and cultural identity. The play is set during a time of significant religious upheaval in ancient India, as Hinduism and Buddhism vie for dominance in the region. Malini's decision to convert to Buddhism represents a departure from her Hindu upbringing and a rejection of the religious and cultural norms that govern her society. Tagore uses Malini's conversion as a lens through

which to examine the complexities of religious identity and cultural belonging, highlighting the tensions that arise when individuals challenge established belief systems and societal expectations.

Character Development and Moral Ambiguity:

One of the strengths of "Malini" lies in its richly developed characters, each of whom grapples with moral ambiguity and ethical dilemmas. Malini herself is portrayed as a complex figure torn between her personal beliefs and her sense of duty to her family and community. Throughout the play, Malini undergoes a process of self-discovery and transformation, as she confronts the consequences of her actions and wrestles with questions of faith and loyalty. Similarly, characters like Kemankar and Supriya navigate moral dilemmas that test the boundaries of their friendship and their principles. Tagore's nuanced portrayal of moral ambiguity adds depth and realism to the characters, allowing readers to empathize with their struggles and conflicts.

Critique of Patriarchal Society:

"Malini" offers a searing critique of patriarchal society and its constraints on women's autonomy and agency. Malini's defiance of societal norms and her refusal to conform to traditional gender roles challenge the patriarchal structures that seek to control and confine women. Throughout the play, Malini asserts her independence and asserts her own agency, even in the face of opposition from her family and community. Tagore's portrayal of Malini as a strong, independent woman who refuses to be silenced serves as a powerful statement against the oppression of women in Indian society.

Themes of Friendship and Betrayal:

Friendship and betrayal are central themes in "Malini," as the relationships between characters are tested and strained by conflicting loyalties and beliefs. The friendship between Kemankar and Supriya, in particular, is characterized by loyalty, trust, and ultimately betrayal. Supriya's decision to betray Kemankar by revealing his plans to the king raises questions about the nature of friendship and the moral compromises individuals may make in pursuit of their beliefs or self-interest. Through Kemankar

and Supriya's friendship, Tagore explores the complexities of human relationships, highlighting the fragility of trust and the consequences of betrayal.

Symbolism and Allegory:

Throughout "Malini," Tagore employs symbolism and allegory to convey deeper meanings and themes. The garden setting, for example, serves as a metaphor for growth, transformation, and renewal, reflecting the inner journeys of the characters as they grapple with moral dilemmas and personal conflicts. Similarly, Malini's acceptance of Buddhism symbolizes a departure from societal norms and a search for spiritual enlightenment and personal truth. Tagore's use of symbolism enriches the narrative, inviting readers to interpret the story on multiple levels and explore its deeper themes and meanings.

"Malini" by Rabindranath Tagore is a compelling exploration of religious conflict, moral ambiguity, and the struggle for personal autonomy within the context of Indian society. Through its well-developed characters, intricate plot, and thought-provoking themes, the play offers readers a nuanced and insightful portrayal of the human condition and the enduring quest for meaning and purpose in life. By examining questions of identity, loyalty, and the pursuit of personal truth, "Malini" invites readers to reflect on their own beliefs and values and consider the complexities of human relationships and societal expectations.

3.1.7 Assertion of Malini

Malini is the first Buddhist play of Rabindranath Tagore published in 1896. It is adapted from the Buddhist legend of Mahavastu Avadana which Tagore found in Rajendra Lal Mitra's The Sanskrit Buddhist literature in Nepal. The play is set against the historical backdrop of the conflict between entrenched Brahminism and rising Buddhism. In the original story, the king's daughter Malini, invites a Buddhist mendicant Kashyap to lunch. The Brahmins are enraged to see this and ask the king to banish her. Malini begs one week's time from her father. In the meantime all her brothers, ministers, and citizens of Varanasi were proselytised to Buddhism. The confrontation of the newly converts with the Brahmins, compels the latter to seek

king's protection. Still the Brahmins try to murder Kashyap, but they fail in their attempt. At last they themselves get destroyed.

Tagore has created the character of Malini as a bold heroine. She embraces the new-fangled religion of Buddha. Though born in a king's house, she is strong-willed enough to discard all the beautiful dresses and ornaments of gold. Her mother asks her: "why do you forget to put on dresses that befit your beauty and youth? Where are your ornaments? My beautiful dawn, how can you absent the touch of gold from your limbs?" (45). To this Malini gives a humble reply that she can find riches in penury also. Her mother, however, assists her in her choice. She answers the king that her daughter is free to "choose her own teachers and pursue her own path" (47). When the King tells her that his people are demanding Malini's banishment, the queen quips "are all truths confined only in their musty, old books? Let them fling away their worm-eaten creeds, and come and take their lessons from this child" and further she adds that "she is not a common girl,- she is a pure flame of fire. Some divine spirit has taken birth in her" (48). The mother has an affectionate solicitude for her daughter. When the queen does not find Malini in the palace she pleads the king to "go with your soldiers and search for her through all the town, from house to house. The citizens have stolen her. Banish them all. Empty the whole town, till they return her" (64). Tagore has delineated brave mothers who bolster up their daughters in times of need. They do not constrict to any unethical tradition but rebel against it. The mother of Prakriti in the play Chandalika is also a befitting example of female assertion Malini, as portrayed by Tagore, is a torch bearer and can be called a moral genius for extraordinary courage and integrity of character. She pleads her father to banish her "like the tree that sheds its flowers unheeding. Let me go out to all men, - for the world has claimed me from the king's hands" (49). She is ready to carry the burden of the world on her little shoulders. She has been compared by the queen with the image of light. In Tagore's plays the monopoly of the central figure by male characters gives way to the assertive heroines. The helpless Brahmins were reciting sacred verses and praying to the goddess for coming to their rescue. At that moment Malini appears before them with her divine gentleness and purity. She has a magnetic mien, exuding peace and compassion. She has the guts and grit to own the people who assembled to disown her. To Thompson, Malini remains an unconvincing character: "He (Tagore) has drawn the lines of her figure so tenuously

that her thoughts and actions are seen as if moving through a mist of dream” (27). Malini is ready to forsake all comforts of palatial abode. Tagore’s heroines do the task of battling against age-old customs, traditions and superstitions for which they have to come out of their house. They would know full well that this is a sorrowful world, but to feel its pain they have to step out of their threshold. Like Ila of *The King and the Queen*, Malini in the play *Malini* also tells the Brahmins that she had never looked out of the window of her palace: “I was born in a King’s house, never once looking out from my window” (*Sacrifice...* 57). Tagore makes his heroines come out of the eternal confinement. Kemankar in *Malini* is an embodiment of patriarchal society. He is a resolute Brahmin. He urges upon the clamorous Brahmins to keep firm in their resolution of banishment of the king’s daughter.

Tagore shows that it is very hard to squelch patriarchy. The brahmins’ tumultuous emotional exaltation cannot deflect the iron willed Kemankar. With his dour determination, he tries to explore a violent way to exterminate the new faith. Supriya, who is under the spell, wants to go with Malini but Kemankar restrains him. Kemankar is a symbol of patriarchy which does not brook any change in the old order. He forces upon Supriya the critical state of affairs when the continuance of the old order is at stake. Kemankar unfolds his plan of bringing soldiers from outside to quench this conflagration. The king and the prince, two different faces of Patriarchy, are firmly inclined to banish Malini. The king’s attitude reflects his political dilemma for he realizes that his daughter’s conversion poses an apparent threat to his throne. He tells Malini: “My daughter, storm clouds are gathering over the King’s house. The Brahmins now begin to acknowledge Malini as their mother. They call her a star which will lead them across the pathless sea of life. They beg her to save them from utter ruin which is threatening this world. They call her a goddess who has come down in exile from heaven. Malini in turn reassures them that she will never desert them. The Brahmins are of the view that she has carved a distinct niche in their hearts.

Malini does not behave like a girl of that time. She crosses the limits of her body as a woman. She outsteps the four walls of the house. Tagore’s heroines refuse to sit quietly in a corner. Tagore sets out to undermine the female archetype of the passive and docile woman yoked to household chores. Malini confides in her mother that she has “brought the outer world into your house. I seem to have lost the bounds of my

body. I am one with the life of this world” (66). No other writer of that era could have thought of making his heroine so bold and brave. Those were the times when girls were not allowed to go out of the house. The queen also tells Malini that she has no need to go out now.

Malini’s mother advises her to remain in the house as it is considered the proper place for women. In doing this she is not aware that she is unconsciously appropriating her daughter’s role in patriarchal society. In phallocratic culture there is the distinction between biological sex on the one hand and socially constructed gender on the other.

Tagore does not portray Malini as a goddess or a deity. She is a person with flesh and blood who fights the wrongs of the world. She is completely exhausted by her new experience. She tells her mother that she is “tired. My body is trembling. So vast is this world” (Sacrifice... 66). Tagore’s heroines do not want themselves to be above everyone else. They only seek equality and equanimity with honour.

The quality of independent thinking or ratiocination makes the woman of Tagore a class apart. Supriya tells Malini that he has shown the letter of Kemankar to the King, “in which he wrote that he was coming with a foreign army at his back, to wash away the new faith in blood, and to punish you with death” (71). At this Malini retorts that she has room enough in her house for him and his soldiers. She is fearless; she is more articulate in expressing her views than her male counterpart. As the play advances Malini becomes more human without any halo of divinity. Malini’s compassion makes the play a triumph of eternal human morality. Malini comes to know from the king that the punishment for Kemankar’s treason is death. She begs pardon for him and ultimately when Kemankar kills Supriya, she pleads for his forgiveness. Malini’s plea for forgiveness is juxtaposed with her father’s determination for vengeance. She manifests her cherished ideal of compassion for all, even for her dread enemy. It is a reflexion of her unpolluted psyche. Kemankar hates all religious creeds other than his own. Kriplani glorifies Kemankar’s obstinacy. For Kriplani the character of Kemankar is more convincing than that of Malini:

Malini, the King's daughter and a major Buddhist heroine, is squarely denounced by orthodoxy. But her sincerity saves her and Kemankar, her chief accuser, meets a right retribution. A Renaissance figure, Tagore, preferred modernity but could not dissociate completely from the traditional values. Tagore is taken to be the most brilliant creative genius of the Indian Renaissance, revealing his deep acquaintance with Sanskrit classics, Bengali, English and continental European literatures.

3.1.8 The Concept of Resistance

Various disciplines in humanities and social sciences reflect the concepts of resistance. This paper draws on particular ideas on resistance from Kasper Masse. Resistance, according to Masse, takes place when there is "a clash of interests between the people' and 'the power bloc'" (45). The difference of interests occurs when there are opposite thoughts and feelings between the authority and the people. As a result, people resist overtly. The critical insights of sociologists Hollander and Einwohner analyze the diversity of resistance. They write, "Scholars have used the term resistance to describe a wide variety of actions and behaviors at all levels of human social life (individual, collective, and institutional) and in a number of different settings, including political systems, entertainment and literature, and the workplace" (534). Scholars recognize it in diverse situations mostly through the issue of intention and recognition. In that case, the greatest emphasis lies on action and opposition in protest. Interpretation itself is an act of resistance. Miguel Tamen believes, "...expressions of resistance are always relative to intentions, purposes, and goals" (218). No act of resistance is purposeless, or purposeless act cannot be resistive. Consequently, breaking established norms or questioning against the authority is the beginning of the revolutionary journey. These theoretical insights and other critical thoughts have been used for the analysis of the new religion in order to explore Malini's journey of rebellion in the play Malini.

3.1.9 Arrival of a New Religion

Tagore's play Malini has established itself as a milestone to portray the true picture of religious conflict in colonial India. Religion entails in the mind of fellow Brahmins despite the diversity of art, culture, and literature in India. Brahmins are intolerant about the arrival of a new religion just as the ruling class cannot forgive the resistant for the sake of power. They perceive the new religion as an evil in the sacred land of

Kashi. Malini's transformation adduces Kemankar to act as an agent of the safety of his religion. Their mission is not successful in any sense. In other words, their unflinchingly rebellion lacks the combination of knowledge, power, and vision that is essential for a successful *résistance*. Malini launches the grand projection of her resistance by adopting the new religion inside the king's palace. This causes Kemankar to revolt against Buddhism to preserve his traditional religion. When the two equal forces come into the state of collision, chaos is sure to prevail. However, when the antagonism merges, then obviously it brings the positive vibes for the civilization. The entire course of human history and civilization have established this fundamental truth. There is growth in antagonism and conflicts. In this sense, the resistance of Malini and Kemankar lead the society forward with the new insights. The conflict, in the play, ends with the death of Supriya. His death from the hand of a Hindu religious activist Kemankar provides space for critical thinkers to assume that traditional religion has the influence of colonial rule.

Hinduism and Buddhism are two different religions according to their sacred principles. Everybody has the right to have opposite thoughts and feelings in the religious discourse. Religion conversion is a matter of personal choice. Sometimes, it brings dramatic topsy-turvy in a nation. But, killing people in the name of religion calls for immediate solution. Therefore, religion must integrate the people rather than dividing and killing each other in a nation. Tagore's idea of universal humanity flourishes only after spreading religious consciousness and harmony in the people so that they can respect each other's dignity. So the role of religion to spread the idea of universal humanism can be another better topic for further research.

3.1.9 To Sum UP

Tagore's "Malini" portrays the poignant journey of a woman grappling with love, duty, and societal expectations. It delves into themes of personal sacrifice, redemption, and the complexities of human relationships, offering a nuanced exploration of love and destiny.

Glossary

1. **Compassion**- Sympathy, empathy, kindness, mercy, benevolence
2. **Conversion**- Transformation, change, shift, transition, metamorphosis

3. **Exile**- Banishment, expulsion, deportation, displacement, ostracism
4. **Fundamentalism**- Dogmatism, orthodoxy, traditionalism, conservatism, purism
5. **Kingdom**- Realm, domain, empire, state, territory
6. **Orthodoxy**- Conformity, traditionalism, conventionality, adherence, faithfulness
7. **Rebellion**- Revolt, uprising, insurrection, mutiny, resistance
8. **Redemption**- Salvation, deliverance, atonement, absolution, reclamation
9. **Sincerity**- Honesty, genuineness, authenticity, candor, truthfulness
10. **Transformation**- Change, alteration, conversion, metamorphosis, transfiguration

Self-Assessment Question

CHOOSE THE BEST ANSWER (1 MARK)

1. What is the main theme of Rabindranath Tagore's "Malini"?
 - a) Love and sacrifice
 - b) Religious conflict
 - c) Adventure and exploration
 - d) Political intrigue
2. Who is Malini in Tagore's play?
 - a) A warrior princess
 - b) A young girl devoted to Buddhism
 - c) A rebellious peasant
 - d) A queen from a neighboring kingdom
3. What religion does Malini convert to, causing conflict in the play?
 - a) Christianity
 - b) Islam
 - c) Buddhism
 - d) Jainism
4. How do the Brahmins react to Malini's conversion?
 - a) They support her wholeheartedly
 - b) They ignore her decision
 - c) They demand her exile
 - d) They convert as well
5. What role does Supriya play in the story?

- a) Malini's father
 - b) A Brahmin who supports Malini
 - c) A prince from another land
 - d) A Buddhist monk
6. What is the outcome of Malini's spiritual quest?
- a) She is exiled from the kingdom
 - b) She renounces her new faith
 - c) She unites the kingdom through her beliefs
 - d) She leaves the palace to live as a commoner
7. Who wrote the play "Malini"?
- a) Rabindranath Tagore
 - b) Sarojini Naidu
 - c) Mahatma Gandhi
 - d) Sri Aurobindo
8. What is the reaction of Malini's parents to her new beliefs?
- a) They disown her
 - b) They support her
 - c) They are indifferent
 - d) They seek advice from religious leaders
9. What is the central conflict in "Malini"?
- a) A battle between neighboring kingdoms
 - b) The struggle between tradition and change
 - c) A love triangle
 - d) The quest for a hidden treasure
10. Which character represents the orthodox Brahmin views in the play?
- a) Malini
 - b) Kemankar
 - c) Supriya
 - d) The King

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING IN 250 WORDS (5 MARKS)

1. Would you call Supriya a betrayer? Give reasons for your answer.
2. Describe the characters of Malini.

3. Why does Kemankar kill his dear friend Supriya?
4. Why do you think Malini asked for her own banishment from the palace?
5. Were Brahmins demanding the banishment of Malini?

3.2 Karna and Kunti

3.2.1 Introduction

The poem is a dramatic dialogue between Kunti and Karna, where they express their emotions of love, regret, pride, anger, sorrow and forgiveness. Kunti tries to persuade Karna to join the Pandavas and accept his true identity, while Karna refuses to betray his foster parents and his friend Duryodhana, the leader of the Kauravas. Karna also questions Kunti's motives and morality for abandoning him and hiding his birth secret for so long. The poem explores the themes of fate, duty, honor, family and sacrifice.

Karna Kunti Sangbad was first published in 1900 in Tagore's collection of plays called Kahini. It is considered one of his finest works of poetry and drama. The poem has been translated into many languages and adapted into various forms of art and media.

3.2.2 Summary

The stage is set in Kunti's chamber, where she awaits the arrival of Karna, her long-lost son. Kunti, the mother of the Pandavas, is filled with a mix of anticipation and anxiety as she prepares to reunite with the son she had abandoned years ago. Karna, on the other hand, approaches the meeting with apprehension, unsure of what to expect.

As Karna enters, he is met with a mixture of emotions. On one hand, he is curious about the woman who claims to be his mother, but on the other hand, he is wary of opening old wounds and revisiting painful memories. Kunti, sensing her son's hesitation, approaches him with a mixture of warmth and trepidation.

The initial exchange between Kunti and Karna is fraught with tension, as both struggle to find the right words to express their emotions. Kunti, overcome with maternal love and regret, reaches out to Karna, hoping to bridge the gap that has

separated them for so many years. Karna, however, remains guarded, unsure of whether to trust the woman standing before him.

As the conversation progresses, Kunti begins to reveal the truth of Karna's birth, recounting the circumstances that led to his abandonment. She explains how she had invoked the Sun God Surya and conceived Karna before her marriage to King Pandu. Faced with the stigma of an unwed mother, Kunti had no choice but to give up her son, unaware of the pain it would cause him in later years.

Karna listens intently to his mother's words, his emotions in turmoil as he grapples with the revelation of his true parentage. He feels a mixture of anger, confusion, and longing, torn between his love for his mother and the bitterness of his past. Kunti, for her part, is filled with remorse for the pain she has caused her son and seeks his forgiveness.

Kunti and Karna's relationship has begun to thaw, as they tentatively reach out to one another in a gesture of reconciliation. Despite the years of separation and the wounds that have yet to heal, there is a glimmer of hope for a renewed bond between mother and son. Kunti continues to recount the story of Karna's birth, shedding light on the circumstances that led to his abandonment. She explains how, as a young maiden, she had been granted a boon by the sage Durvasa, which allowed her to invoke any deity and conceive a child. Curious to test the boon's power, Kunti had invoked the Sun God Surya and borne a son, whom she had named Karna.

However, faced with the stigma of an unwed mother, Kunti had been forced to abandon her newborn son, leaving him to be raised by a charioteer. Overwhelmed with guilt and remorse, Kunti had kept her son's true identity a secret, unaware of the pain it would cause him in later years.

As Karna listens to his mother's tale, he is filled with a mix of emotions. On one hand, he is deeply moved by Kunti's confession and the depth of her love for him. On the other hand, he is angry and resentful at having been denied the love and acceptance of his true family.

Kunti, for her part, is consumed with remorse for the pain she has caused her son and seeks his forgiveness. She pleads with Karna to accept her as his mother and join the Pandavas in their quest for justice and righteousness. However, Karna

remains torn between his loyalty to his friend Duryodhana and his desire to embrace his birthright.

Kunti makes a heartfelt plea to Karna, urging him to join the Pandavas in their quest for justice and righteousness. She reminds him of his noble lineage and the duty he owes to his true family, hoping to sway him from his allegiance to Duryodhana.

Karna, however, is torn between his loyalty to his friend Duryodhana and his desire to embrace his birthright. He struggles to reconcile his conflicting loyalties, torn between his duty as a warrior and his longing for acceptance and belonging.

As Kunti pleads with Karna to reconsider his allegiance, she appeals to his sense of honor and righteousness, hoping to sway him from his path. However, Karna remains steadfast in his resolve, unwilling to betray the friend who has stood by him throughout his life.

3.2.3 Analysis

"Karna and Kunti Sambad" by Rabindranath Tagore is a poetic play that offers a unique interpretation of the emotional encounter between Karna and his mother Kunti from the Indian epic Mahabharata. Tagore's rendition delves into the complexities of human relationships, the interplay of fate and identity, and the enduring power of maternal love.

Historical Context:

Rabindranath Tagore, a towering figure in Bengali literature and a Nobel laureate in Literature, lived during a period of significant social and political change in India. His works often reflect the cultural, spiritual, and philosophical milieu of his time, drawing inspiration from Indian mythology, folklore, and classical literature. The Mahabharata, an ancient Indian epic, has been a perennial source of inspiration for writers and artists across generations due to its rich tapestry of characters, moral dilemmas, and timeless themes.

Overview of the Play:

"Karna and Kunti Sambad" unfolds as a poignant dialogue between Karna, the tragic hero of the Mahabharata, and Kunti, his birth mother. The play explores the emotional turmoil and moral dilemmas faced by both characters as they confront their shared past and uncertain future. Set against the backdrop of the impending

Kurukshetra War, the dialogue between Karna and Kunti serves as a microcosm of the larger conflict between duty and destiny, loyalty and righteousness.

Themes Explored:

1. Maternal Love and Conflict:

- Tagore delves deeply into the theme of maternal love and the intricate bond between mother and child. Kunti's revelation of her identity as Karna's mother unravels a myriad of conflicting emotions, including guilt, regret, and longing. Karna, torn between his loyalty to Duryodhana and his newfound relationship with Kunti, grapples with the complexities of filial affection and duty.

- The play highlights the universal nature of maternal love, transcending social boundaries and conventional norms. Despite Karna's illegitimate birth and societal stigma, Kunti's love for her son remains unwavering, underscoring the redemptive power of maternal affection.

2. Identity and Destiny:

- Central to the play is the theme of identity and its profound implications on one's destiny. Karna's discovery of his true lineage challenges his sense of self and forces him to confront the existential questions of identity and belonging. As a child of destiny, born of divine lineage yet raised in obscurity, Karna embodies the eternal struggle between fate and free will.

- Tagore explores the notion of self-discovery and inner transformation as Karna grapples with his dual identity as both Kunti's son and Duryodhana's ally. The play underscores the transformative power of self-awareness and acceptance in shaping one's destiny.

3. Duty and Loyalty:

- The conflict between duty and loyalty lies at the heart of Karna's moral dilemma. Bound by his allegiance to Duryodhana, Karna is torn between his duty as a warrior and his filial obligations towards Kunti and the Pandavas. Tagore portrays the ethical complexities of Karna's predicament, highlighting the tension between personal loyalty and moral conscience.

- Through Karna's character, Tagore interrogates the notion of duty as a moral imperative versus duty as a social obligation. Karna's unwavering loyalty to Duryodhana, despite his inner turmoil, raises profound questions about the nature of loyalty and the limits of personal sacrifice.

4. Redemption and Forgiveness:

- The theme of redemption permeates the play as Kunti seeks forgiveness for her past actions and Karna grapples with the possibility of reconciliation. Tagore portrays forgiveness as a transformative act of healing and reconciliation, transcending the barriers of pride and resentment.

- Karna's ultimate act of redemption on the battlefield, where he chooses to forsake his armor and face Arjuna unarmed, symbolizes his journey towards spiritual liberation and self-realization. Tagore underscores the redemptive power of forgiveness in overcoming past grievances and forging a path towards reconciliation and inner peace.

Character Analysis:

1. Karna:

- Karna emerges as the tragic hero of the play, grappling with the complexities of his identity and moral conscience. Tagore portrays Karna as a noble and valiant warrior, burdened by the weight of his past and the uncertainty of his future. Karna's unwavering loyalty to Duryodhana is juxtaposed against his deep-seated longing for maternal affection and acceptance.

- Throughout the play, Karna embodies the archetypal figure of the outsider, marginalized by society yet endowed with a profound sense of dignity and self-respect. His journey towards self-discovery and self-realization reflects the universal quest for identity and meaning in the face of adversity.

2. Kunti:

- Kunti is depicted as a complex and multi-dimensional character, torn between her maternal instincts and her sense of duty as a queen and a mother of the Pandavas. Tagore portrays Kunti as a figure of profound wisdom and compassion, seeking reconciliation and forgiveness for her past actions.

- Kunti's revelation of her identity as Karna's mother serves as a catalyst for emotional catharsis and spiritual renewal, allowing her to confront her own guilt and remorse. Her journey towards self-forgiveness mirrors Karna's quest for redemption, highlighting the transformative power of forgiveness in healing past wounds.

3.2.4 Literary Techniques

1. Symbolism:

- Tagore employs symbolism to enrich the thematic depth and emotional resonance of the play. Symbols such as the sun, representing Karna's divine lineage, and the armor, symbolizing Karna's sense of identity and pride, serve as potent metaphors for the inner conflict and spiritual journey of the characters.

- The recurring motif of light and darkness underscores the moral ambiguity of human nature and the eternal struggle between good and evil. Tagore uses symbolism to evoke deeper layers of meaning and insight, inviting readers to contemplate the timeless truths embedded within the narrative.

2. Imagery:

- Tagore's use of vivid imagery enhances the dramatic impact of the play, immersing readers in the rich tapestry of emotions and sensations. Descriptions of the battlefield, with its swirling dust and clashing swords, evoke a sense of urgency and intensity, heightening the dramatic tension of the narrative.

- The imagery of nature, with its cycles of birth and rebirth, serves as a powerful metaphor for the themes of transformation and renewal. Tagore's lyrical prose and evocative imagery create a vivid and immersive world, inviting readers to experience the emotional depth and complexity of the characters' inner lives.

3.2.5 Critical Analysis

"Karna and Kunti Sambad" by Rabindranath Tagore is a masterpiece of Indian literature, offering a profound exploration of human emotions, moral dilemmas, and existential themes. Through the poignant dialogue between Karna and Kunti from the Mahabharata, Tagore delves into the complexities of maternal love, identity, duty, and redemption. This critical analysis aims to delve deeply into the thematic, literary,

and philosophical dimensions of Tagore's poetic play, unraveling its layers of meaning and significance.

Historical and Cultural Context:

Rabindranath Tagore, a towering figure in Bengali literature and the first non-European to win the Nobel Prize in Literature, lived during a period of profound social and political upheaval in India. Born in 1861, Tagore witnessed the transition from colonial rule to independence, and his works reflect the cultural, spiritual, and philosophical ethos of his time. The Mahabharata, an ancient Indian epic, serves as a timeless repository of moral wisdom and spiritual insight, inspiring generations of poets, writers, and thinkers.

Overview of the Play:

"Karna and Kunti Sambad" unfolds as a dramatic dialogue between Karna, the tragic hero of the Mahabharata, and Kunti, his birth mother. Set against the backdrop of the Kurukshetra War, the play explores the emotional turmoil and moral conflicts faced by both characters as they confront their shared past and uncertain future. Tagore's poetic rendition breathes new life into the age-old tale, infusing it with lyrical beauty and philosophical depth.

3.2.6 Thematic Analysis

1. Maternal Love and Conflict:

- At the heart of the play lies the theme of maternal love and the intricate bond between mother and child. Kunti's revelation of her identity as Karna's mother unleashes a torrent of conflicting emotions, including guilt, regret, and longing. Tagore portrays the complexity of maternal love, transcending social boundaries and conventional norms.

- Karna's conflicted emotions reflect the universal longing for maternal affection and acceptance, despite the circumstances of his birth. His reunion with Kunti

symbolizes the eternal bond between mother and child, underscoring the redemptive power of love and forgiveness.

2. Identity and Destiny:

- Central to the play is the theme of identity and its profound implications on one's destiny. Karna's discovery of his true lineage challenges his sense of self and forces him to confront existential questions of identity and belonging. Tagore explores the journey of self-discovery and inner transformation as Karna grapples with his dual identity.

- The play raises profound questions about fate, free will, and the nature of destiny. Karna's acceptance of his destiny as a warrior, despite his illegitimate birth, reflects his transcendence of societal constraints and his alignment with a higher purpose.

3. Duty and Loyalty:

- The conflict between duty and loyalty lies at the heart of Karna's moral dilemma. Bound by his allegiance to Duryodhana, Karna wrestles with his filial obligations towards Kunti and the Pandavas. Tagore portrays the ethical complexities of Karna's predicament, highlighting the tension between personal loyalty and moral conscience.

- Through Karna's character, Tagore interrogates the nature of duty as a moral imperative versus duty as a social obligation. Karna's unwavering loyalty to Duryodhana underscores the complexity of human loyalties and the limits of personal sacrifice.

4. Redemption and Forgiveness:

- The theme of redemption permeates the play as Kunti seeks forgiveness for her past actions and Karna grapples with the possibility of reconciliation. Tagore portrays forgiveness as a transformative act of healing and reconciliation, transcending the barriers of pride and resentment.

- Karna's ultimate act of redemption on the battlefield, where he chooses to face Arjuna unarmed, symbolizes his journey towards spiritual liberation and self-realization. Tagore underscores the redemptive power of forgiveness in overcoming past grievances and forging a path towards reconciliation and inner peace.

Character Analysis:

1. Karna:

- Karna emerges as the central figure in the play, embodying the archetype of the tragic hero torn between conflicting loyalties and moral imperatives. Tagore portrays Karna as a noble and valiant warrior, burdened by the weight of his past and the uncertainty of his future.

- Karna's journey towards self-discovery and self-realization mirrors the universal quest for identity and meaning in the face of adversity. His unwavering loyalty to Duryodhana, despite his inner turmoil, highlights the complexities of human loyalties and the ethical dilemmas inherent in warfare.

2. Kunti:

- Kunti is depicted as a figure of wisdom and compassion, seeking reconciliation and forgiveness for her past actions. Tagore portrays Kunti as a symbol of maternal love and sacrifice, willing to confront her own guilt and remorse for the sake of her son.

- Kunti's reunion with Karna symbolizes the redemptive power of forgiveness and the transformative nature of maternal love. Her journey towards self-forgiveness mirrors Karna's quest for redemption, highlighting the interconnectedness of their destinies.

Literary Techniques:

1. Symbolism:

- Tagore employs symbolism to enrich the thematic depth and emotional resonance of the play. Symbols such as the sun, representing Karna's divine lineage, and the armor, symbolizing his sense of identity and pride, serve as potent metaphors for the inner conflict and spiritual journey of the characters.

- The recurring motif of light and darkness underscores the moral ambiguity of human nature and the eternal struggle between good and evil. Tagore's use of

symbolism invites readers to contemplate the deeper layers of meaning embedded within the narrative.

2. Imagery:

- Tagore's use of vivid imagery creates a rich and immersive world, evoking a sense of urgency and intensity in the midst of battle. Descriptions of the battlefield, with its swirling dust and clashing swords, transport readers into the heart of the action, heightening the dramatic tension of the narrative.

- The imagery of nature, with its cycles of birth and rebirth, serves as a powerful metaphor for the themes of transformation and renewal. Tagore's lyrical prose and evocative imagery invite readers to experience the emotional depth and complexity of the characters' inner lives.

3. Dialogue:

- The dialogue between Karna and Kunti serves as the narrative backbone of the play, driving the plot forward and revealing the inner thoughts and motivations of the characters. Tagore's dialogue is marked by its poetic beauty and philosophical depth, capturing the nuances of human emotion and existential angst.

- Through their conversations, Karna and Kunti grapple with profound questions of identity, duty, and redemption, engaging in a philosophical dialogue that transcends the confines of time and space. Tagore's dialogue invites readers to ponder the timeless truths embedded within the narrative and to reflect on the complexities of the human condition.

"Karna and Kunti Sambad" by Rabindranath Tagore is a timeless masterpiece that continues to resonate with readers across generations. Through its exploration of themes such as maternal love, identity, duty, and redemption, Tagore offers profound insights into the human condition and the eternal struggle for meaning and purpose. Through his lyrical prose, vivid imagery, and philosophical dialogue, Tagore invites readers to contemplate the deeper truths of existence and to confront the complexities of their own inner lives. As a testament to the enduring power of literature, "Karna and Kunti Sambad" continues to inspire and provoke thought,

reminding us of the timeless wisdom embedded within the pages of the Mahabharata and the human heart.

3.2.7 Analyzing the dialogue in "Karna and Kunti"

Analyzing the dialogue in "Karna and Kunti Sambah" by Rabindranath Tagore involves dissecting the exchanges between Karna and Kunti to uncover the underlying themes, character motivations, and philosophical insights conveyed through their interactions. Let's delve into the dialogue to explore its nuances and significance:

Opening Exchange:

The dialogue begins with Karna encountering Kunti, his birth mother, on the battlefield. Kunti, recognizing Karna as her son, expresses her desire to reveal the truth of his parentage. Karna, initially skeptical and defensive, questions Kunti's motives and the timing of her revelation. This opening exchange sets the stage for the emotional conflict and moral dilemma that will unfold throughout the play.

Revelation of Identity:

As Kunti discloses the truth of Karna's birth, the dialogue takes on a heightened emotional intensity. Karna's initial disbelief gives way to a profound sense of betrayal and longing as he grapples with the implications of his true lineage. Kunti's confession triggers a flood of conflicting emotions within Karna, challenging his sense of self and his loyalties.

Conflict and Resolution:

The heart of the dialogue lies in the emotional confrontation between Karna and Kunti, as they confront the past and reconcile their differences. Karna's anger and resentment towards Kunti gradually give way to a sense of acceptance and forgiveness as he comes to terms with his identity and destiny. Kunti, in turn, seeks forgiveness for her past actions and offers Karna the opportunity for redemption.

Philosophical Reflections:

Throughout the dialogue, Tagore interweaves philosophical reflections on the nature of identity, fate, and morality. Karna's existential angst and Kunti's maternal wisdom serve as vehicles for exploring timeless truths about the human condition. The dialogue invites readers to ponder the complexities of moral choice and the interconnectedness of individual destinies within the larger tapestry of cosmic order.

Symbolic Imagery:

Tagore employs symbolic imagery to deepen the thematic resonance of the dialogue. Metaphors such as the sun, representing Karna's divine lineage, and the battlefield, symbolizing the moral ambiguity of human existence, imbue the dialogue with layers of meaning and symbolic significance. Through evocative imagery, Tagore invites readers to contemplate the deeper truths embedded within the narrative.

In conclusion, the dialogue in "Karna and Kunti Sambad" serves as a vehicle for exploring profound themes of identity, destiny, and redemption. Through the exchanges between Karna and Kunti, Tagore delves into the complexities of human emotion and moral choice, offering insights into the eternal quest for meaning and purpose. The dialogue resonates with readers as a timeless exploration of the human condition, inviting contemplation and reflection on the deeper truths of existence.

3.2.8 The Depths of Human Emotion

In the rich tapestry of Indian mythology and literature, the Mahabharata stands as one of the most profound and enduring epics, offering a treasure trove of moral wisdom, spiritual insight, and timeless narratives. Among its myriad characters and episodes, the story of Karna occupies a unique place, resonating with readers across generations with its poignant exploration of identity, loyalty, and destiny. Rabindranath Tagore, the Nobel laureate poet and playwright, masterfully reimagines this timeless tale in his poetic play, "Karna and Kunti Sambad", breathing new life into the age-old narrative and inviting readers to delve into the depths of human emotion and moral dilemma.

At its core, "Karna and Kunti Sambah" revolves around the emotional confrontation between Karna, the legendary warrior, and Kunti, his birth mother, just before the cataclysmic Kurukshetra War. Karna, raised as the son of a charioteer and unaware of his true parentage, encounters Kunti on the battlefield, where she reveals the truth of his birth. What ensues is a poignant dialogue that explores themes of maternal love, identity, duty, and redemption, illuminating the complex interplay of human relationships and moral choices.

The opening lines of the play set the stage for the emotional drama that is about to unfold. Karna, having encountered Kunti on the battlefield, initially reacts with skepticism and disbelief as she claims to be his mother. His words betray a sense of wounded pride and existential confusion, as he grapples with the implications of Kunti's revelation. For Karna, who has long identified himself as the son of a charioteer and earned renown as a warrior through his own merit, the idea of being the son of a queen comes as a shock, challenging his sense of self and his place in the world.

Kunti, on the other hand, exudes a quiet resolve and maternal compassion as she seeks to reunite with her long-lost son. Her words are suffused with a mixture of longing and regret, as she recounts the circumstances of Karna's birth and the choices she made as a young woman. Despite the weight of her past mistakes, Kunti's love for her son shines through, underscoring the timeless bond between mother and child that transcends social norms and personal failings.

As the dialogue between Karna and Kunti unfolds, Tagore delves deep into the inner worlds of his characters, exploring the conflicting emotions and moral dilemmas that shape their destinies. Karna's initial anger and resentment towards Kunti gradually give way to a sense of acceptance and forgiveness as he comes to terms with the truth of his birth. His journey towards self-discovery is marked by moments of profound introspection and existential angst, as he grapples with the complexities of his identity and the choices that define his destiny.

Similarly, Kunti's character undergoes a transformation as she seeks redemption for her past actions and offers Karna the opportunity for reconciliation. Her willingness to confront her own guilt and remorse reflects a deep sense of maternal love and moral integrity, as she strives to mend the broken bonds of family and forge a path towards healing and forgiveness. Through their emotional journey, Tagore underscores the redemptive power of love and forgiveness, reminding readers of the inherent capacity for growth and transformation that lies within each human heart.

Embedded within the dialogue are profound philosophical reflections on the nature of identity, duty, and destiny. Karna's existential angst and Kunti's maternal wisdom serve as vehicles for exploring timeless truths about the human condition and the eternal quest for meaning and purpose. As Karna grapples with questions of fate and free will, duty and loyalty, he confronts the fundamental paradoxes of human existence, wrestling with the mysteries of life and death, joy and sorrow, love and loss.

The play also abounds with rich symbolism and evocative imagery, which deepen its thematic resonance and emotional impact. Symbols such as the sun, representing Karna's divine lineage, and the battlefield, symbolizing the moral ambiguity of human existence, serve as potent metaphors for the inner conflict and spiritual journey of the characters. Through vivid descriptions of the natural world and lyrical prose, Tagore creates a vivid and immersive setting that invites readers to enter into the emotional landscape of the play and experience its profound truths firsthand.

"Karna and Kunti Sambad" by Rabindranath Tagore stands as a testament to the enduring power of literature to illuminate the depths of the human soul and to provoke thought and reflection on the deeper mysteries of life. Through its poignant exploration of themes such as maternal love, identity, duty, and redemption, the play invites readers to embark on a transformative journey of self-discovery and moral awakening, reminding us of the timeless wisdom embedded within the pages of the Mahabharata and the human heart.

3.2.9 Character Sketch

Karna

Karna, the tragic hero of the Mahabharata and a central figure in Indian mythology, stands as one of the most complex and compelling characters in literature. Born to Kunti, the queen of Hastinapura, and Surya, the sun god, Karna's life is marked by a series of trials and tribulations that test his character and challenge his sense of identity and belonging. Through his noble deeds, unwavering loyalty, and tragic fate, Karna embodies the timeless struggle between duty and destiny, honor and betrayal, love and loss.

From his humble beginnings as the abandoned son of a charioteer to his rise as a formidable warrior and ally of the Kauravas, Karna's journey is a testament to the power of resilience and determination in the face of adversity. Despite facing discrimination and social ostracism due to his low birth, Karna rises above his circumstances through his exceptional skill in archery, his unwavering commitment to his principles, and his indomitable spirit.

Karna's character is defined by a deep sense of honor and integrity, rooted in his unwavering adherence to his word and his steadfast commitment to his principles. Despite being offered the throne of Hastinapura and the status of a Kshatriya prince by Kunti, Karna remains loyal to his friend and benefactor, Duryodhana, refusing to betray the bonds of friendship and loyalty that bind them together. His steadfastness in the face of temptation and his willingness to sacrifice his own happiness for the sake of his friend's ambitions highlight the depth of his character and the strength of his convictions.

Throughout the Mahabharata, Karna's character is depicted as a tragic figure caught between conflicting loyalties and moral imperatives. His unwavering loyalty to Duryodhana, despite his awareness of the latter's flaws and injustices, underscores his sense of duty and his commitment to his principles. However, this loyalty

ultimately leads to his downfall, as he becomes embroiled in the Kauravas' war against the Pandavas and meets his tragic end on the battlefield of Kurukshetra.

Karna's relationship with his birth mother, Kunti, is a central aspect of his character development and emotional journey. Their reunion in "Karna and Kunti Sambad" is a poignant exploration of maternal love, forgiveness, and reconciliation, as Kunti seeks to atone for her past mistakes and Karna grapples with the truth of his parentage. Despite his initial anger and resentment towards Kunti for abandoning him as a child, Karna ultimately finds it in his heart to forgive her and accept her as his mother, highlighting the transformative power of love and forgiveness.

Karna's tragic fate is sealed by a series of events that unfold throughout the Mahabharata, culminating in his fateful encounter with Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. Despite his valor and skill as a warrior, Karna is ultimately betrayed by fate and abandoned by those he holds dear, leading to his untimely demise at the hands of his own brother. His death is a poignant reminder of the fragility of human life and the inevitability of fate, as well as a testament to the enduring power of courage and sacrifice in the face of adversity.

In conclusion, Karna stands as a timeless symbol of courage, integrity, and resilience in the face of adversity. His character embodies the timeless struggle between duty and destiny, honor and betrayal, love and loss, inviting readers to reflect on the complexities of human nature and the eternal quest for meaning and purpose in life. Through his noble deeds, unwavering loyalty, and tragic fate, Karna continues to inspire and resonate with readers across generations, reminding us of the enduring power of the human spirit to overcome even the greatest of challenges.

Kunti

Kunti, a pivotal figure in the Mahabharata, possesses a character as multifaceted as the epic itself. Her journey from a young princess to a wise matriarch is marked by love, sacrifice, and the weight of responsibility. Kunti's character arc navigates through the complexities of family dynamics, loyalty, and the moral dilemmas

inherent in her role as both a queen and a mother. In this comprehensive exploration, we delve into the depths of Kunti's character, tracing her evolution and impact on the epic narrative.

Born into the royal family of Kuntibhoja, Kunti's early life is steeped in privilege and expectation. Her beauty and intelligence are remarked upon, hinting at the potential she holds within her. However, her destiny takes an unforeseen turn when she receives a boon from the sage Durvasa, granting her the ability to invoke any deity and bear children by them. This divine gift becomes the defining feature of Kunti's life, shaping her journey as a mother and a queen.

Kunti's marriage to King Pandu of Hastinapura propels her into the heart of the epic's political landscape. Despite the challenges of navigating a complex court and the expectations placed upon her as a queen, Kunti embraces her responsibilities with grace and dignity. Her marriage to Pandu is not without its trials, particularly with his inability to father children due to a curse. However, Kunti's divine boon becomes a means to fulfill her wifely duties and ensure the continuation of the royal lineage.

As a mother, Kunti's journey is one of sacrifice and unconditional love. Her bond with her five sons, the Pandavas, is forged through the trials and tribulations they face together. From the moment she invokes the gods to bear children, Kunti's maternal instincts are put to the test as she navigates the complexities of raising princes in a world fraught with political intrigue and familial discord. Her relationship with each of her sons is unique, shaped by their individual personalities and destinies.

With Yudhishtira, her eldest son, Kunti shares a special bond marked by mutual respect and admiration. She sees in him the embodiment of righteousness and wisdom, qualities she instills in him from a young age. Bhima, her second son, is the epitome of strength and valor, traits that Kunti nurtures and encourages as he grows into a formidable warrior. Arjuna, her third son, holds a special place in Kunti's heart, his exceptional skill in archery and devotion to duty earning her admiration and pride.

Nakula and Sahadeva, the youngest of Kunti's sons, occupy a more nuanced space in her maternal affections. Despite being born of different fathers, Kunti treats all her sons equally, ensuring that they receive the same love and attention. Her role as a mother extends beyond mere affection, as she imparts to her sons the values of honor, integrity, and sacrifice that will guide them on their journey through life.

Throughout the epic, Kunti's character is defined by her unwavering devotion to her sons and her commitment to upholding dharma, or righteousness. Her role as a mother is not limited to nurturing her children, but extends to guiding them on the path of virtue and righteousness. Despite the challenges and sacrifices she faces, Kunti remains steadfast in her commitment to her sons, serving as a source of strength and inspiration for them in times of adversity.

Kunti's character also undergoes a transformation as the epic progresses, evolving from a dutiful wife and mother to a wise matriarch and advisor. Her experiences throughout the Mahabharata shape her worldview and deepen her understanding of the complexities of human nature and the moral dilemmas inherent in life. As the war approaches, Kunti's wisdom and foresight become invaluable assets to the Pandavas, as they navigate the treacherous waters of politics and warfare.

During the Kurukshetra War, Kunti's character reaches its zenith, as she grapples with the devastating consequences of the conflict and the toll it takes on her family. Despite her grief and sorrow, Kunti remains resolute in her commitment to upholding dharma and ensuring the victory of righteousness. Her courage and resilience in the face of adversity serve as a beacon of hope for the Pandavas, as they strive to fulfill their destiny and restore peace to the kingdom.

In the aftermath of the war, Kunti's character undergoes a period of introspection and reflection, as she comes to terms with the loss and devastation wrought by the conflict. Her wisdom and compassion shine through as she comforts her sons and helps them rebuild their shattered lives. Despite the challenges they face, Kunti remains a pillar of strength and stability for her family, guiding them through the turbulent aftermath of the war with grace and dignity.

In conclusion, Kunti stands as a towering figure in the Mahabharata, her character embodying the virtues of courage, resilience, and maternal love. From her humble beginnings as a young princess to her rise as a wise matriarch, Kunti's journey is a testament to the enduring power of love and sacrifice in the face of adversity. Her legacy lives on in the hearts of her sons and in the annals of Indian mythology, a shining example of the strength and nobility of the human spirit.

Duryodhana

Duryodhana, the eldest son of King Dhritarashtra and the primary antagonist in the Mahabharata, is a complex and enigmatic character whose actions and motivations shape the course of the epic narrative. From his early years as a prince of Hastinapura to his eventual demise in the Kurukshetra War, Duryodhana's character undergoes a profound evolution, marked by ambition, jealousy, and ultimately, tragic downfall.

Born into the royal family of Hastinapura, Duryodhana is raised alongside his cousins, the Pandavas, with whom he shares a contentious relationship from childhood. Despite being the eldest among his brothers, Duryodhana's claim to the throne is contested due to the Pandavas' lineage and their superior prowess in various fields. This rivalry forms the foundation of Duryodhana's character, fueling his ambition and driving him to seek power and dominance at any cost.

As Duryodhana grows older, his resentment towards the Pandavas intensifies, fueled by jealousy and a sense of entitlement. He perceives their success and popularity as a threat to his own ambitions and becomes increasingly determined to undermine and subjugate them by any means necessary. His interactions with the Pandavas are characterized by manipulation, deceit, and betrayal, as he plots to thwart their aspirations and secure his own position as heir to the throne.

Duryodhana's character is defined by his arrogance and pride, which often blind him to the consequences of his actions and lead to his downfall. Despite the counsel of wise advisors such as Vidura and Bhishma, Duryodhana's stubbornness and refusal

to heed reason ultimately contribute to his undoing. His obsession with power and status blinds him to the values of honor and righteousness, leading him down a path of self-destruction and moral decay.

Throughout the Mahabharata, Duryodhana's character is portrayed as a tragic figure whose downfall is as inevitable as it is lamentable. Despite his flaws and shortcomings, Duryodhana is not devoid of redeeming qualities, as evidenced by his courage, determination, and loyalty to his allies. His unwavering commitment to his cause and his willingness to fight to the bitter end command a begrudging respect, even from his adversaries.

In the final showdown of the Kurukshetra War, Duryodhana emerges as a formidable warrior, leading his army into battle with unmatched ferocity and resolve. His courage and valor on the battlefield earn him the admiration of friend and foe alike, as he faces his destiny with unflinching determination. However, his hubris and arrogance ultimately prove to be his undoing, as he falls in a climactic duel with Bhima, his long-standing rival and nemesis.

In death, Duryodhana's character achieves a tragic poignancy, as he reflects on the futility of his ambitions and the emptiness of his victories. Despite his aspirations for power and glory, Duryodhana's legacy is marred by defeat and disgrace, leaving behind a legacy of sorrow and regret. His character serves as a cautionary tale about the perils of unchecked ambition and the consequences of succumbing to the darker impulses of human nature.

In conclusion, Duryodhana stands as a complex and tragic figure in the Mahabharata, whose character embodies the timeless struggle between ambition and morality, pride and humility. His journey from a proud prince to a fallen warrior serves as a powerful reminder of the inherent fragility of power and the importance of humility and integrity in the face of adversity. Despite his flaws and failings, Duryodhana's character remains a compelling and enduring presence in the epic narrative, challenging readers to confront the complexities of human nature and the consequences of our choices.

3.2.10 To Sum Up

In "Karna and Kunti," Tagore reinterprets the Mahabharata episode with depth and sensitivity, examining the intricate mother-son relationship between Kunti and Karna. It explores themes of identity, loyalty, and the moral dilemmas faced by characters in epic mythology, highlighting Tagore's insightful storytelling and philosophical reflections on human nature and destiny.

Glossary

1. **Dialogue**- Conversation, discourse, exchange, discussion
2. **Monologue**- Soliloquy, speech, address, oration
3. **Confrontation**- Encounter, face-off, clash, conflict
4. **Identity**- Selfhood, individuality, persona, character
5. **Duty**- Responsibility, obligation, commitment, allegiance
6. **Maternal Love**- Motherly affection, maternal care, motherly devotion, maternal bond
7. **Emotional Intensity**- Deep feeling, passion, fervor, emotional depth
8. **Reconciliation**- Resolution, settlement, rapprochement, reunion
9. **Betrayal**- Treachery, disloyalty, deceit, faithlessness
10. **Lament**-Grieve, mourn, sorrow, bewail

Self-Assessment Question

CHOOSE THE BEST ANSWER (1 MARK)

1. Who is the main protagonist in "Karna and Kunti Sangbad"?
A) Duryodhana
B) Kunti
C) Arjuna
D) Karna
2. What significant truth does Kunti reveal to Karna?
A) He is the rightful king of Hastinapura
B) He is her son, born of the Sun God Surya
C) He is actually a Kshatriya warrior
D) He has divine powers
3. What emotional conflict does Karna face after learning about his true parentage?
A) Whether to continue his battle with Arjuna

- B) Whether to betray Duryodhana
- C) Whether to join the Pandavas or remain loyal to Duryodhana**
- D) Whether to reveal his secret to the public
4. How does Kunti describe her feelings about abandoning Karna at birth?
- A) Indifference **B) Regret and sorrow**
- C) Relief D) Pride
5. What argument does Kunti use to persuade Karna to join the Pandavas?
- A) The promise of wealth and power
- B) His rightful place as the eldest Pandava**
- C) Threats of divine punishment
- D) Emotional blackmail
6. How does Karna respond to Kunti's plea?
- A) He immediately agrees to join the Pandavas
- B) He refuses and remains loyal to Duryodhana**
- C) He becomes indifferent to the war
- D) He decides to leave for a pilgrimage
7. What is the main theme explored in "Karna and Kunti Sangbad"?
- A) The pursuit of power **B) The conflict between duty and family loyalty**
- C) The importance of education D) The glory of war
8. Which of the following best describes Karna's character in the play?
- A) Treacherous and deceitful **B) Loyal and honorable**
- C) Cowardly and indecisive D) Greedy and ambitious
9. What does Kunti seek from Karna during their meeting?
- A) His forgiveness** B) His wealth
- C) His support in the war D) His promise to protect the Pandavas
10. How does the play "Karna and Kunti Sangbad" end?
- A) Karna kills Kunti
- B) Kunti and Karna part ways with unresolved emotions**
- C) Karna agrees to a truce with the Pandavas
- D) Karna ascends to the throne

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING IN 500 WORDS (10 MARKS)

1. What is the central theme of "Karna and Kunti Sangbad"?
2. Describe the relationship between Karna and Kunti as depicted in the dialogue.
3. Why does Kunti reveal Karna's true identity to him?
4. What is Karna's reaction to learning about his true parentage?
5. How does Tagore explore the themes of duty and loyalty in the dialogue?

Further Reading

Chakrabarati, Santosh. *Studies in Tagore*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, 2004.

Tagore Rabindranath, *Karna and Kunti*, Collected Poems and Plays, London, Macmillan, 1950.

Tagore Rabindranath, *The King and The Queen, Sacrifice & other plays*, Madras, Macmillan, 1985.

Iyengar K. E. S., *Indian Writing in English*, Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1990.

<https://www.scribd.com/presentation/499638039/DIALOGUE-BETWEEN-KARNA-AND-KUNTI-PPT2>

<https://dotnepal.com/malini-summary/>

UNIT IV

SHORT STORY

SECTION 4.1: THE RENUNCIATION

4.1.1 Introduction

"Renunciation" is a story about a "nice gentleman" who goes all out of his way to unite in marriage two young persons in love ... for revenge! After the lovers are married, Pyarishankar, the "nice gentleman", lets out a secret that sours the marriage.

Before we go into the details, please note that "Renunciation", published in Youthaffairz, is only a poor translation of "Tyaag", a short story by Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore. The objective is to urge readers to read the original story or better translations of it. "Tyaag" was first published around 1892.

4.1.2 Text

I

It was a night of full moon early in the month of Phalgun. The youthful spring was everywhere sending forth its breeze laden with the fragrance of mango-blossoms. The melodious notes of an untiring papiya (One of the sweetest songsters in Bengal. Anglo-Indian writers have nicknamed it the "brain-fever bird," which is a sheer libel.), concealed within the thick foliage of an old lichi tree by the side of a tank, penetrated a sleepless bedroom of the Mukerji family. There Hemanta now restlessly twisted a lock of his wife's hair round his finger, now beat her churl against her wristlet until it tinkled, now pulled at the chaplet of flowers about her head, and left it hanging over her face. His mood was that of an evening breeze which played about a favourite flowering shrub, gently shaking her now this side, now that, in the hope of rousing her to animation.

But Kusum sat motionless, looking out of the open window, with eyes immersed in the moonlit depth of never-ending space beyond. Her husband's caresses were lost on her.

At last Hemanta clasped both the hands of his wife, and, shaking them gently, said: "Kusum, where are you? A patient search through a big telescope would reveal you only as a small speck-you seem to have receded so far away. O, do come closer to me, dear. See how beautiful the night is."

Kusum turned her eyes from the void of space towards her husband, and said slowly: "I know a mantra (A set of magic words.), which could in one moment shatter this spring night and the moon into pieces."

"If you do," laughed Hemanta, "pray don't utter it. If any mantra of yours could bring three or four Saturdays during the week, and prolong the nights till 5 P.M. the next day, say it by all means."

Saying this, he tried to draw his wife a little closer to him. Kusum, freeing herself from the embrace, said: "Do you know, to-night I feel a longing to tell you what I promised to reveal only on my death-bed. To-night I feel that I could endure whatever punishment you might inflict on me."

Hemanta was on the point of making a jest about punishments by reciting a verse from Jayadeva, when the sound of an angry pair of slippers was heard approaching rapidly. They were the familiar footsteps of his father, Haribar Mukerji, and Hemanta, not knowing what it meant, was in a flutter of excitement.

Standing outside the door Harihar roared out: "Hemanta, turn your wife out of the house immediately."

Hemanta looked at his wife, and detected no trace of surprise in her features. She merely buried her face within the palms of her hands, and, with all the strength and intensity of her soul, wished that she could then and there melt into nothingness. It was the same papiya whose song floated into the room with the south breeze, and no one heard it. Endless are the beauties of the earth-but alas, how easily everything is twisted out of shape.

II

Returning from without, Hemanta asked his wife: "Is it true?"

"It is," replied Kusum.

"Why didn't you tell me long ago?"

"I did try many a time, and I always failed. I am a wretched woman."

"Then tell me everything now."

Kusum gravely told her story in a firm unshaken voice. She waded barefooted through fire, as it were, with slow unflinching steps, and nobody knew how much she was scorched. Having heard her to the end, Hemanta rose and walked out.

Kusum thought that her husband had gone, never to return to her again. It did not strike her as strange. She took it as naturally as any other incident of everyday life—so dry and apathetic had her mind become during the last few moments. Only the world and love seemed to her as a void and make-believe from beginning to end. Even the memory of the protestations of love, which her husband had made to her in days past, brought to her lips a dry, hard, joyless smile, like a sharp cruel knife which had cut through her heart. She was thinking, perhaps, that the love which seemed to fill so much of one's life, which brought in its train such fondness and depth of feeling, which made even the briefest separation so exquisitely painful and a moment's union so intensely sweet, which seemed boundless in its extent and eternal in its duration, the cessation of which could not be imagined even in births to come—that this was that love! So feeble was its support! No sooner does the priesthood touch it than your "eternal" love crumbles into a handful of dust! Only a short while ago Hemanta had whispered to her: "What a beautiful night!" The same night was not yet at an end, the same yapiya was still warbling, the same south breeze still blew into the room, making the bed-curtain shiver; the same moonlight lay on the bed next the open window, sleeping like a beautiful heroine exhausted with gaiety. All this was unreal! Love was more falsely dissembling than she herself!

III

The next morning Hemanta, fagged after a sleepless night, and looking like one distracted, called at the house of Peari Sankar Ghosal. "What news, my son?" Peari Sankar greeted him.

Hemanta, flaring up like a big fire, said in a trembling voice: "You have defiled our caste. You have brought destruction upon us. And you will have to pay for it." He could say no more; he felt choked.

"And you have preserved my caste, presented my ostracism from the community, and patted me on the back affectionately!" said Peari Sankar with a slight sarcastic smile.

Hemanta wished that his Brahmin-fury could reduce Peari Sankar to ashes in a moment, but his rage burnt only himself. Peari Sankar sat before him unscathed, and in the best of health.

"Did I ever do you any harm?" demanded Hemanta in a broken voice.

"Let me ask you one question," said Peari Sankar. "My daughter—my only child—what harm had she done your father? You were very young then, and probably never heard. Listen, then. Now, don't you excite yourself. There is much humour in what I am going to relate.

"You were quite small when my son-in-law Nabakanta ran away to England after stealing my daughter's jewels. You might truly remember the commotion in the village when he returned as a barrister five years later. Or, perhaps, you were unaware of it, as you were at school in Calcutta at the time. Your father, arrogating to himself the headship of the community, declared that if I sent my daughter to her husband's home, I must renounce her for good, and never again allow her to cross my threshold. I fell at your father's feet, and implored him, saying: 'Brother, save me this once. I will make the boy swallow cow-dung, and go through the prayaschittam ceremony. Do take him back into caste.' But your father remained obdurate. For my part, I could not disown my only child, and, bidding good-bye to my village and my kinsmen, I betook myself to Calcutta. There, too, my troubles followed me. When I had made every arrangement for my nephew's marriage, your father stirred up the girl's people, and they broke the match off. Then I took a solemn vow that, if there was a drop of Brahmin blood flowing in my veins, I would avenge myself. You understand the business to some extent now, don't you? But wait a little longer. You will enjoy it, when I tell you the whole story; it is interesting.

"When you were attending college, one Bipradas Chatterji used to live next door to your lodgings. The poor fellow is dead now. In his house lived a child-widow called Kusum, the destitute orphan of a Kayestha gentleman. The girl was very pretty, and the old Brahmin desired to shield her from the hungry gaze of college students. But for a young girl to throw dust in the eyes of her old guardian was not at all a difficult task. She often went to the top of the roof, to hang her washing out to dry, and, I believe, you found your own roof best suited for your studies. Whether you two spoke to each other, when on your respective roofs, I cannot tell, but the girl's

behaviour excited suspicion in the old man's mind. She made frequent mistakes in her household duties, and, like Parvati (The wife of Shiva the Destroyer), engaged in her devotions, began gradually to renounce food and sleep. Some evenings she would burst into tears in the presence of the old gentleman, without any apparent reason.

"At last he discovered that you two saw each other from the roofs pretty frequently, and that you even went the length of absenting yourself from college to sit on the roof at mid-day with a book in your hand, so fond had you grown suddenly of solitary study. Bipradas came to me for advice, and told me everything. 'Uncle,' said I to him, 'for a long while you have cherished a desire to go on a pilgrimage to Benares. You had better do it now, and leave the girl in my charge. I will take care of her.'

"So he went. I lodged the girl in the house of Sripati Chatterji, passing him off as her father. What happened next is known to you. I feel a great relief to-day, having told you everything from the beginning. It sounds like a romance, doesn't it? I think of turning it into a book, and getting it printed. But I am not a writing-man myself. They say my nephew has some aptitude that way—I will get him to write it for me. But the best thing would be, if you would collaborate with him, because the conclusion of the story is not known to me so well."

Without paying much attention to the concluding remarks of Peari Sankar, Hemanta asked: "Did not Kusum object to this marriage?"

"Well," said Peari Sankar, "it is very difficult to guess. You know, my boy, how women's minds are constituted. When they say 'no,' they mean 'yes.' During the first few days after her removal to the new home, she went almost crazy at not seeing you. You, too, seemed to have discovered her new address somehow, as you used to lose your way after starting for college, and loiter about in front of Sripati's house. Your eyes did not appear to be exactly in search of the Presidency College, as they were directed towards the barred windows of a private house, through which nothing but insects and the hearts of moon-struck young men could obtain access. I felt very sorry for you both. I could see that your studies were being seriously interrupted, and that the plight of the girl was pitiable also.

"One day I called Kusum to me, and said: 'Listen to me, my daughter. I am an old man, and you need feel no delicacy in my presence. I know whom you desire at

heart. The young man's condition is hopeless too. I wish I could bring about your union.' At this Kusum suddenly melted into tears, and ran away. On several evenings after that, I visited Sripati's house, and, calling Kusum to me, discussed with her matters relating to you, and so I succeeded in gradually overcoming her shyness. At last, when I said that I would try to bring about a marriage, she asked me: 'How can it be?' 'Never mind,' I said, 'I would pass you off as a Brahmin maiden.' After a good deal of argument, she begged me to find out whether you would approve of it. 'What nonsense,' replied I, 'the boy is well-nigh mad as it were, what's the use of disclosing all these complications to him? Let the ceremony be over smoothly and then—all's well that ends well. Especially, as there is not the slightest risk of its ever leaking out, why go out of the way to make a fellow miserable for life?'

"I do not know whether the plan had Kusum's assent or not. At times she wept, and at other times she remained silent. If I said, 'Let us drop it then,' she would become very restless. When things were in this state, I sent Sripati to you with the proposal of marriage; you consented without a moment's hesitation. Everything was settled.

"Shortly before the day fixed, Kusum became so obstinate that I had the greatest difficulty in bringing her round again. 'Do let it drop, uncle,' she said to me constantly. 'What do you mean, you silly child,' I rebuked her, 'how can we back out now, when everything has been settled?'

"Spread a rumour that I am dead,' she implored. 'Send me away somewhere.'

"What would happen to the young man then?' said I. 'He is now in the seventh heaven of delight, expecting that his long cherished desire would be fulfilled to-morrow; and to-day you want me to send him the news of your death. The result would be that to-morrow I should have to bear the news of his death to you, and the same evening your death would be reported to me. Do you imagine, child, that I am capable of committing a girl-murder and a Brahmin-murder at my age?'

"Eventually the happy marriage was celebrated at the auspicious moment, and I felt relieved of a burdensome duty which I owed to myself. What happened afterwards you know best."

"Couldn't you stop after having done us an irreparable injury?" burst out Hemanta after a short silence. "Why have you told the secret now?"

With the utmost composure, Peari Sankar replied: "When I saw that all arrangements had been made for the wedding of your sister, I said to myself: 'Well, I have fouled the caste of one Brahmin, but that was only from a sense of duty. Here, another Brahmin's caste is imperilled, and this time it is my plain duty to prevent it.' So I wrote to them saying that I was in a position to prove that you had taken the daughter of a sudra to wife."

Controlling himself with a gigantic effort, Hemanta said: "What will become of this girl whom I shall abandon now? Would you give her food and shelter?"

"I have done what was mine to do," replied Peari Sankar calmly. "It is no part of my duty to look after the discarded wives of other people. Anybody there? Get a glass of cocoanut milk for Hemanta Babu with ice in it. And some pan too."

Hemanta rose, and took his departure without waiting for this luxurious hospitality.

IV

It was the fifth night of the waning of the moon—and the night was dark. No birds were singing. The lichi tree by the tank looked like a smudge of ink on a background a shade less deep. The south wind was blindly roaming about in the darkness like a sleep-walker. The stars in the sky with vigilant unblinking eyes were trying to penetrate the darkness, in their effort to fathom some profound mystery.

No light shone in the bedroom. Hemanta was sitting on the side of the bed next the open window, gazing at the darkness in front of him. Kusum lay on the floor, clasping her husband's feet with both her arms, and her face resting on them. Time stood like an ocean hushed into stillness. On the background of eternal night, Fate seemed to have painted this one single picture for all time—annihilation on every side, the judge in the centre of it, and the guilty one at his feet.

The sound of slippers was heard again. Approaching the door, Harihar Mukerji said: "You have had enough time,—I can't allow you more. Turn the girl out of the house."

Kusum, as she heard this, embraced her husband's feet with all the ardour of a lifetime, covered them with kisses, and touching her forehead to them reverentially, withdrew herself.

Hemanta rose, and walking to the door, said: "Father, I won't forsake my wife."

"What!" roared out Harihar, "would you lose your caste, sir?"

"I don't care for caste," was Hemanta's calm reply.

"Then you too I renounce."

4.1.3 Summary

The present-day readers could find a few things in the story somewhat bewildering. So, it needs to be clarified that the story pertains to the period when the caste system was dominant. Orthodox Brahmins could not marry outside their caste; they could also not travel abroad. Anyone who violated these norms faced the prospect of being denounced by the community.

Pyarishankar was so ostracized. His son-in-law had stolen his daughter's jewelry to fund his stay abroad to study law. The son-in-law returned a few years later as a barrister. Now that her husband was back, the woman naturally wished to go to his home. But, Harihar Mukherjee from the neighbourhood instigated the villagers to ostracize Pyarishankar if he did not renounce his daughter for this act. It seems the theft of the ornaments was a lesser crime than the son-in-law's temerity in going abroad for studies. Of course, a father could not renounce his daughter, and the community ostracized Pyarishankar; he had to leave the village and go and settle in Kolkata. Harihar caused a wedding break-up in Pyarishankar's family by revealing the latter's ostracization. Pyarishankar vowed to take revenge.

Harihar's son, Hemanta, was in love with a girl who everyone believed was the daughter of Bipradas Chatterjee, a Brahmin. She was an orphan, a child widow, and from a lower caste; Bipradas had adopted her. Pyarishankar brought about the marriage between the lovers. The girl knew that the marriage was against the norms of society, and she refused to marry. But Pyarishankar convinced her that marriage was the only solution, else her lover could even end his life.

After the marriage, Pyarishankar revealed the girl's secret. The revelation led to the breaking up of the wedding of Hemanta's younger sister because the family's caste had become "polluted". Pyarishankar, thus, took his revenge.

Harihar storms into Hemanta's room even while the latter is declaring his love to his wife. Harihar wants his son to renounce his wife and send her away. After learning from his father the reason, Hemanta's love for his wife shatters to pieces. He goes to

Pyarishankar and demands an explanation for his deed. Pyarishankar tells Hemanta the entire story. Pyarishankar also tells Hemanta that now that he has taken his revenge, he was not concerned about Kusum's (Hemanta's wife) future if Hemanta abandoned her. In the end, love wins. Hemanta tells his father that he will not renounce his wife. The story is all about renunciation. When Harihar learns about Hemanta's decision, he forsakes his son.

4.1.4 Analysis

In *The Renunciation* by Rabindranath Tagore we have the theme of class, prejudice, shame, revenge, letting go, love, bravery and tradition. Taken from his *The Hungry Stones and Other Stories* collection the story is narrated in the third person by an unnamed narrator and after reading the story the reader realises that Tagore may be exploring the theme of class. Both Hemanta and his father Harihar are both Brahmins (members of the highest Hindu caste) while Kusum is the daughter of a Sudra (lowest of the four Hindu castes). Due to the perception at the time a member of the Brahmin caste considered themselves to be better than someone from the Sudra caste and as such marriage between either castes (or social classes) was deemed improper. Something that is clear to the reader by Harihar's wish for Kusum to leave his house. It is as though Kusum is a stain on Harihar's family based solely on the fact that she is of a lower caste than Harihar and Hemanta. Which may leave some readers to suggest that Harihar is being prejudicial based solely on Kusum's social class. If anything Harihar does not wish to have his family associated with Kusum as it will bring shame onto his family. Something that Kusum herself feels when the truth about her background is revealed. Kusum feels ashamed.

This may be important as in reality Kusum has done nothing wrong. She may not have adhered to accepted societal norms at the time but Tagore may be questioning these same norms in the story. As it is clear to the reader that Hemanta loves Kusum. Peari Sankar's character is also interesting as he appears to be driven by a desire to get revenge on Harihar. So strong is Peari Sankar's desire for revenge that he does not take into consideration that he may be hurting people. His battle is with Harihar yet he uses Hemanta and Kusum to exact revenge on Harihar. Though some critics might suggest that Peari Sankar has acted selfishly and thought only of himself it is more likely that Tagore is highlighting how important the caste system is

to Peari Sankar. Peari Sankar has been ostracised by Harihar not through any fault of his own but due to the fact that he wished to protect his daughter. As any father might wish to do. How deeply affected Peari Sankar was is noticeable by the fact that he did not forget what Harihar did to him.

In fact Tagore is most likely suggesting that the caste system was so important to Peari Sankar that he refused to let go of what Harihar had done to him. Even when he went to start a new life in Calcutta. Similarly Harihar also intervened and halted a possible marriage between one of Peari Sankar's nephews and a girl. Again due to the accepted societal norms that came with the caste system. If anything Peari Sankar was looked upon in an unfavourable light based solely on his desire to protect his daughter. How strongly Peari Sankar really felt is noticeable by the fact that he is prepared to use Kusum as a pawn to get revenge on Harihar. However it might also be important to remember that Kusum is in love with Hemanta. Though she does have doubts about marrying him which is interesting as Tagore may be suggesting that Kusum is aware of the caste system and knows she is of a lower caste than Hemanta. Which in many people's eyes would mean that the marriage is unacceptable.

However so strong are Kusum's feelings for Hemanta that she hides the fact that she is of a lower caste and still marries Hemanta. This might be important as it suggests that for Kusum love is more important than anything society might say or think about her marriage to Hemanta. It might also be significant that Peari Sankar relishes in the fact that he has brought shame onto Harihar. It is as though revenge is sweet for Peari Sankar. He has waited a long time to exact revenge on Harihar. What is also interesting about the end of the story is the fact that Hemanta refuses to leave Kusum. This may be important as it would appear that Hemanta's love for Kusum is more important to Hemanta than what society might think about Kusum being of a lower caste. If anything Hemanta is turning his back on accepted societal norms and following his heart. The result being that Harihar renounces Hemanta. Making life harder on Hemanta but the point Tagore may be making is that Hemanta has done the right thing. He has stood by the woman he loves regardless of her social class. Life might become difficult for Hemanta but at least he will have the woman he loves and who loves him by his side. The values of Harihar and Peari Sankar are not the same values of Hemanta. He is bravely breaking with tradition.

4.1.5 Character Sketch

"The Renunciation" by Rabindranath Tagore is a story that encapsulates the complexities of human relationships, societal norms, and the eternal struggle between tradition and individual autonomy. In this character-driven narrative, Tagore delves into the lives of individuals caught in the web of societal expectations, exploring themes of love, sacrifice, and the pursuit of personal integrity. Let us embark on a detailed exploration of the characters and their roles in this timeless tale.

1. Pyarishankar:

Pyarishankar is the fulcrum around which the story revolves. A man of quiet dignity and inner strength, Pyarishankar embodies the virtues of compassion, resilience, and ultimately, renunciation. Ostracized by his community due to his son-in-law's transgressions, Pyarishankar's response to adversity is marked by a stoic acceptance of his fate. Despite facing injustice and humiliation, he refrains from seeking revenge and instead channels his energies into acts of kindness and compassion. Pyarishankar's character epitomizes the theme of renunciation, as he transcends societal barriers in the name of love and integrity.

2. Harihar:

Harihar serves as the primary antagonist in the story, his actions driven by rigid adherence to societal norms and a sense of self-righteousness. As the instigator of Pyarishankar's ostracism and the subsequent dissolution of Hemanta's family, Harihar embodies the darker aspects of human nature, including jealousy, prejudice, and vindictiveness. His character serves as a cautionary tale, highlighting the destructive consequences of clinging blindly to tradition and social status.

3. Hemanta:

Hemanta represents the struggle between personal desire and societal expectations, torn between his love for Kusum and the pressures exerted by his family and community. Initially swayed by his father's demands and societal norms, Hemanta's character arc is defined by a gradual awakening to his own convictions

and values. His decision to defy his father and stand by his wife in the face of adversity underscores his growth and maturation throughout the narrative.

4. Kusum:

Kusum emerges as a symbol of resilience and strength in the face of adversity. An orphaned child widow from a lower caste, Kusum defies societal expectations and prejudice to pursue her love for Hemanta. Despite the challenges and obstacles she faces, Kusum remains steadfast in her convictions, refusing to compromise her integrity or sacrifice her happiness for the sake of societal acceptance. Her character serves as a beacon of hope and inspiration, highlighting the transformative power of love and courage.

5. Other Characters:

In addition to the central characters, "The Renunciation" features a cast of supporting characters who play significant roles in shaping the narrative. These include members of Pyarishankar's community, such as his son-in-law and neighbors, whose actions and attitudes contribute to the unfolding drama. Each character serves as a reflection of broader societal attitudes and values, adding depth and complexity to the story.

Through the interplay of these characters, Tagore crafts a nuanced exploration of human nature and the complexities of social interaction. "The Renunciation" is not merely a story of personal triumph or tragedy but a profound meditation on the enduring power of love, resilience, and the pursuit of truth and integrity. It invites readers to reflect on their own values and choices, challenging them to confront the constraints of tradition and embrace the transformative potential of compassion and understanding.

4.1.6 Theme

Love and Sacrifice:

One of the central themes of "The Renunciation" is the transformative power of love and sacrifice. Throughout the story, we witness characters making profound sacrifices for the sake of love, whether it is Pyarishankar accepting his daughter's

marriage to a man of lower caste, or Hemanta defying societal expectations to stand by his beloved. These acts of selflessness and devotion highlight the profound impact that love can have on individuals, inspiring them to transcend social barriers and societal norms in pursuit of happiness and fulfillment.

At the same time, the story also explores the darker side of love, depicting the sacrifices and compromises that individuals are often compelled to make in the name of societal acceptance and familial duty. Hemanta's initial reluctance to defy his father's wishes and Pyarishankar's quiet acceptance of his daughter's marriage highlight the complexities and conflicts inherent in romantic relationships, underscoring the tension between personal desires and societal expectations.

Societal Norms and Expectations:

Another prominent theme in "The Renunciation" is the oppressive nature of societal norms and expectations, particularly within the context of the caste system prevalent during the period in which the story is set. The rigid hierarchy of caste dictates not only social interactions but also imposes restrictions on love and relationships, forcing individuals to conform to established norms or face ostracism and condemnation.

The ostracism faced by Pyarishankar due to his son-in-law's transgressions serves as a stark reminder of the harsh consequences of defying societal norms. His quiet acceptance of his fate reflects the resignation of individuals trapped within the confines of tradition and social hierarchy, highlighting the profound impact that societal expectations can have on individual lives.

However, the story also celebrates acts of defiance and resistance against oppressive societal norms, as characters like Pyarishankar and Hemanta challenge established conventions in pursuit of love and personal integrity. Their refusal to bow down to societal pressures and their willingness to sacrifice their own happiness for the sake of love serve as powerful examples of individual autonomy and agency in the face of social injustice.

Renunciation and Redemption:

At its core, "The Renunciation" is a story about the transformative power of renunciation and redemption. Through the experiences of its characters, the story explores the profound impact of letting go of worldly attachments and embracing a life of selflessness and compassion. Pyarishankar's quiet acceptance of his fate and his refusal to seek revenge against those who have wronged him exemplify the virtues of renunciation, highlighting the transformative power of forgiveness and compassion.

Similarly, Hemanta's decision to defy his father and stand by his beloved represents a moment of personal redemption, as he chooses love and integrity over societal expectations and familial duty. His journey from compliance to defiance underscores the transformative potential of individual agency and autonomy, highlighting the inherent value of personal integrity and moral courage in the face of adversity.

"The Renunciation" by Rabindranath Tagore is a timeless tale that explores the complexities of love, sacrifice, and societal expectations. Through its richly drawn characters and evocative narrative, the story offers profound insights into the human condition and the enduring quest for meaning and fulfillment. By grappling with themes of love, sacrifice, renunciation, and redemption, "The Renunciation" invites readers to reflect on their own values and choices, challenging them to confront the constraints of tradition and embrace the transformative potential of compassion, integrity, and individual autonomy.

4.1.7 Exploring the Depths of Love, Sacrifice, and Societal Norms

Rabindranath Tagore, the Nobel laureate and eminent literary figure of India, crafted numerous stories that delve into the complexities of human relationships and societal norms. "The Renunciation" stands as one of his masterpieces, a poignant tale that resonates with readers across cultures and generations. Set against the backdrop of a society governed by rigid caste hierarchies and oppressive social norms, the story unfolds with themes of love, sacrifice, and the quest for personal integrity. In this essay, we will embark on a journey into the depths of Tagore's narrative, exploring the characters, themes, and underlying messages that make "The Renunciation" a timeless classic.

Part 1: Setting the Stage

Rabindranath Tagore's "The Renunciation" is situated within the historical and cultural context of early 20th-century India, a time marked by profound social and political change. The story unfolds in a society deeply entrenched in the caste system, where individuals are bound by rigid social hierarchies and oppressive norms. Against this backdrop, Tagore introduces us to a cast of characters whose lives are shaped by the constraints of tradition and the pursuit of personal freedom and happiness.

The story begins with Pyarishankar, a man of quiet dignity and inner strength, who finds himself at odds with his community due to his son-in-law's transgressions. Ostracized by society, Pyarishankar's response to adversity is marked by stoic acceptance rather than bitterness or resentment. Despite facing injustice and humiliation, he refrains from seeking revenge and instead channels his energies into acts of kindness and compassion.

Part 2: Characters and Relationships

At the heart of "The Renunciation" are the characters whose lives intersect in profound ways, shaping the narrative and illuminating the themes explored by Tagore. Pyarishankar emerges as the central figure, embodying the virtues of resilience, forgiveness, and compassion. His quiet acceptance of his fate serves as a powerful testament to the transformative power of renunciation, challenging readers to confront the constraints of tradition and embrace the transformative potential of love and integrity.

Opposing Pyarishankar is Harihar, the primary antagonist in the story, whose actions are driven by rigid adherence to societal norms and a sense of self-righteousness. As the instigator of Pyarishankar's ostracism and the subsequent dissolution of Hemanta's family, Harihar embodies the darker aspects of human nature, including jealousy, prejudice, and vindictiveness. His character serves as a cautionary tale,

highlighting the destructive consequences of clinging blindly to tradition and social status.

Hemanta, torn between his love for Kusum and the pressures exerted by his family and community, grapples with the tension between personal desire and societal expectations. His journey from compliance to defiance underscores the transformative potential of individual agency and autonomy, highlighting the inherent value of personal integrity and moral courage in the face of adversity.

Kusum emerges as a symbol of resilience and strength in the face of adversity, defying societal expectations and prejudice to pursue her love for Hemanta. Despite the challenges and obstacles she faces, Kusum remains steadfast in her convictions, refusing to compromise her integrity or sacrifice her happiness for the sake of societal acceptance. Her character serves as a beacon of hope and inspiration, highlighting the transformative power of love and courage.

Part 3: Themes and Symbolism

At its core, "The Renunciation" is a meditation on the complexities of love, sacrifice, and societal expectations. Through the experiences of its characters, the story explores the profound impact of letting go of worldly attachments and embracing a life of selflessness and compassion. Pyarishankar's quiet acceptance of his fate and his refusal to seek revenge exemplify the virtues of renunciation, highlighting the transformative power of forgiveness and compassion.

The theme of love and sacrifice is central to the narrative, as characters navigate the complexities of romantic relationships in the face of societal expectations and familial duty. Hemanta's decision to defy his father and stand by his beloved represents a moment of personal redemption, as he chooses love and integrity over societal expectations and familial duty. His journey underscores the transformative potential of individual agency and autonomy, challenging readers to confront the constraints of tradition and embrace the transformative potential of compassion, integrity, and personal autonomy.

Rabindranath Tagore's "The Renunciation" is a timeless masterpiece that explores the depths of human relationships and societal norms. Through its richly drawn characters and evocative narrative, the story offers profound insights into the human condition and the enduring quest for meaning and fulfillment. By grappling with themes of love, sacrifice, renunciation, and redemption, "The Renunciation" invites readers to reflect on their own values and choices, challenging them to confront the constraints of tradition and embrace the transformative potential of compassion, integrity, and personal autonomy.

4.1.8 Review

In "The Renunciation" by Rabindranath Tagore we have the theme of class, prejudice, shame, revenge, letting go, love, bravery and tradition. Taken from his "The Hungry Stones and Other Stories" collection the story is narrated in the third person by an unnamed narrator and after reading the story the reader realises that Tagore may be exploring the theme of class. Both Hemanta and his father Harihar are both Brahmins (members of the highest Hindu caste) while Kusum is the daughter of a Sudra (lowest of the four Hindu castes). Due to the perception at the time a member of the Brahmin caste considered themselves to be better than someone from the Sudra caste and as such marriage between either castes (or social classes) was deemed improper. Something that is clear to the reader by Harihar's wish for Kusum to leave his house. It is as though Kusum is a stain on Harihar's family based solely on the fact that she is of a lower caste than Harihar and Hemanta. Which may leave some readers to suggest that Harihar is being prejudicial based solely on Kusum's social class. If anything Harihar does not wish to have his family associated with Kusum as it will bring shame onto his family. Something that Kusum herself feels when the truth about her background is revealed. Kusum feels ashamed.

This may be important as in reality Kusum has done nothing wrong. She may not have adhered to accepted societal norms at the time but Tagore may be questioning these same norms in the story. As it is clear to the reader that Hemanta loves Kusum. Peari Sankar's character is also interesting as he appears to be driven by a desire to get revenge on Harihar. So strong is Peari Sankar's desire for revenge that

he does not take into consideration that he may be hurting people. His battle is with Harihar yet he uses Hemanta and Kusum to exact revenge on Harihar. Though some critics might suggest that Peari Sankar has acted selfishly and thought only of himself it is more likely that Tagore is highlighting how important the caste system is to Peari Sankar. Peari Sankar has been ostracised by Harihar not through any fault of his own but due to the fact that he wished to protect his daughter. As any father might wish to do. How deeply affected Peari Sankar was is noticeable by the fact that he did not forget what Harihar did to him.

In fact Tagore is most likely suggesting that the caste system was so important to Peari Sankar that he refused to let go of what Harihar had done to him. Even when he went to start a new life in Calcutta. Similarly Harihar also intervened and halted a possible marriage between one of Peari Sankar's nephews and a girl. Again due to the accepted societal norms that came with the caste system. If anything Peari Sankar was looked upon in an unfavourable light based solely on his desire to protect his daughter. How strongly Peari Sankar really felt is noticeable by the fact that he is prepared to use Kusum as a pawn to get revenge on Harihar. However it might also be important to remember that Kusum is in love with Hemanta. Though she does have doubts about marrying him which is interesting as Tagore may be suggesting that Kusum is aware of the caste system and knows she is of a lower caste than Hemanta. Which in many people's eyes would mean that the marriage is unacceptable.

However so strong are Kusum's feelings for Hemanta that she hides the fact that she is of a lower caste and still marries Hemanta. This might be important as it suggests that for Kusum love is more important than anything society might say or think about her marriage to Hemanta. It might also be significant that Peari Sankar relishes in the fact that he has brought shame onto Harihar. It is as though revenge is sweet for Peari Sankar. He has waited a long time to exact revenge on Harihar. What is also interesting about the end of the story is the fact that Hemanta refuses to leave Kusum. This may be important as it would appear that Hemanta's love for Kusum is more important to Hemanta than what society might think about Kusum being of a lower caste. If anything Hemanta is turning his back on accepted societal norms and following his heart. The result being that Harihar renounces Hemanta. Making life

harder on Hemanta but the point Tagore may be making is that Hemanta has done the right thing. He has stood by the woman he loves regardless of her social class. Life might become difficult for Hemanta but at least he will have the woman he loves and who loves him by his side. The values of Harihar and Peari Sankar are not the same values of Hemanta. He is bravely breaking with tradition.

4.1.9 To Sum UP

In "The Renunciation," Tagore explores the tension between worldly desires and spiritual fulfillment through the protagonist's journey towards renunciation. It delves into the complexities of human ambition, societal expectations, and the quest for inner peace, offering a poignant reflection on the choices we make in pursuit of personal and spiritual liberation.

Glossary

1. **Renunciation**- Abandonment, relinquishment, surrender, giving up
2. **Asceticism**- Self-discipline, austerity, abstinence, self-denial
3. **Desire**- Longing, craving, yearning, aspiration
4. **Personal Fulfillment**- Self-realization, satisfaction, fulfillment, achievement
5. **Inner Peace**- Tranquility, serenity, calmness, harmony
6. **Comfort**- Ease, luxury, contentment, well-being
7. **Loyalty**- Faithfulness, devotion, allegiance, fidelity
8. **Bond**- Connection, tie, link, relationship
9. **Resolution**- Determination, decision, resolve, firmness
10. **Transcendence**- Exceeding, surpassing, going beyond, rising above

Self-Assessment Question

CHOOSE THE BEST ANSWER (1 MARK)

1. Why does the community ostracize Pyarishankar?
 - A) Because his son-in-law stole jewelry
 - B) Because his son-in-law traveled abroad for studies**
 - C) Because he married outside his caste
 - D) Because he opposed traditional norms
2. What instigates Pyarishankar to take revenge on Harihar?

- A) A personal insult
B) Financial dispute
C) Being ostracized due to Harihar's influence
D) A land conflict
3. How does Hemanta react when he learns about Kusum's caste?
A) He immediately renounces her
B) He confronts Pyarishankar for an explanation
C) He leaves the village with Kusum
D) He accepts her without any conflict
4. What is the primary reason Harihar wants Hemanta to renounce his wife?
A) Because she is not wealthy
B) Because she comes from a lower caste
C) Because she is older than Hemanta
D) Because she cannot have children
5. What decision does Hemanta make at the end of the story?
A) He renounces his wife
B) He leaves the village with his father
C) He stands by his wife, Kusum
D) He becomes a monk
6. What consequence does Pyarishankar's revenge have on Harihar's family?
A) Their social status improves
B) They are excommunicated from the community
C) They gain wealth and prosperity
D) They reconcile with Pyarishankar
7. Why does Pyarishankar arrange the marriage between Hemanta and the girl believed to be Bipradas Chatterjee's daughter?
A) To seek forgiveness from Harihar
B) To fulfill his revenge plan
C) To honor the girl's wishes
D) To strengthen the bond between the families
8. What does Pyarishankar reveal after Hemanta's marriage to the girl?
A) His own secret love affair
B) The girl's true caste background

- C) The theft of jewelry by Harihar's son
D) The arrival of a wealthy relative
9. How does Hemanta initially react to his father's revelation about Kusum's caste?
A) **He becomes angry and confronts Pyarishankar**
B) He leaves the village immediately
C) He refuses to believe it and defends Kusum
D) He apologizes to his father and agrees to renounce Kusum
10. What is the final decision made by Hemanta regarding his wife, Kusum?
A) He renounces her to please his father
B) He leaves the village with her to start a new life
C) He abandons her and returns to his father's house
D) **He stands by her, defying his father's wishes**

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING IN 500 WORDS (10 MARKS)

1. How does Hemanta's response to Kusum develop the Theme?
2. Discuss the role of societal norms and caste in "The Renunciation". How do these norms impact the lives and decisions of the characters?
3. Analyze the character of Hemanta in the story. How does his perception of love and duty evolve throughout the narrative?
4. Examine the theme of revenge in "The Renunciation". How does Pyarishankar's quest for revenge drive the plot and influence the other characters?
5. Explore the ending of "The Renunciation".

THE CABULIWALLAH

4.2 THE CABULIWALLAH

4.2.1 Introduction

"The Cabuliwallah" is a short story written by Rabindranath Tagore, first published in 1892 as part of his collection titled "Mashi and Other Stories." The story explores themes of friendship, compassion, and the impact of societal prejudices.

4.2.2 Summary

The story opens with the narrator talking about his precocious five-year-old daughter Mini, who learned how to talk within a year of being born and practically hadn't stopped talking since. Her mother often tells her to be quiet, but her father prefers to let her talk, so she talks to him often.

One day while the narrator is writing, Mini starts crying out "Kabuliwallah, Kabuliwallah!" The man she's shouting about is an Afghan in baggy clothes, walking along selling grapes and nuts. Mini fears him, convinced that she has children the size of herself stashed in his bag.

But a few days later, our narrator finds the Kabuliwallah sitting with Mini, paying close attention as she talks and talks. He has given her some grapes and pistachios, so the narrator gives the Kabuliwallah half a rupee. Later, Mini's mother finds her with the half-rupee and asks where she got it, and is displeased to hear she took money from the man.

Mini and the Kabuliwallah develop a close relationship, spending time together every day joking around and talking. The narrator enjoys talking to the Kabuliwallah too, asking him about his home country of Afghanistan, and all about his travels. But Mini's mother is alarmed by her daughter's closeness with the man, worrying that he might try to abduct Mini. The narrator does not agree that there is any danger.

Every year in the middle of the month of Magh, the Kabuliwallah returns home. Before making the trip, he goes around collecting money he is owed. But this year, the Kabuliwallah gets in a scuffle with a man who owes him money and ends up stabbing him. This lands him in jail for the next several years, during which Mini grows up and starts enjoying the company of girls her age. The narrator more or less forgets about the Kabuliwallah.

But on the day of Mini's wedding, the Kabuliwallah appears at the narrator's house. Without a bag or his long hair, he is barely recognizable to the narrator, but he eventually welcomes him in. The narrator is uneasy, thinking about how the Kabuliwallah is the only would-be murderer he's ever known, and tells the visitor to leave. He complies.

But shortly after, the Kabuliwallah returns, bringing a gift of grapes and pistachios for Mini. The narrator doesn't tell him that it's her wedding today, but simply repeats that there's an engagement at their house and he must go. But the Kabuliwallah pulls a

small piece of paper out of his coat pocket and shows it to the narrator. It's a handprint in ash, and he explains that he has a daughter back home in Afghanistan, and that Mini helps him deal with the heartache of being so far from her. The narrator is touched and gets Mini.

Mini and the Kabuliwallah have an awkward exchange during which the man realizes that Mini has grown up, and therefore so has his own daughter. Like with Mini, he'll have to reacquaint himself with his daughter. The narrator gives the Kabuliwallah money so that he can return home to Afghanistan to see his daughter, meaning that Mini's wedding will lose some of the theatrics such as electric lights and a brass band. But the wedding will be "lit by a kinder, more gracious light."

"The Cabuliwallah" is a short story written by Rabindranath Tagore, first published in 1892 as part of his collection titled "Mashi and Other Stories." The story explores themes of friendship, compassion, and the impact of societal prejudices.

4.2.3 Analysis

There are two central themes in this story, and Tagore masterfully plays them against each other to build tension in the narrative. The first key theme is otherness, with Kabuliwallah standing as a clear outsider who speaks broken Bengali and dresses in a way that situates him outside of typical Bengali society. The narrator is fascinated by him in part because of the fact that he's seen parts of the world that are so different from Calcutta, while the narrator's wife distrusts him precisely because he is a foreigner, and perhaps one who will kidnap her child, which she thinks Afghans are wont to do.

The other theme is doubling, as the narrator and the Kabuliwallah are construed as mirror characters of one another. They are both shown as storytellers, and each is fascinated enough by Mini to listen to her talk for hours. But most importantly, Tagore reminds us that they're both fathers, and the narrator seeing the Kabuliwallah as a man who is heartsick over a daughter that he has not seen in years helps the narrator see the man as a human being, not as some would-be murderer.

The genius of the story is the fact that the climax seems to come when Kabuliwallah stabs the debtor, which would confirm the narrator's wife's worst fears that this outsider is dangerous. During what seems like the denouement of the story, the Kabuliwallah returns and the narrator, who has clearly spent the intervening years considering the man a would-be murderer, tries to brush this outsider off.

But then the real climax comes. The Kabuliwallah pulls out the piece of paper with his daughter's handprint inscribed on it. This image draws a link between the narrator and Kabuliwallah as men with daughters they love dearly. With the move to bond the narrator and the Kabuliwallah, Tagore crafts a tale about finding common humanity despite all of the differences that two men may have.

It's worth noting here that one of the things that makes Tagore such an innovator given the context he was writing in was his unconventional narrative structure. Indeed, this story doesn't play out over some sort of conflict and resolution like a typical narrative (or the adventure stories that the narrator writes) might. Instead, Tagore develops a set of relationships and shows us how those relationships play out when tempered by the sands of time.

4.2.4 Theme

1. **Friendship:** The story explores the unlikely friendship that develops between the Cabuliwallah and Mini, transcending barriers of language, culture, and age.
2. **Compassion:** Tagore emphasizes the importance of compassion and empathy in understanding and connecting with others, regardless of their backgrounds.
3. **Identity and Prejudice:** The story highlights the impact of societal prejudices and stereotypes on individuals, as seen in the initial wariness towards the Cabuliwallah based on his ethnicity and appearance.
4. **Loss and Change:** "The Cabuliwallah" also delves into themes of loss and change, as seen in the transformation of the Cabuliwallah's life after his imprisonment and Mini's inability to recognize him upon his return.

4.2.5 Review of the story

The Cabuliwallah is a short story is about an unlikely friendship that forms between a dry fruit peddler Abdur Rahman, and Mini, a five-year-old girl. Rahman comes to Calcutta from Kabul to sell his goods. Mini lives with her parents in the city, her father is the narrator of the story. Mini is a little shy in front of Rahman upon first meeting him, but they go on to form a sweet wholesome bond. Rahman is arrested for beating a man who refused to pay his debts to him and spends years in jail. As Mini grows up, she forgets about him. He comes back to meet her once he is released which is on Mini's wedding day.

The story is narrated from the perspective of Mini's father. There is a clear class difference shown between Abdur Rahman and the narrator's family. In the beginning, the narrator is almost indifferent to Rahman, casually aware of their places in society. He sees the friendship developing between Rahman and Mini, how Rahman handles Mini's questions and engages her. It is when Rahman comes back from jail to see Mini again he realizes that Rahman, too, has a daughter back in Kabul of Mini's age and Mini reminded him of her.

There is a connection between them despite the difference, both are fathers. They understand each other's plight. Mini is getting married and will leave her parents' house and then won't be a part of their life in the same way ever again. On the other hand, Rahman has missed so much time with his daughter, and he needs to start to build a relationship with her all over again. Another instance of this theme is the friendship between Rahman and Mini.

Mini grows up, and her equations with people change including with her father, and she forgets about the Cabuliwallah. This shows how human emotions and relationships change with time; it is one of the most prominent things I noticed while reading. As a young child, Mini loved spending time with her father, it didn't matter what they were going to do. But, when she grows up, she has her girlfriends and her life, and now she is getting married. For Rahman, being in prison is like time being frozen. He hopes or expects that things will be the same when he gets out, but tragically, that's not the case.

I feel like the way the situation ends up being for Rahman, in the end, is so sad. He has lost all this time, waiting to get out and get back to his life, but life has moved on. He has to start from scratch. The story is straightforward in its premise but it deals with complex human emotions. The way the story is written tugs at your heartstrings. It does a beautiful job capturing the time of a pre-independent India. It is minimalistic, but it is heartfelt and deep.

I am so glad I downloaded a copy of these short stories. I forgot how much I used to enjoy reading them, though I didn't understand the complexities in them back then. But, I loved reading The Cabuliwallah by Rabindranath Tagore. It is a story everyone must read at least once.

Character Development

In the beginning, Mini's father displays suspicious and biased (ww/noun: bias) in his treatment of the Cabuliwallah. When the Cabuliwallah visits their house to sell goods, Mini's father views him with different looks, looks of doubt and does not even want to look at him.(awk. & wdy)This first reaction indicates or reflects a tendency to judge others at first sight based on their appearance or background, without making an effort to understand them as individuals. This behaviour reflects the common human behaviours to make quick judgments based on non important characteristics, rather than taking the time to engage with others and learn about their stories and experiences. He's initially unhappy with the Cabuliwallah's visit because it's interrupting his work. In other words, he's not really biased towards him (as his wife is, for example). As the story goes on, Mini's father undergoes a transformation through his interactions with the Cabuliwallah. Despite his first hesitation, he gradually forms a bond of friendship and empathy with the peddler. The story describes Mini's father's changing attitude towards them by stating, "But little by little he opened his heart to him, and in return received a store of affection"(?).

This change in perspective of Mini's father demonstrates his willingness to recognize the humanity in the Cabuliwallah and see beyond the judgemental characters and his beliefs before. It highlights the capacity for personal growth and the ability to challenge one's own biases when given the opportunity to engage with others in a meaningful way. Additionally, Mini's father's treatment of the Cabuliwallah demonstrates his generosity and kindness. When the Cabuliwallah faces unjust accusations (?/No indication the Cabuliwallah is innocent), Mini's father stands on his behalf, fighting for his release.(This doesn't happen)The narrator describes this act by stating, "My father interfered, and tried to get him set at liberty". (?)This intervention reveals Mini's father's genuine concern for the well-being of the Cabuliwallah and his willingness to stand up for what is right, even in the face of opposition. It showcases the protagonist's strong moral character and his commitment to justice and fairness, particularly when it comes to protecting those who are vulnerable or who are considered not important by certain people.Again, there is no indication that the Cabuliwallah is innocent of the crime he was accused

of, stabbing a customer. In conclusion, the interactions between Mini's father and the Cabuliwallah in "The Cabuliwallah" do reveal his true character.

Initially, Mini's father displays different behaviours or(?) towards the peddler. However, through their continued interaction, he undergoes a transformation, developing a bond of friendship and empathy. This growth highlights the importance of personal connections and understanding in breaking down barriers and challenging (ones) own disbelief. Furthermore, his act on standing on the Cabuliwallah's behalf (awk. & unclear) showcases his sense of justice and fairness. This story serves as a reminder that how one treats strangers and outsiders can provide important clues about their(pro.: ones)real character or it teaches us how really important treating strangers and outsiders is and how it reflects our true generosity or(the)real us. By being open-minded,

4.2.6 A Complex Human Relationship

"Kabuliwala" by Rabindranath Tagore is a timeless tale that explores the complexities of human relationships, cultural differences, and the bonds that transcend them. Set against the backdrop of Calcutta in the late 19th century, the story delves into the unlikely friendship between Mini, a spirited young girl, and Rahamat, a Kabuliwala or merchant from Afghanistan. Through their interactions, Tagore masterfully navigates themes of empathy, nostalgia, and the universal longing for connection.

The story opens with Mini, a young girl full of curiosity and wonder, observing the world around her with keen interest. She is intrigued by the Kabuliwala, a tall and imposing figure with a long beard and a turban, who arrives in her neighborhood to sell goods from Afghanistan. Despite her initial apprehension, Mini is drawn to the Kabuliwala's warm and friendly demeanor, and she eagerly accompanies him on his rounds as he sells his wares.

As Mini and the Kabuliwala spend more time together, they form a bond based on mutual curiosity and compassion. The Kabuliwala regales Mini with tales of his homeland, transporting her to a faraway land of mountains and spices. Through these stories, Mini gains a deeper understanding of the Kabuliwala's background and experiences, fostering empathy and compassion for the stranger from a distant land.

However, their budding friendship is not without its challenges. Mini's mother grows wary of the Kabuliwala's presence, fearing that he may be a threat to her daughter's safety. She insists that Mini keep her distance from the stranger, leading to tension and conflict between them. Despite this, Mini remains steadfast in her friendship with the Kabuliwala, refusing to let fear and prejudice cloud her judgment.

As time passes, Mini's priorities begin to shift as she grows older and more preoccupied with her studies and social life. Her interactions with the Kabuliwala become less frequent, and she begins to prioritize her own interests over their friendship. Meanwhile, the Kabuliwala struggles with the loneliness and isolation of being a stranger in a foreign land, longing for the companionship and connection he once shared with Mini.

The climax of the story comes when the Kabuliwala is falsely accused of a crime and sentenced to prison. Despite her mother's objections, Mini visits him in jail, offering him solace and support in his time of need. Through this act of kindness, Mini reaffirms the depth of her friendship with the Kabuliwala, demonstrating the transformative power of empathy and compassion.

In the end, "Kabuliwala" is a testament to the resilience of the human spirit and the capacity for connection to transcend cultural and linguistic barriers. Through the relationship between Mini and the Kabuliwala, Tagore invites readers to reflect on the universal longing for companionship and understanding, reminding us of the importance of empathy and compassion in forging meaningful connections with others.

The story of "Kabuliwala" is not just a simple tale of friendship; it is a profound exploration of the human condition and the universal desire for connection. Through the characters of Mini and the Kabuliwala, Tagore highlights the transformative power of empathy and compassion, reminding us of the importance of seeing beyond cultural differences and recognizing the humanity that binds us all together. As readers, we are invited to reflect on our own relationships and consider the ways

in which we can cultivate empathy and compassion in our interactions with others. In a world often divided by differences, "Kabuliwala" serves as a poignant reminder of the universal longing for connection and the transformative power of friendship.

4.2.7 Character Sketch

Kabuliwala

"Kabuliwala" by Rabindranath Tagore is a timeless tale that explores the complexities of human relationships, cultural differences, and the bonds that transcend them. Set against the backdrop of Calcutta in the late 19th century, the story delves into the unlikely friendship between Mini, a spirited young girl, and Rahamat, a Kabuliwala or merchant from Afghanistan. Through their interactions, Tagore masterfully navigates themes of empathy, nostalgia, and the universal longing for connection.

The story opens with Mini, a young girl full of curiosity and wonder, observing the world around her with keen interest. She is intrigued by the Kabuliwala, a tall and imposing figure with a long beard and a turban, who arrives in her neighborhood to sell goods from Afghanistan. Despite her initial apprehension, Mini is drawn to the Kabuliwala's warm and friendly demeanor, and she eagerly accompanies him on his rounds as he sells his wares.

As Mini and the Kabuliwala spend more time together, they form a bond based on mutual curiosity and compassion. The Kabuliwala regales Mini with tales of his homeland, transporting her to a faraway land of mountains and spices. Through these stories, Mini gains a deeper understanding of the Kabuliwala's background and experiences, fostering empathy and compassion for the stranger from a distant land.

However, their budding friendship is not without its challenges. Mini's mother grows wary of the Kabuliwala's presence, fearing that he may be a threat to her daughter's safety. She insists that Mini keep her distance from the stranger, leading to tension

and conflict between them. Despite this, Mini remains steadfast in her friendship with the Kabuliwala, refusing to let fear and prejudice cloud her judgment.

As time passes, Mini's priorities begin to shift as she grows older and more preoccupied with her studies and social life. Her interactions with the Kabuliwala become less frequent, and she begins to prioritize her own interests over their friendship. Meanwhile, the Kabuliwala struggles with the loneliness and isolation of being a stranger in a foreign land, longing for the companionship and connection he once shared with Mini.

The climax of the story comes when the Kabuliwala is falsely accused of a crime and sentenced to prison. Despite her mother's objections, Mini visits him in jail, offering him solace and support in his time of need. Through this act of kindness, Mini reaffirms the depth of her friendship with the Kabuliwala, demonstrating the transformative power of empathy and compassion.

In the end, "Kabuliwala" is a testament to the resilience of the human spirit and the capacity for connection to transcend cultural and linguistic barriers. Through the relationship between Mini and the Kabuliwala, Tagore invites readers to reflect on the universal longing for companionship and understanding, reminding us of the importance of empathy and compassion in forging meaningful connections with others.

The story of "Kabuliwala" is not just a simple tale of friendship; it is a profound exploration of the human condition and the universal desire for connection. Through the characters of Mini and the Kabuliwala, Tagore highlights the transformative power of empathy and compassion, reminding us of the importance of seeing beyond cultural differences and recognizing the humanity that binds us all together. As readers, we are invited to reflect on our own relationships and consider the ways in which we can cultivate empathy and compassion in our interactions with others. In a world often divided by differences, "Kabuliwala" serves as a poignant reminder of the universal longing for connection and the transformative power of friendship.

Mini

Mini is a central character in Rabindranath Tagore's "Kabuliwala." She is a young, curious, and spirited girl who forms a deep and meaningful bond with Rahamat, the Kabuliwala, despite their differences in age, culture, and background. Here's a detailed character sketch of Mini:

Physical Description:

Mini is described as a young girl of about five or six years old at the beginning of the story. She is depicted as having a cherubic face, bright eyes, and a playful demeanor that endears her to those around her. As she grows older throughout the story, Mini's physical appearance matures, but she retains her youthful energy and curiosity.

Personality Traits:

Mini is characterized by her curiosity, imagination, and empathy. She possesses a keen sense of wonder about the world around her and is always eager to learn and explore new things. Mini is also incredibly empathetic and compassionate, particularly towards Rahamat, the Kabuliwala, whom she befriends. Despite their differences in age and background, Mini treats Rahamat with kindness and respect, forging a deep and meaningful bond with him based on mutual curiosity and compassion.

Background and Family:

Mini's background and family are not extensively explored in the story, but it is implied that she comes from a middle-class Bengali family living in Calcutta. She is the only child of her parents and is doted on by her family members, who indulge her curiosity and encourage her to explore the world around her. Mini's family plays a significant role in shaping her worldview and values, instilling in her a sense of empathy, kindness, and curiosity about the world.

Relationship with Rahamat:

One of the central relationships in the story is between Mini and Rahamat, the Kabuliwala. Despite their differences in age, culture, and language, Mini forms a

deep and meaningful bond with Rahamat based on mutual curiosity and compassion. She is drawn to Rahamat's warmth and kindness, and eagerly accompanies him on his rounds as he sells his wares. Through their interactions, Mini learns about Rahamat's homeland and experiences, fostering empathy and compassion for the stranger from a distant land.

Challenges and Obstacles:

Throughout the story, Mini faces various challenges and obstacles, both external and internal. As she grows older, Mini's priorities begin to shift, and she becomes more preoccupied with her studies and social life. This leads to a gradual distancing between her and Rahamat, as she prioritizes her own interests over their friendship. Additionally, Mini's mother grows wary of Rahamat's presence, fearing that he may pose a threat to her daughter's safety, leading to tension and conflict between them.

Transformation and Growth:

As the story progresses, Mini undergoes a transformation from a curious and carefree young girl to a mature and empathetic young woman. Through her interactions with Rahamat and the other characters in the story, Mini learns valuable lessons about empathy, compassion, and the importance of human connection. She demonstrates incredible resilience and strength in the face of adversity, ultimately reaffirming the depth of her friendship with Rahamat through acts of kindness and support.

In conclusion, Mini is a complex and multifaceted character in Rabindranath Tagore's "Kabuliwala." Through her curiosity, empathy, and resilience, Mini serves as a symbol of the transformative power of human connection, reminding us of the universal longing for companionship and understanding in a world often divided by differences.

4.2.8 Structure

The structure of "Kabuliwala" by Rabindranath Tagore is relatively straightforward, following a linear narrative that unfolds over the course of several key events. Here's a breakdown of the story's structure:

1. Introduction:

- The story begins with an introduction to the protagonist, Mini, a young girl living in Calcutta. She is portrayed as curious and adventurous, with a penchant for exploring the world around her.

2. Introduction of the Kabuliwala:

- The narrative introduces Rahamat, a Kabuliwala or merchant from Afghanistan, who arrives in Calcutta to sell goods from his homeland. Rahamat's appearance and mannerisms capture Mini's attention, sparking her curiosity and fascination with the stranger from a distant land.

3. Establishment of the Relationship:

- Mini and Rahamat's initial interactions are characterized by curiosity and mutual interest. Mini is drawn to Rahamat's warmth and kindness, while Rahamat is intrigued by Mini's innocence and curiosity about the world. Their friendship begins to blossom as they spend more time together, with Rahamat sharing stories of his homeland with Mini, transporting her to a world of mountains and spices.

4. Conflict and Tension:

- As Mini grows older, her priorities begin to shift, and she becomes more preoccupied with her studies and social life. This leads to a gradual distancing between her and Rahamat, as she prioritizes her own interests over their friendship. Additionally, Mini's mother grows wary of Rahamat's presence, fearing that he may pose a threat to her daughter's safety, leading to tension and conflict between them.

5. Resolution:

- The climax of the story comes when Rahamat is falsely accused of a crime and sentenced to prison. Despite her mother's objections, Mini visits him in jail, offering him solace and support in his time of need. Through this act of kindness, Mini reaffirms the depth of her friendship with Rahamat, demonstrating the transformative power of empathy and compassion.

6. Conclusion:

- The story concludes with Mini's visit to Rahamat in jail serving as a poignant reminder of the enduring bond between them. Despite the challenges and obstacles they face, their friendship remains steadfast, highlighting the resilience of the human spirit and the power of connection to transcend cultural and linguistic barriers.

Overall, the structure of "Kabuliwala" follows a traditional narrative arc, with the introduction of characters, establishment of relationships, development of conflict and tension, and resolution leading to a poignant conclusion. Through this structure, Rabindranath Tagore effectively explores themes of empathy, friendship, and the universal longing for connection, creating a timeless tale that resonates with readers across cultures and generations.

4.2.9 To Sum Up

Glossary

1. **Friendship**- Companionship, camaraderie, fellowship, bond
2. **Compassion**- Empathy, kindness, sympathy, humanity
3. **Prejudice** - Bias, discrimination, intolerance, bigotry
4. **Identity** - Individuality, selfhood, personality, character
5. **Loss** - Bereavement, sorrow, grief, deprivation
6. **Change** - Transformation, alteration, evolution, transition
7. **Misunderstanding** - Confusion, misconception, misinterpretation, mistake
8. **Connection** - Link, association, relationship, bond
9. **Empathy**- Understanding, compassion, sympathy, sensitivity
10. **Transformation** - Metamorphosis, change, conversion, evolution

Self-Assessment Question

CHOOSE THE BEST ANSWER (1 MARK)

1. What is the central theme of "The Cabuliwallah"?
A) Love and betrayal
B) **Friendship and compassion**
C) Revenge and redemption
D) Power and greed
2. Who is the protagonist of "The Cabuliwallah"?
A) Mini
B) **The writer**

- C) The Cabuliwallah** D) Mini's mother
3. What is the occupation of the Cabuliwallah in the story?
A) Teacher B) Doctor
C) Street vendor D) Farmer
4. What is the initial reaction of Mini towards the Cabuliwallah?
A) Fear and suspicion B) Indifference
C) Friendship and trust D) Curiosity and excitement
5. What happens to the Cabuliwallah after he is released from prison?
A) He returns to Afghanistan
B) He continues selling goods in Kolkata
C) He becomes a wealthy merchant
D) He visits Mini but she doesn't recognize him
6. What draws Mini to the Cabuliwallah in the story?
A) His storytelling abilities B) His exotic appearance and language
C) His generosity and kindness D) His impressive salesmanship
7. How does Mini react when she sees the Cabuliwallah after his release from prison?
A) She warmly welcomes him back B) She is frightened and runs away
C) She does not recognize him D) She becomes angry and confronts him
8. What does the Cabuliwallah bring for Mini as a gift?
A) Dry fruits B) Books
C) Toys D) Clothes
9. What is the significance of the relationship between Mini and the Cabuliwallah in the story?
A) It represents the bond between different cultures
B) It symbolizes the innocence of childhood
C) It highlights the importance of friendship and compassion
D) It serves as a metaphor for the passage of time
10. How does the story "The Cabuliwallah" end?
A) Mini and the Cabuliwallah reconcile and continue their friendship
B) Mini's family moves away, and she never sees the Cabuliwallah again
C) Mini's father confronts the Cabuliwallah and forbids him from seeing Mini

D) Mini's mother intervenes and resolves the misunderstanding between Mini and the Cabuliwallah

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING IN 500 WORDS (10 MARKS)

1. Describe the friendship between Mini and the Cabuliwallah. How do they become friends, and what do they enjoy doing together?
2. Explain why the Cabuliwallah is arrested in the story. What happens to him after his arrest?
3. Discuss the role of storytelling in "The Cabuliwallah". How does the Cabuliwallah use stories to connect with Mini and others?
4. How does Mini's father feel about her friendship with the Cabuliwallah? How does his attitude change over the course of the story?
5. What is the significance of the ending of "The Cabuliwallah"? How does the reunion between Mini and the Cabuliwallah demonstrate the theme of friendship?

Further Reading

Moitra Anita. "Reminiscing Gurudev...|| A Review of 'Kabuliwala' by Antara Moitra." Literature Studio RSS. Web. 25 Mar. 2015.

Siddiqui Zaman, Rana. "Kabuliwala (1961)." The Hindu 8 July 2010. Web. 29 May 2015.

Radice, William. *Rabindranath Tagore – Selected Short Stories* (New Delhi: Penguin Books Ltd. 1991.

Tagore, R. N. *Collected Stories*. New Delhi: Macmillan, 1974.

Glimpses of Life: An Anthology of Short Stories, Mumbai, Orient Longman Limited, 2007. Print.

<https://www.youthaffairz.in/tagore3-tyaag.html>

<https://www.gradesaver.com/rabindranath-tagore-short-stories/study-guide/summary-kabuliwallah>

UNIT V

FICTION

5.1 THE HOME AND THE WORLD

SECTION 5.1: The Home and The World

5.1.1 Introduction

The novel "Home and the world" is written by famous Indian author Rabindranath Tagore and it was originally published in 1916. The story of novel revolve around a woman, Bimala, who is married to a man who love her for infinity and support her in every phases of her life.

he novel "*The Home and the World*" is written by a famous personality **Rabindranath Tagore**. It was initially written and published in Bengali in 1916 and later translated into English by **Surendra Nath Tagore**. The Bengali title of the novel is "**Ghare Baire.**" This social and political novel is based on the different cultures of the society. The novel's central theme is **love, the tradition of society, and nationalism**. The novel is about the Swadeshi movement in Bengal, the partition of Bengal, east Bengal, and West Bengal in 1905. The Swadeshi movement was one of the large protests and movements of that time when British Colonial Rule controlled India. It played a significant role in the independence of India. The novel talks about the conflict between tradition and modernity and contains a detailed discussion of the love triangle between the characters present in the novel. Tagore discussed the tradition's personal and political aspects and offered a deep study of human emotions and the stress when a tradition experiences a sudden change in its legacy.

The story revolves around three main characters. **Nikhil** a progressive zamindar (landlord) who supports and follows Western ideals and encourages his wife, **Bimala**, to embrace her independence and mental growth. Bimala, a young and sheltered woman, finds herself ragged between her loyalty to her husband and her growing fascination with **Sandeep**, a charming and brave nationalist leader who fights for a radical and militant approach to the freedom movement. The

psychological pain that Bimala goes through as she negotiates the complications of **love, duty, and self-discovery** is expertly portrayed by Tagore. The story explores issues of identity, gender roles, and the effects of personal decisions during political instability from her point of view. The characters must deal with their views and disagreements as the tale develops, which has dramatic and unexpected results. ***The Home and the World*** explores competing ideologies and the intensely human conflicts that result from societal change.

5.1.2 Chapter wise Summary

Chapter-1

Bimala, the narrator of *The Home and the World*, begins by sharing a loving memory of her mother. She describes how her mother was characterized by the “vermillion mark” in her hairline and her practice of wearing a sari, signifying wifely devotion. As a young woman, Bimala explains, she “married into a Rajah’s house.” As a young wife, Bimala behaves demurely, expressing devotion to Nikhil, her wealthy husband, and seeing it as female nature to “worship” him.

When Bimala joins the household, her husband’s parents are already dead. In their stead, his grandmother rules the domestic space. Nikhil is studying for a Master’s degree in Calcutta, so he brings an English woman, Mrs. Gilby, to educate Bimala. While physically separated from her husband, Bimala cherishes and saves his letters.

Looking back from “the modern era,” Bimala expresses shame, feeling guilty for her old-fashioned ideas about marriage as a state of passionate servitude. Nikhil, she concedes, never demands worship and generously bestows his affection on her.

Those around them notice this reciprocal (and unconventional) devotion and are often jealous. Bimala’s widowed sister-in-law, Bara Rani, is particularly bitter that Nikhil does not embody the flaws of many husbands, such as drinking heavily or committing adultery.

Bara Rani seems to believe Bimala does not deserve her happy marriage or status in the household. However, Nikhil encourages her to be “gentle” with Bimala and is generous in providing for his widowed sister. Though she loves his goodness,

Bimala sometimes wishes Nikhil could set boundaries with her disapproving sister-in-law.

Nikhil begins to encourage Bimala to leave “purdah”— a state of seclusion in the household—to experience the outside world. While Bimala is concerned this means he is not satisfied with the devotion she has shown him, he says he does not want her life to center around him. The test of their love, he claims, is how it adapts to the real world.

Bimala does not want to leave purdah out of respect for the family matriarch, who sees Bimala as a good luck charm. After his grandmother’s death, however, Nikhil again asks Bimala to join him in Calcutta, but she feels this would disrespect the matriarch’s memory. Bimala wants to occupy the seat of power in the household, but Nikhil suggests it might be better to allow their Bara Rani that position.

Bimala introduces the “new era” of “*Swadeshi*,” a Nationalist movement also referred to as “the Cause.” From within the walls of her home, she feels a spark of interest in the movement. Nikhil has long believed in the power of local production—and even opened a bank so locals could invest in homegrown industries. Between these ventures and Nikhil’s extensive “list of charities,” some townspeople believe he will squander his estate.

When Bimala decides, in solidarity with the Cause, to burn her “foreign clothes,” Nikhil advises her to build things up rather than destroy them. She also asks for Miss Gilby to be sent away; after a young boy whom Bimala and her husband had “been supporting” insults Miss Gilby, a mortified Miss Gilby leaves on her own accord. Bimala warns Nikhil to not escort Miss Gilby to the train station. He ignores her, sparking “a public scandal.” ensues. While Nikhil expresses sympathy for the Cause, he is wary of worshipping any “country as a god.”

Chapter-2

Sandip Babu, a leader of *Swadeshi* and a life-long friend of Nikhil, comes to town with his followers. Based on a photo Bimala saw, she initially distrusts him, thinking: “The light in his eyes somehow did not shine true.” She is frustrated that Nikhil assists Sandip unquestioningly. Once she hears him speak, however, she is won over. His words make her feel like “the sole representative of Bengal’s womanhood,” and Sandip “the champion of Bengal.”

Nikhil breaks the spell, telling Bimala that Sandip plans to leave soon. She wants him to stay an extra day so she can invite him to dinner. Bimala waits upon Sandip but is nervous to look him in the eye. In their conversation, Sandip singles out Bimala, calling her a “talisman.” Nikhil argues with Sandip, noting discrepancies between Sandip’s speeches and his behavior (such as using foreign medicine despite condescending foreign products).

Sandip worries that his arguments with Nikhil upset Bimala but continues to challenge Nikhil’s lack of devotion to the Nationalist movement. Sandip believes that anything is permissible when building the strength of one’s homeland. When asked, Bimala valorizes the nation, and Sandip exclaims: Women “will save the country.” Nikhil is embarrassed by his wife’s proclamations, and when Chandarath Babu, Nikhil’s teacher, arrives, Nikhil tells his wife to show “obeisance.”

Nikhil tries to defend himself against Bimala and Sandip. He has seen his wife change due to her political involvement and feels conflicted; he wishes to see her develop but worries about who she will become. Similarly, he explains that Bimala is much more passionate than he, so he worries she thinks him feeble.

Nikhil sees Sandip as “tyrannical” and “coarse.” However, he cannot make Bimala see the leader’s flaws. Chandarath advises Nikhil to arrange for Sandip’s departure, but Sandip claims he may need to work from “a centre” rather than traveling the country to speak to followers. Frustrated, Nikhil asks Bimala to go on a trip to the Himalayas, but she refuses, not wanting to leave Sandip or the Cause.

Sandip justifies greed as a necessary part of building pride and power in India. He describes his arguments with Nikhil, claiming his old friend is too metaphorical and needs to be more pragmatic.

Sandip also acknowledges the power he seems to have over women. He takes pride in this effect, seeing women as both fervent followers and in touch with “reality” in a way that educated men are not. Finally, he recognizes an undeniable affinity between himself and Bimala.

Chapter-3

Bara Rani teases Bimala for dressing up for Sandip. Bimala remembers Sandip telling Nikhil that, when he first saw Bimala, she appeared demure. However, the gold trim on her sari immediately revealed to him her internal passion. Bimala herself feels reborn since Sandip’s arrival; he convinces her that she embodies “all the

splendour of Bengal.” Sandip calls her “Queen Bee,” and she feels “divine strength” inside of her.

Sandip consults Bimala on political matters, but their conversations do not always involve Nikhil. With all her energy devoted to Sandip and to India, Bimala worries her marriage will suffer.

Sandip comments that he and Bimala’s kinship has drawn “foul” reactions. One day, he hears Bimala in Nikhil’s sitting room and tries to enter, but a servant, Nanku, bars him. An indignant Bimala dismisses Nanku, insisting Sandip stay with her. When Nikhil arrives to investigate the noise, Bimala tells him that Nanku insulted Sandip and must be fired. While Nikhil does reassign Nanku, the servant does not suffer a pay decrease.

Later, Bimala calls Sandip, who senses her marital trouble. Sandip recognizes an attraction between himself and Bimala, but sees it as natural and full of “Truth.” He then insults Nikhil to Bimala, claiming he tries to apply “misty” rules of poetry to nationalism, while the Cause needs followers in touch with reality and able to “respond” to it, like Bimala.

Sandip shocks Bimala by arguing that all “human relations [should] be free,” as this implies her bond with Nikhil is not sacred. Chandranath visits, causing Sandip to reflect on Nikhil’s valorization of the schoolhouse. This is a weakness because Nikhil expects the world to be orderly and elementary, while Sandip would argue that human passion makes life (and politics) much more complex.

As Sandip and Chandranath argue, Sandip celebrates the “burning at the heart” that characterizes *Swadeshi*. In turn, Chandranath warns Sandip not to “mistake [fervor] for work, or heroism.” When the teacher leaves, Sandip asks Nikhil about a political book. In response to the book, and Sandip’s claims, Nikhil counsels “restraint,” as passion can turn to “violence.”

To Sandip’s chagrin, Bimala does not partake in the discussion. Nikhil excoriates Sandip for celebrating humanity’s baser nature rather than “the beautiful in man.” Before running upstairs, Nikhil remarks that people can be “wounded” without dying and that he is “ready to suffer ... with eyes open.” This indicates that he is aware of the developing relationship between Bimala and Sandip.

Bimala rushes upstairs after Nikhil, while Sandip wonders why he has not yet been banished from Nikhil’s home. He worries for Bimala but also feels that she has

started down a path that she will likely not abandon. Later, Sandip removes Bimala's picture from a frame on the wall and replaces her image with one of himself.

Chapter- 4

Nikhil considers Bimala's perspective, thinking of how she thinks he takes "things too seriously." He begins to wonder what the word "wife" entails—does it give him license to control Bimala's individuality? Nikhil seems prepared to suffer the loss of his wife, recognizing that he and Bimala's "natures" may not be as compatible as hers and Sandip's.

Frequently, Nikhil stays up late, ashamed and unable to talk to Bimala. He tries to ground himself in something reliable, looking out at the stars in the night sky and speaking of "Eternal Love." Nikhil runs into Bara Rani, who is horrified by the "pain" in his face and encourages him to go to bed.

Bimala describes her fervor for the Cause, which Sandip's influence has accelerated. She has enjoyed making "havoc" in her life through her newfound political interest. While she now "looks down upon" Sandip, she also responds to his "worship" of her nonetheless. Bimala likens her "intoxication" with Sandip and the Cause to her late brother-in-law's destructive alcoholism, yet part of her desires to keep pursuing the danger.

Bara Rani again teases Bimala about the length of Sandip's stay and laments Nikhil's predicament. Bimala feels women like Bara Rani cannot possibly "understand the nature of [her] devotion." Gradually, the tide turns and other pressing issues come to dominate the popular consciousness, making it more difficult to justify Sandip's continued presence.

Bimala hides away for a few days but can find no satisfying task to distract herself. Eventually, Sandip sends her a letter; there is "urgent" business related to the movement. She meets him in the sitting room, where he encourages her to abandon her mundane domestic tasks and go to "the outside world." Two servants interrupt their conversation.

Shortly after, Bimala understands that Bara Rani contrived the servants' arrival to disrupt her time with Sandip. Bimala feels she has "spoil[ed] her life" and wishes to be free of her passion for the Cause. She thinks with nostalgia of her harmonious

marriage, when she and Nikhil were so reciprocally devoted, but sees no way out of her current state.

Sandip articulates his philosophy, saying: “It is reserved for the great to be unjust.” He argues with Nikhil about the Cause once more, with Nikhil asserting that *Swadeshi* asks followers to worship the homeland, which could be seen as sacrilege. Sandip says India’s spirituality is an obstacle to great nationhood.

Sandip feels his involvement in Bimala and Nikhil’s marriage drains Sandip of the power he needs to lead. Both Bimala and Sandip are “aware that some crisis [is] impending,” and he knows that it would be easy to claim Bimala as his own. However, he sees her being pulled in different directions: To him and the Cause but also to Nikhil and domesticity. Sandip believes Bimala needs to be freed of the chains of tradition for both her and India to achieve greatness.

Chapter- 5

After nine years of marriage, Nikhil has many fond memories to recall, comparing the anniversaries he and Bimala shared to the Biblical Adam and Eve. Their marriage now contrasts those nostalgic moments. Their house is “silent” and tense. Nikhil considers “freeing” Bimala so that they can, as individuals, achieve true liberty. Possessing his wife in marriage limits them both. However, upon seeing Bimala’s possessions in the bedroom, Nikhil is struck with love for her.

A poor neighbor, Panchu, brings Nikhil some cocoa nuts. When Nikhil tries to pay, Panchu refuses, claiming to be making amends after stealing nuts from Nikhil’s property in the past. The interaction leads Nikhil to realize his marital problems are relatively small.

Nikhil describes Panchu’s struggles to consistently feed his family. When Nikhil suggests giving Panchu charity, Chandarath explains that helping one man does not fix a damaged system on the national level.

Bimala comments on the energy behind *Swadeshi*, adding that Sandip’s arrival and the timeliness of the movement’s mission must be supernaturally ordained. Sandip and Nikhil argue over whether the Cause is blessed by the divine. Nikhil asserts that the passion of people like Sandip and Bimala is not enough to make *Swadeshi* successful. Irritated, Nikhil leaves the room.

Bimala analyzes her own susceptibility to the rhetoric of the Cause. She was never one to be carried away by “stormy passion” and wonders to what extent she controls her fate. Simultaneously, she recognizes she has “lost [her] home” as a result of her devotion to *Swadeshi*, and to Sandip.

Thinking back to Sandip’s arrival, Bimala reflects on how Nikhil’s estate had been the only one where residents continued to use foreign products. As Nikhil shifted to Indian-made goods, though, the home looked less impressive to Bimala.

Bara Rani tries to win Nikhil’s favor by praising goods like Indian-made soaps, but Bimala believes she does this to mock Bimala’s attachment to foreign luxuries. Bara Rani admits she only says such things to Nikhil because they make him happy; she does not share his values.

Sandip tries to rid the local markets of European goods. Nikhil does not bow to Sandip’s “coercion,” so Bimala agrees to try to use his love for her to gain power over Nikhil.

Nikhil reports that Panchu’s wife died of consumption and is outraged to learn of the cost of the purification rites Panchu must undergo. Panchu distracts himself from his and his children’s starvation by devoting himself to an ascetic.

Chandarath takes Panchu’s children in, caring for them until Panchu returns. The teacher loans Panchu money and tells him to peddle wares at the market and pay him back gradually.

A group of *Swadeshi* devotees approach Nikhil and tell him to remove foreign goods from the markets, but he refuses. Chandarath tries to explain to the young men that not everyone has the privilege to abide by the Cause’s new expectations. They question Chandarath’s devotion, but he claims he would give his life for his country. The men grill Nikhil on what he is doing to benefit homegrown industries, believing Nikhil cares more about profits than the Cause.

Chapter-6

Panchu is fined for selling foreign items in the market, and *Swadeshi* supporters burn his goods. Nikhil encourages him to file a complaint, but Panchu knows no one will serve as his witness. Nikhil tries to get Sandip to be a witness, who refuses. Instead, he tries to persuade Nikhil and Chandarath that real revolution comes from “bad men” and corruption.

Frustrated by Sandip's words, Nikhil volunteers to help Panchu by buying him new goods and renting him land. An aunt claiming kinship with Panchu moves into Panchu's rented space, saying she is Panchu's late uncle's second wife.

For the first time in a while, Bimala sends for Nikhil. She appears "dressed up" and has made her room more orderly. She tries to persuade him to expel foreign goods from their markets, but Nikhil asserts that the goods belong to the vendors, not him. He will not "tyrannize," even though Bimala argues, echoing Sandip, that tyranny is acceptable in service of one's country.

Bimala reports to Sandip that Nikhil did not agree to their plan. She was confident in her ability to win her husband over; having failed, her pride is bruised. Sandip grabs her hand. She turns pale, and the physical contact goes no further; Sandip believes they have sidestepped something that could have been a "crisis," had they given into their attraction.

After the interaction, Bimala cannot concentrate and goes to her room to be alone, while Sandip wonders if he let a great opportunity pass by when he dropped Bimala's hand. Meanwhile, Amulya, a young convert to the Cause, debriefs Sandip on various conflicts related to the Cause.

For those continuing to engage with foreign goods, Sandip suggests extreme measures, such as "burning their granaries" or sinking the boat of a man who refuses to comply with the *Swadeshi* ban on transporting foreign goods.

Sandip tells Bimala they need money. She agrees to procure it but also feels she cannot simply take "[Nikhil's] money." Sandip trusts her to find a solution, encouraging her to think of her motherland.

Chapter-7

Sandip claims it is men's right to take whatever they need, while women find happiness in giving to others. While he feels conflicted about making demands of Bimala, Sandip believes he is right to help her fulfill her true desire: To give to him and to her country.

Meanwhile, police have a lead into the sinking of the boatman's boat—the manager who helped commit the crime complains to Sandip that he cannot be caught. He threatens to implicate Sandip, who feels there is nothing to connect him. Even still, Sandip knows he needs money to pay off the boatman and the police.

Sandip fully acknowledges that *Swadeshi* has corrupt elements but justifies this by claiming that “truth” does not have to be morally good or bad. Sandip also considers “desire” a manly flaw and continues to think about the day he touched Bimala’s hand. However, the work of the Cause keeps him too busy to dwell on this desire.

Sandip and Nikhil debate the role of Muslims in a “united India.” Sandip complains that Muslims are not cooperating with the Hindu majority, and Nikhil reminds him that they will be necessary if the country is to be one India.

Nikhil’s “sincerity” and moralizing irritate Sandip. Instead, Sandip argues that the Cause must project an image of the motherland as a goddess, even if it is an “illusion.” Nikhil does not like the idea of manipulating people, but Sandip asserts that men must outgrow simplistic moral principles in order to achieve the massive change motivating *Swadeshi*. While Sandip is concerned only with short-term achievement, Nikhil worries about the long-term fallout of Sandip’s methods.

When Sandip speaks to Bimala next, he tells her that gods show themselves to humans—and that the goddess Shakti revealed herself through Bimala. She imagines his power overtaking the whole nation and feels small in contrast. Sandip complains about his poverty, so Bimala offers him all of her jewels.

Despite his lack of moral compass in his politics, Sandip thinks it wrong to take gifts from women. Bimala seems upset to have to ask Nikhil for more rupees for the Cause. She is relieved when he requests a smaller sum this time and says she can have it at the end of the month. When Sandip insists that it is too late, she promises to get it by the next day.

Chapter-8

Nikhil faces criticism, with some claiming those who live on his estates are afraid to declare loyalty to *Swadeshi*. His critics assert that he seeks a foreign title and is in league with the police. Those involved in the movement see fire as a way to purify India and will not hesitate to burn down the treasuries of anyone not fully aligned with them.

Later, Nikhil speaks with a student about *Swadeshi*’s tactics, asserting that intimidation will not allow *Swadeshi* to accumulate the power they seek—people must follow the Cause freely. Nikhil is horrified to learn that a *zamindar* (a

landowner) sold his debtor's wife to accrue the money he was owed. Sandip and his followers claim this merciless strategy is necessary; Nikhil is appalled.

Panchu continues to seek the truth of his "sham aunt." The woman apparently wants Panchu's holdings and has no proof of their kinship. Panchu leaves to investigate the village of his uncle, thinking this aunt is a scam artist.

On a slow work day, Nikhil visits his gardens to commune with nature and is startled to find Bimala lying there. She promptly gets up and walks away. When she eventually stops, he assures her he has no desire to be "her fetters," knowing that giving Bimala her liberty is the only way to free himself. Humans, Nikhil explains, cannot "shackle" or reform one another by force.

Chandarath reveals that he has been staying with Panchu to observe the dynamic with the supposed aunt. Eventually, the aunt agrees to leave but demands travel expenses. Chandarath wins her over by not distancing himself from her based on her caste, unlike Panchu, who keeps himself separate. Panchu loses respect for Chandarath as a result.

Sandip's worship of Bimala has given her the power to confront Nikhil. She recalls the moment in the garden when Nikhil "set her free." Until then, Bimala could feel no joy because she did not understand how to exist "outside the atmosphere of loving care" to which she is accustomed. Freedom becomes synonymous with "emptiness" for Bimala.

While wandering, Bimala encounters Sandip and vows to get him the rupees. Amulya agrees to take the money from the treasury for her, but she does not think his "childish" plans will work. He alludes to killing a cashier, utterly unbothered by the idea of murder. Shocked, Bimala knows she must put this boy back on a righteous path, promising to get the money herself.

When Sandip next comes to ask for money, Bimala describes herself as possessed by a "demon, in the guise of a god." She agrees to do anything he needs despite the risk.

Chapter-9

Bimala knows Nikhil puts aside six thousand rupees each year for Bara Rani. Currently, the gold is not in the bank yet. She also knows her husband keeps the key to his safe in his pants pocket when he undresses for the night. Bimala unlocks the

safe and takes the gold. To assuage her guilt, she reminds herself that she acts in the service of her motherland.

Wracked with guilt, Bimala spends the night on the terrace. In the morning, she walks toward her bedroom and passes Bara Rani, who says the *Swadeshi* supporters have threatened to rob the treasury.

Sandip demands the money, and Bimala is terrified it is not enough. Sandip approaches her, but she pushes him away, and he hits his head. Amulya bows to Bimala as Sandip returns to the table and announces that Bimala has offered six thousand rupees.

Sandip and Amulya proclaim the generosity and divinity of women, and Sandip reveals that he was trying to approach Bimala with reverence before she pushed him. Bimala feels she misunderstood the impassioned look in his eyes. Just as quickly as he lost it, Sandip wins back Bimala's and Amulya's loyalty.

One night at dinner, Bara Rani brings up the threats to the treasury, worried her annual gift will not make it to the bank. Nikhil laughs her worries off, as the money is in his safe. Bara Rani notices Bimala's silence—readers know she is crushed with guilt and anxiety.

Bimala takes her jewels to Bara Rani and offers them as "security" but is refused. Bimala asks Amulya to "sell or pawn" the jewels to make up for the stolen money. Amulya reports that he quarreled with Sandip over using the stolen money, but Sandip justified the crime for the greater good of the Cause.

Sandip returns, but Bimala ignores him, telling Amulya not to reveal the sale of the jewels. When she briefly speaks with Sandip, he goads her relationship with Amulya, warning that the boy is loyal to him. Bimala tries to escape Sandip's company, but he restrains her; only when he hears Nikhil approaching does he let her go.

Nikhil cautions Sandip about threats against him by the Muslims but does not advise Sandip how to act. He does, however, ask Sandip to leave, saying Sandip can stay in his house in Calcutta; Nikhil will meet him there in five days. Sandip sings a bold song to Bimala, referring to her as his "Queen," in front of Nikhil. Bimala leaves and encounters Amulya, who is on his way to sell the jewels. She worries for his safety.

Chapter-10

Nikhil hears that the *zamindar* Harish Kundu has befriended Sandip. Harish has been known to “extort” his tenants, leading Nikhil to question Sandip’s morality and feel he must banish Sandip so his ideas do not further infect Nikhil’s community. However, he knows neither Sandip nor Bimala will understand his reasoning and will assume he is motivated by jealousy.

Rumors of Muslims killing cows, which are sacred to Hindus, lead Nikhil’s tenants to encourage him to wield his power. Nikhil does not think “oppression” will stop the killings, and he thinks it could even lead to violence against men. Nikhil hears that an effigy of him has been burned, and negative reports continue to appear in local newspapers.

The sub-treasury is robbed, with the thieves taking six thousand rupees, injuring the guard, and leaving the rest. Considering the recent theft, Bara Rani asks Nikhil to attend to her money in his safe. He vows to remove the money and send it to the bank.

Before he can resolve that, an inspector arrives, reporting that he suspects the guard, Kasim, of engineering the theft at the sub-treasury. Nikhil goes to Kasim in prison, and he denies any involvement. He does not have a reliable story but blames Harish.

Nikhil calls upon Chandarath, who laments the rampant sin in the country and encourages Nikhil to banish all the guilty parties and take Bimala to Calcutta to expand her worldview. At night, Nikhil hears someone sobbing and goes out to find Bimala weeping.

Bimala waits to hear from Amulya, worried she has doomed him. When Sandip next appears, Bimala feels that his magic has gone and does not wish to see him. She is focused on news of Amulya. When Sandip reveals her box of jewels, Bimala assumes this means Amulya is not in trouble. Soon after, Amulya rushes in, upset that Sandip took the jewel case to her. Sandip resents that Amulya and Bimala plotted without him.

Amulya reveals that he got the money without Bimala’s jewels but does not explain how. He tells Bimala that it was through her he learned the truth of Sandip’s corruption and greed—he has used none of the gold for the movement. Amulya devotes himself to Bimala, seeing hers as the more noble “path.” She does not want

to rely on Amulya any longer or get him into any danger, but she must because, as a woman, she cannot go out into the world herself.

Chapter-11

Bimala rethinks Amulya's mission and tries to recall him. Instead, Sandip arrives, claiming she is the only person to ever exert power over him. Bimala mocks him, finally feeling free of his influence. Nikhil enters and tells Sandip they will be going to Calcutta the next day.

Sandip changes his praise of Bimala from "mother" to "enchantress," one who "leads to destruction. As Sandip continues to wax poetic, Bimala finds herself again drawn to his passion. He claims it is time for him to find another embodiment of her to worship, the goddess and the mother wrought "larger ... in a larger temple." Bimala seems to be won over, giving her jewel case to Sandip as an offering to the *Bande Mataram* ("Mother").

Bimala prepares cakes for her birthday until Bara Rani comes in, reporting that the treasuries have been robbed and that she is worried the house may be next. Bimala goes to her room to dress, a ruse to check the safe. Bimala notices how aggrieved Nikhil looks and feels guilty for her sins. She worries about Amulya's fate, knowing his willingness to take the blame for her theft will bring consequences on the boy she calls her "little brother."

The servants worry about Bara Rani's warning of a robbery and ask Bimala to hold their valuables in her safe. When she learns that Amulya has not returned, Bimala imagines some awful tragedy has befallen him. She takes out a pistol and puts it to her head but is interrupted by gongs signaling prayer time.

After her birthday celebration ends, Bimala goes to Nikhil's bed, laying her head next to his feet. However, he pushes her away. She moves outside to the verandah, utterly alone. Though she longs to die, Bimala feels her crimes will continue to haunt her even after death—she must come clean in this life. She sobs and prays for mercy. Nikhil tries to comfort her, and while Bimala is relieved, she expects to face "public humiliation" the next day.

Chapter-12

Nikhil reports that he and Bimala will leave the “bonds” of their marriage behind as they embark to Calcutta. As Bara Rani sees Nikhil packing, she asks if he will never come back. He replies that he will no longer confine himself to this compound. She brings Nikhil to her room to show him everything she has packed, and he is astonished to hear that she thinks she will accompany them.

Nikhil reflects on his relationship with Bara Rani, stemming back to when he was only six years old and she nine. They grew up together after she joined the household. He understands that the tensions between Bara Rani and Bimala arose because Nikhil’s marriage put another person between Nikhil and Bara Rani; at this point, Nikhil is the only lifelong relation Bara Rani has left.

Bara Rani encourages Nikhil to bathe and rest before the journey; however, she is upset when the inspector arrives with a prisoner to see Nikhil. To their surprise, the prisoner is Amulya, who was found in possession of the six thousand rupees missing from Nikhil’s treasury. Amulya will not reveal how he got the money. The Inspector knows Amulya is covering for someone. When Nikhil questions the boy, after the Inspector departs, Amulya still claims it was his work alone.

Amulya describes the robbery in detail, admitting to shooting Kasim and taking the rupees. Nikhil wonders why the boy would return the money now. Amulya asks to see Bimala and falls at her feet, as she credits him with “saving” her.

Nikhil intends to move Bara Rani’s money from the safe to the bank but is confused when the safe key is not on the keyring. Bimala comes to Nikhil as he finishes his dinner, and he asks about the key. She openly admits she has it, and when Nikhil says they will take the money out of the safe that evening, she also confesses to having already removed the money. Bara Rani asks what happened to the money, and Bimala only says she spent it.

Nikhil assumes the six thousand rupees in the safe, taken by Bimala, and the robbery committed by Amulya are connected but does not care to think about the details. He regrets trying to shape Bimala into a specific kind of wife rather than letting her flourish independently. Bimala appears in his doorway but hesitates to enter until he calls her in. She throws herself at his feet and sobs.

Bimala fully devotes herself to Nikhil as they leave for Calcutta. As Bimala packs, Nikhil comes to her, unable to sleep and longing for her companionship. Sandip

appears, wanting to return the sovereigns and jewels to Bimala; he feels “compunction” in his “hitherto untroubled conscience.”

Chandarath arrives, reporting that the Muslims are looting Harish’s treasury and abusing the women of the house. Nikhil intends to go to Harish’s, but Bimala is afraid for him to leave. When Bara Rani realizes he has left, she insists he be called back immediately, fearing for his life. Bimala watches out the window, while Bara Rani prays. Nikhil returns on a stretcher, gravely injured with a head wound. Amulya has been shot through the heart and killed.

5.1.3 Summary

The story of novel follows the life of Nikhil, who has just completed his bachelor’s degree and now pursuing his M.A. He has one faithful wife, Bimala, who is fully devoted to him. The third important character of novel is Sandeep, who has recently joined the Swadeshi Movement. The story begins with Bimala, a devoted wife who always try to fulfil her husband wish. She loves living like a traditional woman like waking up early in the morning, worshipping God and wearing vermilion etc. On the other side, we have Nikhil whose parents died a long time ago, since then his grandmother is the mistress of the house. Nikhil is jewel of her grandmother’s eye.

Nikhil is an open-minded person and very supportive husband who has allowed complete freedom to his wife to do anything in life. He believes that husband and wife are equal in love because of their equal rights on each other. He always force Bimala to explore outer world and start interacting with other people. He even hires an English tutor named Miss Gilby to teach English to his wife, Bimala.

The story now jumps to an era of Swadeshi Movement. The people who have been involved in Swadeshi movement are requesting all the people to boycott foreign goods and start using domestic goods. There comes a third important character named Sandeep, a leader of Swadeshi Movement and a good friend of Nikhil to whom Bimala meets when she joined Swadeshi movement by requesting her husband. The first time she met Sandeep was when he was giving motivational speech to his troops on boycotting foreign goods. Furthermore, she starts attending all the rallies and motivational speeches of Sandeep as she is deeply influenced by his charisma. Afterwards, she seem attracted to him.

One day, Bimala asks her husband, Nikhil to invite Sandeep for dinner at their home. Nikhil listens to his wife request and ends up inviting Sandeep at their home. As Sandeep come for dinner at Nikhil's home, he requests him to use his house as headquarter for few weeks. Nikhil without hesitation allowed him to use his house. As the story progresses, we follow Bimala and Sandeep who are falling for each other. Sandeep has started meeting Bimala secretly in her home. On the other side, we have Nihil, who is acquainted by the attraction of Bimala for his friend, Sandeep. Furthermore, Sandeep comes at Nikhil's home with his troops and ask him to boycott foreign goods. Nikhil denied his request as foreign goods are cheaper and more affordable than domestic woods.

Afterwards, Sandeep asks Bimala to give him fifty thousand rupees for the welfare of his troops. Bimala hesitates at first but than she agrees to give him fifty thousand. She sold all her marriage's jewellery to arrange 50 thousand for Sandeep. As soon as Sandeep gets money from Bimala, he runs somewhere very far away.

Bimala feels apologetic as she has betrayed her husband for someone who just runs away after stealing all her money. She decides to apologize to her husband. Nikhil comes home but he was in rush as troops are abusing women, so he decides to help them. On the other hand, Bimala is waiting for Nikhil to come back home, but when he returns, he was on stretcher in very bad condition. As Bimala saw Nikhil on stretcher, she started crying. The story of novel end with suspense, we do not know whether Nikhil lives or die.

5.1.4 Characters

1. **Bimala:** Bimala is the wife of Nikhil. She is the central character of the novel. A young, sheltered woman finds herself ragged between her loyalty to her husband and her growing fascination with Sandeep. She is the protagonist of the novel. Nikhil loves her very much. He wants to see Bimala as a modern and progressive woman, and he brings her out of the house's four walls. Although she initially attracts Sandeep and his revolutionary ideas. Her eyes opened when she learned about his reality and the goodness of Nikhil.
2. **Nikhil:** Nikhil is the husband of Bimala and a friend of Sandip later. He is also a Wealthy merchant. He supports and follows Western ideas. He has a very

calm and sweet nature. He is a liberal for the Swadeshi movement but also modern and progressive. He supports his wife, Bimala, in every situation and always agrees with her decisions. He is a patriot, too, as he agreed to serve his house as the Swadeshi movement's headquarters. He is an accommodating person. It is evident from the story how he put his life in danger to help the women stuck in the riots. He saved them from the mobs and sacrificed his own life.

3. **Sandeep:** Sandeep is a friend of Nikhil and is a confident and brave nationalist who fights for the independence of India. He strictly followed Swadeshi Movement and boycotted delivering foreign goods to India. He sinks the boat of Mirjan so that he cannot bring foreign items into the state. He betrayed Bimala and ran away after taking all their money and jewellery.
4. **Amulya:** Amulya is the disciple of Sandeep. Later he became the adopted son of Bimala. He is a very clever child who unthinkingly does anything he is ordered. Sandeep uses him for personal purposes. The mobs killed him in the riot while he was returning, looting the bank. Sandeep ordered him to do so.
5. **Mirjan:** Mirjan is a boatman who carries foreign items in his boat. Sandeep denied him doing so, but he disagreed and continued his work. Because he is a poor man and cannot quit his job. Later Sandeep sinks his boat in the water with the help of Amulya.
6. **Chandra Nathan Babu:** He is the schoolmaster of Nikhil. He arranged for a tutor named Gilby for Bimala to teach her English.
7. **Bara Rani:** Bara Rani is Nikhil's sister-in-law of Bimala. She is a widow living with Nikhil in his house. She dislikes Bimala and undermines her love for Nikhil.
8. **Note:** Abovementioned names and relations are according to the novel. The novel circulates only three main characters: Nikhil, Sandip, and Bimala.

5.1.5 Analysis

The story is centered on the personal evolution of Bimala, a woman who came from a poor economic class and was considered unattractive by cultural standards. Bimala was devoted to her husband, Nikhil, who came from an aristocratic family of

landowners. The difference in Nikhil and Bimala's social standing was a commentary on the caste system and the economic divisions in India at the time.

Tagore also used the contrasts in Nikhil's and Bimala's backgrounds to demonstrate Nikhil's love for Bimala, as Nikhil's family had always prized beautiful and wealthy women. By not following his family's tradition, Nikhil showed Bimala and the society around him that his devotion to her was more important than superficial ideas.

Bimala represents how women—regardless of social and economic class—were perceived and treated by society. Bimala was expected to live a domestic life by society, even though Nikhil had encouraged her to experience "the real world" by taking her to a political rally.

When Bimala met Sandip—a fiery, radical, and gifted debater—as a guest in their home, she was initially put off by his brash nature. However, she gradually became enthralled with his political views, particularly those on anti-imperialism. Sandip was a proponent of the Swadeshi movement, which promoted Indian independence and nationalism. The movement was a reaction to the British Empire's colonialist history in India.

Bimala transformed from a traditional housewife to an independent woman. Bimala's "awakening" is an analogy of Indian independence. At this point in the novel, Sandip represented the Swadeshi movement and Nikhil, although also politically-minded, represented the old system of serfdom and traditionalism.

The love triangle between Bimala, Nikhil, and Sandip represents the dilemma that Indians faced at the time: make progress toward independence or remain within their tradition. Although not explicitly considered feminist literature, Tagore deftly used feminist theory as an analogy to articulate the political complexities of India's push for independence.

When Sandip asks Bimala to steal money from Nikhil, she realizes the true nature of Sandip's intentions. For Sandip, stealing from Nikhil, who represented the wealthy elite in good standing with the colonial power, was a revolutionary act. However, Bimala thought that stealing from her own home was equivalent to stealing from her nation. With this realization, Bimala not only kept her newfound nationalism, she also refined it by learning that progress can only be achieved through ethical means.

Political movement

The novel is set in early 20th century India. The story line coincides with the National Independence Movement taking place in the country at the time, which was sparked by the Indian National Congress. There were various national and regional campaigns with both militant and non-violent ideas which all had the common goal of ending British colonial rule. Militant nationalism had a strong showing in the early part of the 20th century, especially during the World War I period. Some examples of this movement are the Indo-German Pact and the Ghadar Conspiracy, both of which failed.

Particularly important to the novel is an understanding of the Swadeshi movement as a part of the Indian Nationalist Movement. The Swadeshi movement started in response to the 1905 Partition of Bengal by Viceroy Lord Curzon, which temporarily separated Hindus and Muslims into different geographical areas. The Swadeshi movement was a successful resistance policy against British colonisation. Indian citizens were encouraged to boycott British goods to foster Indian identity and independence. This movement was important in fostering "the new spirit in India," and separating India from Britain, which was largely thought to be responsible for the subsequent widespread poverty.

Traditional Indian household

Family structures in traditional India consists of not only the nuclear family but also grandparents, parents-in-law, and unmarried sisters-in-law as well. Though the joint-family is linked to ancient India, it is still prevalent in modern-day India. Traditionally, baby boys were preferable to baby girls since boys were able to earn money and support the family, whereas girls were expensive to raise. In addition to being unable to work for a living, the girl's marriage dowry required a hefty amount of money and other luxury goods such as valuable jewelry and saris. Once girls were married off to the other families, they would have to address their new parents-in-law as "father" and "mother". As home maker of the family, the wife's duty was to supervise the household and take care of the children, as well as to please her new in-laws.

The Home and the World tells us not only of the personal struggles of the three main characters, but also little details of the family structure and what traditional Indian

households were like. At the opening of the novel, Bimala is a traditional, obedient house wife who is faithful to her husband, even forcing herself to be respectful towards her nagging sister-in-law. "I would cautiously and silently get up and take the dust of my husband's feet without waking him, how at such moments I could feel the vermilion mark upon my forehead shining out like the morning star" (11). However, as she falls "in love" with Sandip, she slowly weans herself from her traditional housewife role. She becomes more daring, more confidently brushing off her sister-in-law's criticisms, crossing outside the women's quarter of the house, and easily conversing with a man, Sandip, who is not her husband. Through her change from the good house wife to an independent, more modern woman.

5.1.6 Major events

The Rally

Near the beginning of the novel, Nikhil brings his wife Bimala to a political rally in an attempt to get her to join the outside world and get in better touch with "reality." Though Bimala had heard of Sandip before this time, and developed a somewhat negative opinion of him, this was the first time she heard Sandip speak. This event not only changes her opinion of Sandip, but affects her entire outlook on her life both at home and in the outside world. "I was no longer the lady of the Rajah's house, but the sole representative of Bengal's womanhood," Bimala says (31).

Bimala's realisation

Towards the end of the book Sandip convinces Bimala to steal from her husband, Nikhil. While in the act of stealing 6,000 rupees, she comes to a realisation of the terrible crime she is committing, "I could not think of my house as separate from my country: I had robbed my house, I had robbed my country. For this sin my house had ceased to be mine, my country also was estranged from me" (144). This represents a character turning point for Bimala: While in the act of thieving, she realises that Sandip is not only corrupting and robbing the nation, but encouraging her and others

to do the same. Ultimately, she ends up giving the money to Sandip and receives unceasing praise from both Sandip and Amulya for her newly recognised sin.

However, Bimala realises that she has made a mistake by stealing the money from Nikhil and attempts to have Amulya pawn off some of her jewellery to replace the money. Amulya attempts to give the box back, but Sandip steals it and gives it back himself. This event allows both Amulya and Bimala to see that Sandip is concerned only with himself, thus allowing them to break free from part of his web. It is during this time that Bimala realises her power over Sandip by being able to easily make him jealous.

5.1.7 Themes

Tradition vs modernism

As the title suggests, a major theme is the relationship of the home with the outside world. Nikhil enjoys the modern, western goods and clothing and lavishes Bimala with them. However, Bimala, in the Hindu tradition, never goes outside of the house complex. Her world is a clash of western and traditional Indian life. She enjoys the modern things that Nikhil brings to her, but when Sandip comes and speaks of nationalism with such fire, she sees these things as a threat to her way of life. Bimala's struggle is with identity. She is part of the country, but only knows the home and her home is a mix of cultures. She is torn between supporting the ideal of a country that she knows she should love, or working toward ensuring that her home, her whole world, is free from strife and supporting her husband like a traditional Indian woman should. Bimala is forced to try to understand how her traditional life can mix with a modern world and not be undermined. This theme ties in with the nationalism theme because it is another way that Tagore is warning against the possibility that nationalism can do more harm than good.

Sandip vs. Nikhil

Nikhil and Sandip have extremely different views for the growth of the nation. Nikhil demonstrates these beliefs in marrying Bimala, a woman considered "unattractive" as a result of her dark skin color. In the novel, Nikhil talks about disliking an intensely patriotic nation, "Use force? But for what? Can force prevail against Truth?" (45). On

the other hand, Sandip has contrasting views for the growth of the nation believing in power and force, "My country does not become mine simply because it is the country of my birth. It becomes mine on the day when I am able to win it by force". (45) The contradicting views of Nikhil and Sandip set up the story and construct a dilemma for Bimala. Unfortunately for Nikhil, he has already tried to show Bimala the outside world, and stir some sort of emotion within her since the beginning of the novel, and failed. Sandip possesses great oratory skill that wins Bimala over simply because of his passion and ferocity, something that her husband may lack.

Illusions

The constant forming of illusions in the novel grows to be a major recurring theme. Sandip tends to create illusions that almost always have negative effects on his followers and on the nation of Bengal. He builds an illusion of his beliefs that sucks the people of Bengal into a sort of cult. His illusion is complete sovereignty, free of all other worlds, and an endless supply of wealth and self enjoyment. This illusion, as many are, is a fake and a lie. It ultimately sells these people a front row ticket to watch their nation fall into complete chaos and civil war between people with different beliefs. He constructs an illusion for Bimala to believe, saying she is the future, women are the future, they are the chosen path to salvation. Bimala builds an illusion that she is to blame for this war, it is solely her doing. That she has done all wrong and no right. She refuses to accept that she too was a victim of "Bande Mataram". "I now fear nothing-neither myself, nor anybody else. I have passed through fire. What was inflammable has been burnt to ashes; what is left is deathless. I have dedicated myself to the feet of him, who has received all my sin into the depths of his own pain." (199) The biggest of all is Sandip's mask of caring and passion, while he hides his own selfishness and desire for the world.

Truth

In more than one way, this novel is a comparison of different views of truth. Which reality is truer is up to the reader's interpretation. Nikhil maintains an idealistic view of the world while Sandip takes a radical, nature-worshiping view. He feels Nikhil's view of the world is inferior to the real, raw world in which he lives as a radical leader. Bimala as well must compare truths. Through her interactions with Sandip, she is introduced to the truth of "shakti" (female power), yet her life with Nikhil is centred on

the truth of conjugality. Each of these instances is a comparison of truth as being something simply objective to being something with a more spiritual or moral dimension. While the story ends in tragedy, both views of truth are important players in the story's outcome, and it is left to the reader to ponder with which he or she agrees or disagrees.

Love and union

From the first page of the novel, the love and union between Nikhil and Bimala is illustrated as something sacred. Nikhil proved throughout the story that he was undeniably devoted to his wife. He proved this first by marrying a woman who hailed from a poor family, along with accepting her darker skin. He made great effort to not only educate her, but also for her to understand her place in the world and not just her place in the captivity of their house. He shows his love by giving her freedom. Bimala also adores her husband, but in a less material manner. This is demonstrated in Bimala's daily ritual of "taking the dust", an Indian ritual of reverence not usually performed by a wife to her husband.

Due to Bimala's extreme devotion to Nikhil, in the beginning of the novel, the union between the two of them is seen as one that cannot be broken. However, as the story progresses, Bimala is slowly overcome by her feelings for Sandip. She eventually realises that she has found in Sandip what she longed for in Nikhil, fierce ambition and even violent defence of one's ideals. Her deep desire for Sandip led her to completely break her sacred union with Nikhil, going as far as to steal money from her household funds. Sandip shows his love for Bimala through idolisation. This idolisation comes about due to her freedom, though.

The tale clearly presents the theme of love and union time and time again, going from Nikhil and Bimala's marriage, through the love triangle created by Sandip, and once again returning to Bimala's love for Nikhil at the very end. This story tests the boundaries of the union of marriage. It stretches and twists it to the point where a 9-year marriage is nearly destroyed simply because of a raw temptation. In addition to the idea of romantic love, there is a sense of love of one's own country depicted throughout the novel. Questions such as, is it best to love one's country through action, perhaps even violence, or by passive tolerance, are posed in the arguments of Nikhil and Sandip. While love and worship seem parallel in marriage, Nikhil

believes these feelings cannot apply to one's country. "To worship my country as a god is to bring a curse upon it". (29)

The role of women

Throughout the novel, as stated earlier, a strong sense of devotion is seen in the relationship between Bimala and Nikhil. It is key to notice that an indirect evaluation of the role of women is seen in this novel also, in a very subtle manner. In the society described, Bimala, like most women, blindly worships her husband. This can be seen when Bimala is described, "taking the dust of my husband's feet without waking him". When she is caught doing this act of reverence, her reaction is, "That had nothing to do with merit. It was a woman's heart, which must worship in order to love." (18). This scene shows the average woman in this society who believes love will happen and worship is a given in a marriage. She blindly respects her husband without understanding or having a grasp of who he is.

Another one of the many scenes that alludes to a woman's place in this society is when Nikhil and Sandip argue and Bimala is asked her opinion, which she finds unusual, in addition to "Never before had I [Bimala] had an opportunity of being present at a discussion between my husband and his men friends" (38). This line shows how there is a strong disconnect and there is no place, usually, for a woman in real world conversations. To further prove this, in Nikhil's story, the role of a woman is seen clearly, "Up till now Bimala was my home-made Bimala, the product of the confined space and the daily routine of small duties" (42). These indirect references and descriptions are quite frequent throughout the novel and clearly allows the reader to get a sense of what women were subject to and their overall role in the society.

Religion versus nationalism

One major theme in the novel is the importance of religion on the one hand and nationalism on the other. In this novel, religion can be seen as the more "spiritual view" while nationalism can be seen more as the "worldly view." Nikhil's main perspective in life is by the moral and intangible, while Sandip is more concerned about the tangible things, which to him is reality. Sandip believes that this outlook on life, living in a way where one may follow his or her passions and seek immediate gratification, is what gives strength and portrays reality, which is linked to his strong

belief in nationalism. From Sandip's point of view, "when reality has to meet the unreal, deception is its principal weapon; for its enemies always try to shame Reality by calling it gross, and so it needs must hide itself, or else put on some disguise" (Tagore 55). To Sandip, reality consists of being "gross", "true", "flesh", "passion", "hunger, unashamed and cruel" (Tagore 55). On the other hand, Nikhil's view is more concerned with controlling one's passions and living life in a moral way. He believes that it is, "a part of human nature to try and rise superior to itself", rather than living recklessly by acting on instinct and fleshly desires (Tagore 57). Nikhil argues that a person must learn to control his or her passions and "recognize the truth of restraint" and that "by pressing what we want to see right into our eyes we only injure them: we do not see" (Tagore 60). All these moral precepts tie in with his faith. Nikhil also speaks from a more religious perspective when he speaks of how "all at once my heart was full with the thought that my Eternal Love was steadfastly waiting for me through the ages, behind the veil of material things" (Tagore 66). This shows that Nikhil does not live morally just for the sake of trying to be good, but that it is grounded in his religious views. Sandip reiterates the fact that in their country, they have both "religion and also our nationalism" and that "the result is that both of them suffer" (Tagore 80).

5.1.8 Film, TV or theatrical adaptations

The film *Ghare Baire* was first released at the Cannes Film Festival in France on 22 May 1984, under the direction of Satyajit Ray. It was also nominated for the Golden Palm award, one of the highest awards received at the Cannes Film Festival. It was later released in the United States on 21 June 1985. The scriptwriters were Satyajit Ray (writer) and Rabindranath Tagore (novel). Sandip was played by Soumitra Chatterjee, Nikhilesh was played by Victor Banerjee and Bimala was played by Swatilekha Sengupta.

5.1.9 Socio Political Novel

Tagore's *The Home and the World* (Bengali *Ghare Baire*) seems to make a sharp distinction between two rival political impulses, Nikhilesh representing the pure passion for constructive work in *swadeshi* (nationalism), and Sandip its greed and

destructive energy .Nikhilesh worships nothing but truth which is greater than the country, and which is alone all temporary crazes; for Sandip the success of the moment, no matter by whatever means it is the only thing that matters. For Nikhilesh, the Ideal is the principal ingredient in the Real; for Sandip the Ideal is tolerable only when it is a means to the attainment of the Real. Bimala, the central character of the novel, who has been given a large number of autobiographical narratives than the other two principal characters, is torn between these two contending forces which exercise a powerful fascination over her mind. Nikhilesh's passion for absolute truth reminds us of the sages of ancient India, and the dominating force in Sandip's character is greed which is the lane of modern western nationalism. The novel has been regarded as an allegory, Bimala, standing for modern India, Nikhilesh for ancient India and Sandip for modern Europe.

However, many would feel that the real meaning and interest of the novel lies in its moving portrayal of man -women relationship, in the psychological conflict, in the personal drama of husband and wife knowing each other both at home and in the world. The swadeshi agitation is a necessary political backdrop only because it is through this upheaval that an Indian wife can suddenly tear the moorings of a sheltered domestic life and float adrift in the high seas of a countryside agitation. The novel is full of political discussions and they are important only in so far as they help to reveal the working in the minds of Sandip, Nikhilesh and Bimala. Ibsen's *Nora (A Doll's House)* and Tagore's *Bimala* belong to two different worlds. The former stands for an idea, which the latter is an individual woman who may be distantly connected with an idea. Unlike *Nora*, *Bimala* does not stand for women's liberation. When, early in the novel, Nikhil urges Bimala, so long a typical Hindu wife to come out of her secluded existence and to meet the world, Bimala is at first indifferent to the idea, saying 'what do I with the outside world.', Nikhilesh is not a Torvald Helmer and does not make a doll of his wife, neither does he try to impose anything of his own on her. A mighty political agitation that sweeps over the country and breaks the barriers of age, gives the Indian wife an opportunity to come out of her secluded existence. Not only does Bimala leave the introverted; but her mind and sight, her hopes and desires become red with the passion of the new ages. And it is at this time she meets Sandip, a fiery nationalist, who thinks and feels differently from her husband.

Sandip is frankly champion of greed and of the Nietzschean will to power. Bimala is fascinated by Sandip's impetuous vitality beside which her husband's love for truth, eternal and absolute, seems to be very thin. Bimala's burning devotion to her country is mined up with her attraction for the country's hero Sandip, who flatters her as the incarnation of *sakti*, the goddess from whom the son of Bengal will derive inspiration and energy.

Bimala does not share, Nikhilesh's ideas, and therefore, although she notices that Sandip's eloquence grows when he catches sight of her, she lets Sandip worm his way into her heart. Even when she finds herself on the high tide of excitement, she argues with her husband in support of Sandip's doctrines. Although Bimala and Sandip are drawn towards each other by what seems to be an insuperable attraction, the adulterous impulse is soon checked, Bimala discovers that behind the sparkle of Sandip's brilliance there is in him the slime of weakness, meanness and cowardice and she recoils in disgust.

Are we to believe that there has been a fundamental misalliance between Nikhil and Bimala which years of mutual devotion and trust have not been able to remove? Sandip, a keen observer and an analyst, says "How little these two persons, who have been together day and night for many years, knows something perhaps of their home life but when it comes to outside concern they are entirely at sea. Although Bimala does not explain anything, Nikhil fears that he might have acted as a fetter around her. Therefore, when the tension between them becomes acute, he tells her that she is free and he does not want to keep her as a garland around his neck. One sees therefore that Tagore's treatment of Bimala- Nikhilesh- Sandip tangle is much more subtle than E. M. Forster recognizes when he calls the novel simply a variation on the theme of triangular love and little more than a boarding house flirtation.

Review

The 'Home and the World' by Rabindranath Tagore is one of the books that are still relevant today though written in the 1920s. I read the English version, a translation of the original work by Sreejata Guha. The novel takes us to 1905, in India when the nationalist movement was picking up and revolves around three characters: Nikhilesh, a wealthy and broad-minded business or landowner, his timid yet educated wife

Bimala and his friend Sandip, a nationalist leader. The story is about the inner journeys of the three characters. The story is written in the point-of-view of the three characters, enabling us to inhabit their personalities in different chapters in no specific order. Of course, by doing so, we are forced to look at the Nikilesh, Bimala, and Sandip within ourselves.

I found Bimala's journey the most fascinating. Bimala had her worldview constructed by society: her duties as a woman are confined to the household. When Nikilesh encourages her to be part of the outside world, she meets Sandip, a nationalist leader. In the story, Bimala confronts the dilemma of choosing between Sandip and Nikilesh. Bimala represents most of us, who as young adults had a concept of the world and our role in it constructed by our circumstances, and yet it was once we were 'free,' we had to the opportunity to up our minds and chose the paths we want to take. Bimala's choices represent the liberal and global identity we carry with us (through Nikilesh) and the labels that are confirmed by borders and nations (through Sandip). Are we Indian first, or are we Hindus first? Are all Hindus the same? Should eating beef be prohibited? What does it mean to be Indian, should we then burn down all British goods? But what if in doing so most innocent Indian's lives are being affected? The questions that arise in the book are still relevant today in India.

Throughout the story, Sandip's and Nikilesh's perception of Bimala is challenged, and to whose vision Bimala's understanding would lean towards is a subject of the book. When Bimala realizes what she wants, it is truly a moment of liberation that connects with us. The other way of looking at Bimala's choices is through the nature of the two men: Nikilesh, a patient, decisive and dignified man, and Sandip, a charismatic and ambitious man. Which kind of man would be the most appropriate to achieving freedom for the country, especially when 'freedom' means different things to the man.

"Is there any country, sir," pursued the history student, "where submission to Government is not due to fear?" "The freedom that exists in any country," I replied, "may be measured by the extent of this reign of fear. Where its threat is confined to those who would hurt or plunder, there the Government may claim to have freed man from the violence of man. But if fear is to regulate how people are to dress,

where they shall trade, or what they must eat, then is man's freedom of will utterly ignored, and manhood destroyed at the root."

I could not help but connect with Nikilesh. His love and his ideologies are put to the test. He seems alone in his path, with the surroundings seeing his liberal views as anti-national or weak and his wife failing to recognize his patience and respect as love. He is well aware that his moral code would lead to tragic consequences for him, and his struggle to come to peace with this constant struggle is captured so well. Sandip, on the other hand, struggles to understand what his love for Bimala means, and how it would affect his ambitions. The way Sandip justifies his violent actions and the deterioration of his friendship with Nikilesh illustrates the blind spots in the nationalist movement. I highly recommend this book. With its many layers and journeys, I need to read this (at least) once more.

5.1.10 To Sum UP

In "The Home and the World," Tagore navigates the complexities of love, nationalism, and personal freedom against the backdrop of India's struggle for independence. Through the characters' journeys, Tagore explores the tensions between tradition and modernity, the roles of women in society, and the ethical dilemmas faced in pursuit of political and personal ideals.

Glossary

1. **Nationalism**- Patriotism, jingoism, chauvinism, loyalty to one's country
2. **Identity**-Individuality, selfhood, persona, character
3. **Independence**- Autonomy, freedom, self-reliance, sovereignty
4. **Gender Roles**- Sex roles, gender norms, societal expectations, stereotypical roles
5. **Love**- Affection, adoration, devotion, fondness
6. **Loyalty**- Allegiance, faithfulness, dedication, commitment
7. **Values**- Principles, beliefs, ethics, standards
8. **Conflict**- Struggle, disagreement, contention, discord
9. **Tradition**- Custom, heritage, convention, culture
10. **Modernism**- Progressivism, innovation, contemporary ideas, forward thinking

Self-Assessment Question

CHOOSE THE BEST ANSWER (1 MARK)

1. What is the central theme of "The Home and the World"?
 - A) Love and betrayal
 - B) Nationalism and independence**
 - C) Family dynamics and relationships
 - D) Tradition and modernity
2. Who are the three main characters in "The Home and the World"?
 - A) Nikhil, Bimala, and Sandip**
 - B) Mini, the Cabuliwallah, and the writer
 - C) Gora, Binoy, and Sandip
 - D) Anandamoyi, Satish, and Nikhilesh
3. What movement serves as the backdrop for the events in "The Home and the World"?
 - A) The Indian independence movement**
 - B) The feminist movement
 - C) The civil rights movement
 - D) The environmental movement
4. Who is Nikhil in "The Home and the World"?
 - A) A revolutionary leader
 - B) A wealthy and enlightened landlord**
 - C) A British colonial officer
 - D) A freedom fighter
5. What role does Sandip play in "The Home and the World"?
 - A) He is a loyal friend of Nikhil
 - B) He is a nationalist leader and agitator**
 - C) He is a British colonial administrator
 - D) He is a religious preacher
6. What is Bimala's initial role within the home in "The Home and the World"?
 - A) She is a revolutionary leader
 - B) She is a nationalist agitator
 - C) She is sheltered and confined within traditional gender roles**
 - D) She is a political activist
7. What influence does Sandip have on Bimala in the novel?

- A) He encourages her to maintain her traditional role as a wife
B) He inspires her to become more involved in the nationalist movement
C) He advises her to distance herself from political matters
D) He urges her to prioritize her personal desires over societal expectations
8. What does Nikhil represent in "The Home and the World"?
- A) Tradition and conservatism
B) Radicalism and rebellion
C) Enlightenment and tolerance
D) Oppression and tyranny
9. How does Bimala's relationship with Nikhil change over the course of the novel?
- A) She becomes more distant and resentful towards him**
B) She becomes more appreciative of his wisdom and kindness
C) She becomes increasingly critical of his beliefs and values
D) She becomes indifferent to his presence and influence
10. What is the ultimate outcome of Bimala's involvement in the nationalist movement?
- A) She becomes a prominent leader and activist
B) She realizes the limitations of nationalism and returns to her traditional role
C) She is ostracized by society for her radical views
D) She sacrifices her personal happiness for the greater cause of independence

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING IN 500 WORDS (10 MARKS)

1. What is the "concept of nationalism" in The Home and the world?
2. What are the themes and Character summaries in The Home and the World?
3. How does the character Amulya die?
4. What is a theme Of The Home and the World?
5. Analyze the character contrast between Nikhil and Sandip?

THE WRECK

5.2. The Wreck

5.2.1 Introduction

The Wreck is one of Tagore's early novels. The Bengali original, 'Naukadubi' was published in 1906. It starts with a boat overturning during a storm and the mistaken identity which results. Ramesh picks up a survivor of the tragedy thinking her to be his newly-wedded wife, whose face he has never seen. He brings her home and showers her with affection. When she discovers that Ramesh is not really her husband, she leaves him. Interposed with an exquisite description of nature, The Wreck is a moving story of complicated human relationships told with power and feeling. Tagore's own translation of his Bengali novel Naukadubi, that was written in 1906.

5.2.2 Summary

The main character of the novel is Ramesh, a law student in Calcutta. He is a regular visitor to his neighbor Annada Babu, and is in love with Annada Babu's daughter Hemnalini, which is known to almost everybody. After his examinations, he is called to his native place by his father, and is forcefully married to a girl of his father's choice. Partly because of custom and partly as a demonstration of protest, he never even looks at his bride's face. After marriage, during his return journey through river Padma, the boat capsizes and everyone in the marriage party dies, except for Ramesh and his bride. He takes her back to the village and it was only later that he learns that she is not really his wife but an orphan girl named Kamala, whose marriage was also on the same day and apparently she also hadn't seen her husband's face ever! Afraid that an immediate public announcement would cause misery to the girl, Ramesh keeps this information to himself. He enrolls her in a school in Calcutta and leaves her in the hostel. Slowly he resumes his relationship with Hemnalini and they get engaged, but then circumstances lead to revealing of the news that Ramesh was already married, and the engagement gets broken. Ramesh is totally lost, but he takes Kamala along with him to West, and settles in Ghazipur and spends days in dilemma regarding what to do. But Kamala soon learns that Ramesh is not her real husband, and she runs away from there. The rest of the

story is about how Kamala reunites with her "real" husband. Ramesh's story doesn't reach a happy climax in the end, but it is suggestive that he will also eventually get married to Hemnalini since all the misunderstandings get cleared.

The story is filled with many unbelievable coincidences which would seem like miracles. Ramesh himself exclaims at one part in the novel: "...Such a mix-up is worthy of an author like Fate, who will stick at nothing! It is in real life that the most extraordinary things happen - things that the most hardened novelist would never dare to spring on the public as his own invention!", as if it is Tagore himself making the excuse. Characters in the novel look familiar and are similar to those of other contemporary novels like Tagore's own Gora or Sarat Chandra Chatterjee's Charitraheen: a hard-core religious person, an idealist - moderate, a Brahma follower, a beautiful educated girl who speaks philosophy, an uneducated modest girl who always suffers everything silently, etc.- but there are no long philosophic discussions like that in Gora and the emphasis is more on the story always. In spite of the stereotype characters and crudeness of the plot, what makes Naukadubi interesting is Tagore's humanitarian vision that is seen in every word of the novel and his beautiful narration like that of Ramesh's and Kamala's boat journey to Ghazipur. The novel also gives a good picture about social life in those days.

5.2.3 Analysis

'The Wreck' (1921) translation by Rabindranath Tagore of his Bengali novel Naukadubi (1906) is based on the dilemma of mistaken identity resulting in a wife-swapping. It is a melodramatic story which has been delightfully told and diversified with descriptions of nature of extraordinary loveliness and is full of action and powerful human emotions. The Wreck has a cleverly constructed story strengthened with philosophy and concluding on a positive note. The hero, Ramesh, has been set in a web of fate; he cannot do anything as per his wish. In the end he gets free from this web of fate after doing his duty properly.

This novel explores the emotional quotients of the main characters. A natural disaster changes the courses of 4 lives. Fate plays an ugly game with four lives, which coincidentally cross each other at intersections of life. Ramesh, Hemnalini, Kamala and Nalinaksha are torn apart by call of duty and the devotion of love.

Conversations become insignificant as subtleties express the emotions. A trifle touching of feet creates a flurry of memories and passion runs high. A man caged by his commitment, a woman trying to accustom herself to the failed pursuit of love, a wife wooing her husband with her sweet nothings and a husband who is wounded but not bruised.

The story revolves around these four central characters. Ramesh, a Calcutta educated lawyer and Hemnalini a well-educated upper class woman who dabbles in rabindrasangeet as time pass. Their fates are relentlessly entwined but yet destiny plays a cruel trick on them. Ramesh compelled by his father and in certain measure owing to his own pity, marries a widow's only daughter who is as her mother puts it- illiterate but expert at household work. He barely had a glimpse at his own wife when tragedy befalls. In a thunderstorm the boat they were travelling in, overturns. Ramesh loses his father in the accident but a few feet from where he regains consciousness he finds a woman in a bride's garb. Thinking of her more as a duty than wife he takes her to his home in Calcutta and tries to be a responsible husband. Meanwhile, Hemnalini heart-broken at Ramesh's sudden desertion, recoils into her own shell. Her father takes her to Kashi to help her recuperate from mental trauma where she meets the charming yet kind-hearted doctor Nalinaksha. Incidentally, Nalinaksha had lost his wife in a boat wreck. The criss-crossing of the lives of the four central characters at times becomes confusing and a tad too boring. 'The Wreck' has to be seen from the point of that period's conventional morality. Chastity plays a major role in the novel. Morality is very important.

Boat wrecks are famed to wreck havoc, and therefore, a fascinating point to begin a narrative. That element of thrill was also there on the first pages of the Tagore novel as well; but, lost wind as the story unfolded. The author has indeed mastered the art of imagery to describe the character's emotions. 'The Wreck' opens beautifully and seductively, in a place we'd love to stay in, the book-filled and serenely comfortable Calcutta home where Hemnalini, a poised and lovely young woman, arranges flowers and sings a song of her dreams of a sweet married life soon to come. With the appearance of Ramesh, a perfect shape is given to a modern love relationship, a man and woman who are connected on every level, intellectual equals who tease each other about books they've both read and are also truly in love. The author successfully made us visualize the description of the Bengal's waterways from

Kolkata to Benares. . In the later part of the novel where Kamala sentimentalizes on her victimization is simply nerve-racking. There is of course beauty and lyricism that come from the fact that Tagore was essentially a poet at heart. There is certainly an analytical and realistic approach, but being a lyricist, he applied his grand imagination to real settings. The Wreck is an example of a dramatic, incredible story, which almost seems like it was written with the intent of shaking up a complacent and custom-driven Bengali society. It's not hard to see it as quite bold and progressive for its times.

On the downside, Tagore's story uses too many coincidences at every point. Also, the actual background reference of boat-wreck is of devastation. However the wrecks within are insipid in depiction. Even if we understand Ramesh's sense of binding obligation in front of Sushila's widowed mother, we don't fathom his reactions towards Hemnalini who he planned to marry without letting her know that he was already married. Similarly, Hem's attraction for Nalinaksha in Benares and then moving back to Ramesh seem too staged.

About 100 years ago, Tagore's fine idea must have been to adopt two kinds of plot situations, the shipwreck (and its consequences), and the "mistaken identity" tale, and use them to tell a totally Indian story, anchored in a familiar Indian situation, the arranged marriage: in a society where two strangers might be assigned to a lifetime together, what would it mean, and what could happen, if a man accidentally brings home the wrong bride from his wedding? A love-match disrupted, a shipwreck, a case of mistaken identity, people lost and then found, and amazing coincidences causing paths to cross and cross and cross again. 'The Wreck' has more to do with the potential for tragedy where actual identity is disregarded for the sake of tradition, and people are not able to live their lives as who they really are.

The ultimate psychological question associated with this story is, if the faith of a woman rooted in the everlastingness of her marriage, deep enough for her to break free from the spell of her first love (now a part of her subconscious)? But such questions do not have a universal answer. The novel looks at our deeply engrained sense of tradition and morality and what happens when it is in conflict with the dictates of the heart. Each character goes through this conundrum, and deal with it according to their individual situations in life.

The theme is clearly about nature versus custom. Each of the characters is forced to momentarily bend to accepted tradition, but ultimately a satisfactory resolution is found. The boat-wreck in some ways could be a metaphor for nature asserting itself and ending what it deems as unnatural.

Hemnalini and Kamala are two women who belong to opposite ends of the social spectrum. Hemnalini has the privilege of wealth, education and an indulgent father while Kamala considers her self unfortunate and is totally traditional Indian-rural woman. Both experience the same kind of emotions, but their social background ultimately determines how they react to their situation. . Their lives are fatefully tied to the same man, a young law student named Ramesh. Ramesh is in love with Hemnalini. Under family pressure he marries a woman he has never met, Susheela, but ends up bringing home a third woman, Kamla, by mistake.

Tagore wrote this novel on optimistic front as could be seen by how Hemnalini set out to survive her disappointment and get on with building a life; Kamla (who does not know she has the wrong husband) became determined to adjust and succeed as a wife in the marriage in which fate had placed her, even if it's not what she expected. But, the portrayal of Ramesh lets you ache for the life he's just lost, and also share the frustration of both Hemnalini and Kamla as long as neither one has what she longs for with him.

The author has woven a story that is full of complicated emotions way beyond our comprehension; still I easily connected with all the characters. And what probably makes me feel so regular is that I understood what he wrote and was able to relate to it in a manner that no one else can probably get me to.

5.2.4 Theme

Moderation versus Extremism

Throughout the novel, characters like Chandranath and Nikhil almost religiously ascribe to moderation in all facets of life, whereas characters like Bimala and Sandip take more extreme approaches. For instance, early in the story, Bimala wants to burn her foreign dresses in solidarity with the Swadeshi movement. Nikhil suggests that she should simply store them away and focus on building up something rather than destruction, but Bimala responds that the excitement of destruction will help them build. This exchange seems to sum up the main conflict in the story: Nikhil

attempts to make change through slow progress and moderation, whereas Sandip's philosophy is to take through bloodshed what he believes to be rightfully his. This is also seen when Sandip talks about poetry versus prose. He says that Nikhil is interested in poetry, which deals in the world of abstractions and ideals. Poetry can also be interpreted in various ways. On the other hand, Sandip talks about prose as weapons that will help them attain their goal. There is no room for relativity or other opinions in Sandip's approach.

While Sandip is the villain of the story, Nikhil's commitment to what he sees as truth beyond Sandip's fanaticism is still problematic. As Nikhil refuses to boycott European goods in his markets, he is suspected of siding with the enemy. At the end of the story, it is not entirely clear if he has been killed, but it is implied that he has been severely wounded. This occurs when Nikhil attempts to stop the abuse of women. His efforts to help were certainly valiant, but it was his moral commitment to a kind of moderation that ultimately ended in his (potential) demise. It may be that Tagore is warning us about the evils of extremism through the character of Sandip but also suggesting that too relative and moderate a stance can also be problematic, as it becomes unclear what one's values truly are.

Tradition versus Progressivism

The Home and the World also explores the theme of tradition versus progressivism. This story takes place in the early 1900s during the height of British colonialism, when India was just beginning to reclaim its independence from the British. In the story, Nikhil's approach to resistance anticipates Gandhi's Satyagraha movement, which was a form of civil disobedience while building up Indian infrastructure. This is seen in Nikhil's own investment of money into Indian banks or when Bimala offers to burn her British clothes early in the story, when she is still aligned with her husband's ways of thinking. Burning clothes was also a form of emerging nonviolent protest at the time. We might say that this less passionate approach, driven by symbols, politics and economy, aligns with a postcolonial way of thinking.

5.2.5 Review

The Wreck (1921) is a translation by Tagore of his Bengali novel Naukadubi (1906). It's one of the full length novels by Tagore and is based on the dilemma of mistaken identity which somehow leads to an exchange of wives. It is originally titled as

"Naukadubi" and appeared in English version in Tagore's life time itself. In my opinion the book is beautifully narrated and interspersed with descriptions of varied human emotions, it is full of action and powerful human interest. Through this novel Tagore suggests the rift between the reformist and progressive Brahmosamaj and traditional conservatism of Hinduism.

Another important aspect I noticed was that the novel had an ingeniously constructed story unburdened with philosophy and ended on an optimistic note.

The novel started with a boat wreck, which had to play a large part in future course of the novel. Two marriage parties were drowned in a boat wreck. Many people met with death, the only survivors being one of the bridegrooms, Ramesh and the other party's bride, Kamala. Kamala and Ramesh hadn't seen their life partners before, so they thought that they were the recently married couple. They tried to forget all the misfortunes and tried to settle somewhere. Ramesh sooner realised the error, and was full of remorse. Meanwhile he remained attracted to Hemnalini. There started the gap between them. Later on in the course of story, Kamala met her real husband, Dr. Nalinaksha. He accepted Kamala thus leaving Ramesh free to marry Hemnalini. According to me the novel is full of improbabilities and coincidences, yet it continues to enjoy popularity because of the positive way in which the novel unfolds. Though the novel began on a tragic note, its optimistic ending would have satisfied any reader. Even though the characters and the turn of events are from another era, I didn't find any problem in connecting with the characters, thanks to the well-thought over way in which Tagore wrote the novel. I genuinely felt like going inside the book and giving each of them a sound thrashing for the way they are thinking & behaving.

What makes 'The Wreck' a good read is the poetic gems at almost every page of the book. Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) is One of India's most cherished renaissance figures, who put India on the literary map of the world when his Gitanjali was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913. Myriad-minded, he was a poet, short story writer, novelist, dramatist, essayist, painter and composer of songs. His worldwide acclaim as a social, political, religious and aesthetic thinker, innovator in education and a champion of the 'One World' idea makes him a living presence. His lyrical nature was pretty evident from the poetic way by which he managed to make

me ponder over a sentence or phrase and hence amazed me at the simplicity and in-depth thought with which it was put in front of me... i feel it was really appraisable....

In short, *The Wreck* came across as a sensitive story, which was well woven around the lives of four people and kept me entangled throughout though sometimes the plot proceeded too slowly. Set in the Bengali background of 1920s the novel is based on the philosophy of true love, eternal loyalty and patience. These words might sound a tad bit dated to today's generation, but the story is progressive in its own way. It subtly takes on the social conventions and questions the credibility of marriage as an institution.

5.2.6 To Sum UP

"*The Wreck*" by Tagore delves into the psychological aftermath of a shipwreck, exploring themes of isolation, survival, and existential crisis. Through the protagonist's introspective journey, Tagore probes the depths of human resilience and the search for meaning in the face of adversity, offering poignant reflections on mortality, fate, and the fragility of human existence.

Glossary

1. **Duty**- Responsibility, obligation, commitment, task
2. **Societal Expectations**- Cultural norms, social conventions, community standards, public demands
3. **Honesty**- Integrity, truthfulness, sincerity, candor
4. **Communication**- Interaction, dialogue, conversation, discourse
5. **Adversity**- Hardship, difficulty, misfortune, adversity
6. **Resilience**- Toughness, strength, endurance, fortitude
7. **Complexities**- Complications, intricacies, nuances, difficulties
8. **Emotions**- Feelings, sentiments, emotions, moods
9. **Responsibilities**- Duties, obligations, tasks, roles
10. **Aspirations**- Ambitions, goals, dreams, desires

Self-Assessment Question

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING IN 500 WORDS (10 MARKS)

1. How do love and duty intersect in the novel, and what challenges do the characters face in balancing personal desires with societal expectations?
2. Analyze Ramesh's character development throughout the story, focusing on his journey from love-struck law student to conflicted husband and eventual partner.
3. Discuss the impact of societal norms on the characters' decisions and actions, particularly regarding marriage and family.
4. Explore the themes of honesty and communication in the novel, and how misunderstandings and secrets affect the relationships between the characters.
5. Reflect on the theme of resilience and redemption, and how Ramesh and Kamala overcome challenges to find hope for the future.

Further Reading

Anita, Desai. Introduction. *The Home and the World*. By R. Tagore. Hammondsworth: Penguin Book, 2005.

Ghosh Tapobrata. "The Form of *The Home and the World*." *R. Tagore's The Home and The World, A Critical Companion*. Ed. Pradip Kumar Datta. London: Anthem Press, 2005.

Tagore, Rabindranath. *The Home and the World*. Hammondsworth: Penguin Book, 2005.

Rabindranath Tagore, *The Wreck*. New Delhi : The Mercantile Company of India Ltd., 1980.

M.Sarada, Rabindranath Tagore, *A study of women characters in his novels*. New delhi: Sterling Publishers pvt. Ltd. 1988.

<https://ayushantiwal.com/summary-of-home-and-the-world-by-rabindranath-tagore/>

<https://harpercollins.co.in/product/the-boat->
