

Literature as an Instrument of Social Change: A Reflective Study of Rabindranath Tagore's Select Short Stories

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Abstract

Change is a never-ending process as it occurs in every aspect of society. Thus, it is apt to say that society is subjected to continuous change because it is impossible for a society to remain constantly static. In view of this, the paper aims at to conduct a reflective study of Rabindranath Tagore's select short stories and tries to find how can literature become an instrument of social change?

Keywords: Rabindranath Tagore, Social Change, Literature

Introduction

“Social change may be defined as modification in ways of doing and thinking of people.”

- M.D. Jenson

Education and society complement each other. Education, in the context of society, can therefore be considered as one of the major factors to bring desirable changes in the thought and action of the people; which in brief, can be called as social change. Hence, the issue of behavioural modification that affects the social change, needs a powerful instrument which reflects our acts and deeds in perfect manner. In this context, the role of literature comes into play. In this way, it can be said that Education and Literature also complement each other. In social context, the place of literature in education is high because literature educates us to know our life to the fullest. While talking about education and literature a name naturally comes to our mind, i.e., Rabindranath Tagore who devoted his life for the welfare of society through his varied literary creations as well as the exemplary educational experiments that he executed at Santiniketan (1901) and Sriniketan (1922).

Rabindranath Tagore flourished as a literary artist when British colonialism was at its peak. Therefore, his entire literary works reflect the realities of the contemporary society of his time. Women, environment, community and most importantly education system were the burning issues of that time. In literary context, the reflection of all these social issues can be observed in his short stories in a most concise and concentrated manner. Hence, it can be said that the short stories of Tagore became a tool to critique the prevalent issues of the then society. Because, through depicting the social realities (of his time) in his short stories, Tagore enables the people of the society to feel the urgency of changing

their outlook towards those social issues in order to bring desirable changes in the society. In view of this, the present study therefore aims to substantiate how Tagore's short stories become instrumental in modifying the 'ways of doing and thinking of people', the words which M.D. Jenson used while defining the idea of social change.

The portrayal of different characters in the short stories thus become the spokesperson for Tagore's aim to change mindset of our society. The characters like Mrinal, Balai, Kamala and the Parrot in the respective short stories such as *Streer Patra (The Wife's Letter)* (1914), *Bolai (Balai)* (1928), *Musolmanir Galpo (The Story of a Muslim)* (1941) and *Totakahini (The Parrot's Training)* (1918) earned a legendary acclamation in the field of literature and social science as they speak for such issues which are still considered as burning problems of our society. The present study therefore hinges on Tagore's short stories and its social reflections.

Streer Patra (The Wife's Letter) (1914)

Substance

The story is written in epistolary structure - the letter from the wife shapes the entire narrative. The text involves the letter as a casing for the story. It recounts the tale of Mrinal, a young lady from an unfortunate family, wedded into a *blue-blooded* joint family of Calcutta. She is picked as a lady, as a result of her excellence. Notwithstanding, her knowledge ends up being the vital component in the story. Ladies in the family lead a day-to-day existence that is restricted to the kitchen and the room. Mrinal's sister by marriage accepts the tradition unquestioningly. But Mrinal is unique; she takes a free position on a few homegrown issues, and covertly composes verse. Her little girl kicks the bucket not long after birth. The turning point in Mrinal's life gets when Bindu, her sister-in-law's sister, comes there to stay. The family is troubled at this turn of events. They deal with Bindu like an unpaid servant, with Mrinal alone going to bat for her. To dispose of the issue, the men force Bindu into an organized marriage, and, surprisingly, her sister believes this to be the best arrangement. Be that as it may, Bindu's better-half ends up being deranged and savage. Yet again Bindu looks for cover with her sister. Presently, nonetheless, the circumstance has become illogical, and Bindu ends it all. In the interim, Mrinal has figured out how to get authorisation to go on a journey to Puri with family members. Through these grievous occasions, she has come to understand that ladies have no opportunity in a male dominated culture. Remaining on the beach at Puri, she decides, and composes a letter to her significant other announcing that she would never return to the house of her in-laws.

Social Aspect

In relation to the portrayal of women in the short stories, it is observed that from 1914 to 1941 Tagore's heroines vehemently protested against the social evils like widow-remarriage, untouchability, the rigid caste-system, and patriarchy at large. *Streer Patra (The Wife's Letter)* was written during that period. Mrinal, the heroine, perhaps, one of the most powerful portrayals of a woman speaks against the evils of patriarchy. A young woman who does not think twice to leave her husband after her family forces her sister-in-law's younger sister into an abusive marriage. Observing the abusive treatment by the family towards those who belong to the lower position, Mrinal leaves

her better half and takes refuge at Puri. She sends him a letter disclosing that he attempted to kill her interests, and abilities, regarded her as an accessory, and never stood up for the wrongs his family did to her, and subsequently lost her regard a long time ago. Through the character of Mrinal, Tagore described a woman who was not afraid to choose herself before her in-laws, despite the oppression from society towards her boldness and her firm decision to become a writer and create an independent life for herself. Thus, in the truest sense, Tagore makes every effort to be a feminist, as he empowers his heroines to fight for an equal status amongst the sufferings of patriarchy during the 19th century. In relation to the social aspect of the text, it can be said that *Streer Patra* (The Wife's Letter) successfully reflects the issue of Women Empowerment.

Totakahini (The Parrot's Training) (1918)

Substance

In this short story, once the king felt the need to educate a parrot who was considered as stupid. The responsibility to teach the parrot was given to the nieces of the king. The scholars from the royal society were called. At the end of the meeting, they decided that the nest that the bird builds naturally with a little straw is not favourable for his further education. Therefore, the golden-cage was built for the birds as advised by the royal-scholars. Curious people from home and abroad came to see the wonderful cage. The bird being taught Science being by Pandit Moshai. Copied books were hugely piled written by different writes. The repair and maintenance of the cage was started simultaneously. The king was keen to observe the teaching-learning process of the parrot with his own eyes. The king arrived to the school with his friends. Suddenly, playing of different musical instruments were started. The actual purpose of arrival of the king to the school was overshadowed in such a hustle and bustle arrangement to welcome him (the king). Meanwhile, the bird gradually became immature because of the tremendous pressure of education. One day, the parrot was seen continuously trying to cut the shackles of the cage with his thin lips. Looking at the disrespect of the parrot, the angry Kotwal called Kamar. Interestingly, this time the chain was prepared for the bird, and also his wings were cut. Scholars were also ready to teach with pen in one hand and spear in the other. At the end, the bird died.

Social Aspect

Tagore realised the fact that the enforced educational ideals perished the values of conventional teaching-learning environment and he depicted the very reality through the portrayal of a parrot's life. The text as a symbolic satire unfolds the realities of our society in a light-hearted manner as the king symbolises the coloniser and the parrot becomes the symbol of the colonised. The ironic part of the text is that the attitude of the king who himself being a significant part of this society does not have the intellect to understand that without the presence of love, and respect for individual traits the real means of education cannot be attained. The time when Tagore drafted the text British colonisation was at its peak, as a result, it is the infiltration of the western culture through education which resulted in the death of the cultural traits that are inherent in our society, and in the story the death of the parrot symbolises the very truth. A holistic man can create a holistic society because education and society complement each other. Thus, in a positive note, the text enables us to realise the declining state of

our conventional education system must be redeemed by taking recourse to the old-age values our education system. As for the social aspect, it can be said that *Totakahini* (The Parrot's Training) (1918) successfully reflects the issue of Restoration of Values in Conventional Education.

Bolai (Balai) (1928)

Substance

Bolai, a motherless kid, and has been put into the care of his uncle and aunt. The uncle and aunt don't have their own child; that may be the sole reason why the aunt loves Bolai so much. She loves Bolai as though he were her own son. As a kid child was so quiet who likes to live in complete harmony the trees and plants, considering them as his best friends. Interestingly, a silk cotton (Simul) seedling has been nurtured under his care that grows into a big tree. Bolai has a deep affection for the tree but the tree looks ugly as it has grown right in the centre of the pathway. His uncle wants to cut it down, but Bolai does not want to do so. Few years later, Bolai's father comes and decided to take him away and move abroad. Bolai bids farewell to his uncle and aunt, and also the very special tree. Bolai is not able to forget the tree and writes a letter to his aunt where he requests her to send a photograph of the tree. Unfortunately, the letter arrives late, the uncle who has already chopped down the tree. As a result, photographs remained unsent. The aunt, however, looks very distressed because the child was taken away from her; importantly, the tree provided her solace, in her unhappiness, as it brought loving memories of her dear Bolai. But it was the he last hope for her, the tree which has also been cut down.

Social Aspect

There is an integral relationship between Man and Trees. The story *Balai* (1928) becomes didactic in this context as it teaches us the lesson of mutual respect between man and trees through the central character of Bolai. Our society cannot sustain unless there is an amicable relationship between man and trees and through the little-heart Bolai Tagore endeavours to depict the very truth. Ironically, Bolai's affection towards the silk cotton tree is unquestionable although he was not in such age to understand the deep ecological aspect of tree plantation whereas the uncle of Bolai, being a matured man reflected his utmost indifference towards the tree as it has grown at the middle of the house. Bolai's love for tree is completely natural as his aunt's love for Bolai. Tagore's has intertwined both the relationships interestingly as Bolai's affection for the tree remained same after his departure from his uncle's house, similarly his aunt's missing of Bolai till the end of the text. The symbolic aspect of the text also lies herein. Bolai's detachment from the tree and his aunt's detachment from Bolai created the imbalance in both the souls which has been coalesced beautifully in this text by Tagore. The cutting of tree at the end is also symbolical as it not only denotes a personal loss of Bolai but also an ecological collapse for the society at large. In a positive note, for the creation of a sustainable society *Bolai* (Balai) (1928), the story, speaks for the issue of Ecological Consciousness which undeniably, is the need of the hour. The social aspect of the text lies herein.

Musolmanir Galpo (The Story of a Muslim) (1941)

Substance

It is the story of Kamala, a Brahmin girl, brought into those turbulent times when having a daughter at home was a curse of God. Kamala was raised by her uncle. Kamala's uncle forced her to marry a wealthy as well as notorious bridegroom, the second son of Paramananda Seth of Mochakhali. After the marriage ceremony, her palanquin gets attacked by a dacoit, Madhu Molla. Her husband fled the scene. Fortunately, she was saved by an old saint Habir Khan who gave her shelter and began training her ways of safeguarding herself. Kamala becomes Meharjan toward the end of the story and rescues her sister from Madhu Molla. To be precise, for the rest of her life, she remains with Habir Khan and devotes her life for the welfare of the deserted and repressed Hindu girls.

Social Aspect

A society cannot move holding its head high until the communal barriers is completely diminished. The reflection of this very truth can be observed in this Tagorean text. The transformation of identity of a Brahmin girl from Kamala to Meharjan with the involvement of Habir Khan clearly depicts the very fact that humanity precedes communality. Tagore's creation of certain messianic character like Habir Khan stands as a symbol of uprooting the narrow outlook of our society as he breaks the communal lens in order to welcome the natural human values like love and mutual respect. It is notable in the text that Habir Khan does not force Kamala to turn her religious identity rather he shows the respect for the religious identity of Kamala and gives shelter to her and it is just for the shake of utmost love for the religion Kamala willingly changed her religious identity and becomes Meharjan. By creating both the exemplary figures like Habir Khan and Kamala (or Meharjan) Tagore aims at to open the eye of his countrymen that communal violence spreads negativity in the society as the time when he wrote the story the conflict between communities, particularly Hindus and Muslims, were at its peak. Hence, in social context, *Musolmanir Galpo* (The Story of a Muslim) (1941) spreads the hymn of Communal Harmony that aims at to welfare of society at large.

Streer Patra (The Wife's Letter) (1914)

(Social Aspect: Women Empowerment)

Educational Implications

Empowerment refers to the authority or power given to someone to do something. As the entire text is in the form of a letter (which denotes a written communication that requires the knowledge of alphabet), therefore, in the context of education, from the particular short story, a very significant conclusion can be drawn, i.e., equalisation of educational opportunities. As it is known that equality of education encapsulates the provision of education for all, irrespective of sex, caste, creed, religion and location, thus, the very undertone of this idea can be observed in Mrinal's letter to her husband in *Streer Patra* (The Wife's Letter) (1914). The very idea of empowerment roots in the 3 Rs of education-Reading, Writing and Arithmetic and the truest sense of women empowerment lies in this very idea. Mrinal's letter speaks for the freedom of women from the domestic boundaries and in reality, it is possible when a woman is literate vis-à-vis educated. In praxis, being a socially conscious person Tagore observed the miserable condition of women in our society and it is needless to say that Visva-

Bharati at Santiniketan, in purest sense, is the embodiment of Tagore's educational thoughts. Education for Tagore is indivisible in nature (because it cannot be separated as men education and women education) and Visva Bharati is the radiant example of this statement where he celebrated the uniformity of education as all men and women from all over the world regularly come to exercise their educational opportunities in a truest sense. Perhaps, in reality, the idea of women empowerment can be established only when our society stops to stereotype women and starts giving right to them to exercise their knowledge in each and every field of our society, and in the context of education, Tagore boldly speaks for it through Mrinal's letter in *Streer Patra* (The Wife's Letter) (1914).

Totakahini (The Parrot's Training) (1918)

(Social Aspect: Restoration of Values in Conventional Education)

Educational Implications

Restoration refers to the action of returning something to a former condition. Notably, if a child is alienated from his/her cultural root he/she could not achieve the true education- Tagore realised the very fact and in the text the Parrot symbolises that child who is detached from his/her indigeneity due to the forceful instruction of the King which is symbolical to the superfluity of the western education. Therefore, in the context of education, from the particular short story, a very significant conclusion can be drawn, i.e., a child learns in naturality not in artificiality. The practical aspect of this statement can be best seen at Tagore's Brahmacharyasrama (1901) where a teacher goes beyond the book-learning as he enables the child to enjoy the entire process of learning, instead of sitting in a *cage-like* (like the parrot in the text) classroom the guru literally frees the child to sit under a tree and experience learning by self, that eventually guides them to inculcate the values of education and also enables them to develop all the three levels of their personality- emotional, intellectual and spiritual. The satirical depiction of the western style of education in *Totakahini* (The Parrot's Training) (1918), i.e., stuffing the dry papers into the parrot's mouth, forces the bird to die that is symbolical to the decline of the old-age tradition of Indian style of education, urges Tagore to create something new in order to restore the values in convention education in modern times, and at Santiniketan he conceived a new pattern of education system which referred back to the ancient method of teaching and learning in India and very significantly he connects the thread between India and the other parts of the World, as a result, the ashrama becomes the hub for the study of humanity at large which is absolutely beyond the limits of nation and geography. It is noteworthy that a person cannot deny his/her society and culture. Hence, as far as Tagore's educational philosophy goes the truest sense of restoration of values in conventional education can be accomplished only going beyond the classroom teaching and enabling the learners to perceive the creative aspects of life in order to face the real challenges of his/her daily routine rather than imparting the rote knowledge, and in this way, the larger aim of creating the social and cultural sustainability is possible.

Bolai (Balai) (1928)

(Social Aspect: Ecological Consciousness)

Educational Implications

Consciousness refers to the state of being aware of something. In this light, it is undeniable that our education remains incomplete if we are not properly aware about the pros and cons of our environment. It is true that our existence is possible because of nature, and it is needless to say that trees are the integral part of our natural environment. In this note, it can be said that little Bolai, in the text, is symbolical to such self of a particular person who is aware about the necessity of trees for the protection of the natural life. As education speaks for the comprehensive development of a person's body, mind and soul, therefore, it can be aptly said that if a person is not properly aware about his/her environment then he/she cannot be considered as truly educated, and notably, in the text *Bolai* (Balai) (1928), it is Bolai's uncle who proves himself as a symbol of such self who lacks the awareness about his/her natural world. Thus, in the context of education, from this particular short story a very significant conclusion can be drawn, i.e., the peaceful co-existence of man and trees is the core of environmental education. For Tagore the essence of environmental education lies in praxis. The theoretical aspect of it becomes meaningless unless a child is not connected to nature and its elements directly. The exercising of environmental education can be observed in the truest sense at Tagore's Santiniketan where Trees, Soil, Grass, Stones, Sand, Animals and other natural elements are the integral parts of the *ashramic* curriculum along with subjects like literature, science, history, geography etc. In this light, it can truly be said that the ashram at Santiniketan, becomes a hub of experiential learning for a child where he/she observes the natural elements sitting under a tree and experiences the relationship between the natural phenomena with his/her own life, and in this way, the child creates his/her own interpretation of all the textbook matters of different disciplines that exist in the curriculum. Notably, creation and destruction are the two selves of a same person. The more nurtured self overpowers the other. Hence, in the context of education, it is Bolai's nurturing of the silk-cotton (Simul) seed and helping it to become a big tree, justifies Tagore's philosophy of education, as a child gets the opportunity nurture his creative self, receiving the pure knowledge about man and nature relationship through experiencing the natural elements directly, he/she gradually becomes ecologically conscious, and in this way, he/she eventually comes out of his/her destructive self, the textual reference of Bolai's uncle who cuts the tree just for the sake of the existence of the silk-cotton (Simul) tree at the centre of the house substantiates the very argument. It is worth mention that the larger aim of creating a sustainable society is possible in this way.

Musulmanir Galpo (The Story of a Muslim) (1941)

(Social Aspect: Communal Harmony)

Educational Implications

Communal harmony refers to togetherness of all communities of all countries with a sense of brotherhood as well as equality, irrespective of caste, creed, religion etc. A society cannot exist in isolation; there must be a sense of co-operation, collectiveness and most importantly we feeling. It is worth mention that plying on this path peace can be created in our society. In the text both Habir Khan and Kamala become the symbolic figures of togetherness that leads to building of peace in our

society. Thus, in the context of education, from this particular short story a very significant conclusion can be drawn, i.e., learning to live together, which notably, is one of the four pillars of education suggested by UNESCO in 1996. Interestingly, at Santiniketan, Tagore brought the very idea into praxis way back in 1901 at the time of the establishment of Brahmacharyasrama and after the set-up of Visva-Bharati in 1921 the scope of practice becomes greater. Significantly, in *Musolmanir Galpo* (The Story of a Muslim) (1941) when Habir Khan welcomes Kamala wholeheartedly at his home breaking all the communal barriers, the overall scenario undoubtedly stands an exemplary symbol of communion of one religion with the other; and through this Tagore aims at to imply the idea to build peace by living together. In a larger context, it is interesting to note that the meaning of Visva-Bharati, i.e., the communion of the world with India not only makes Santiniketan the abode of peace but also enables us to learn to live in harmony which undeniably, is one of the major aspects of Rabindranath Tagore's educational philosophy. In addition, living in harmonious living of different communities create the scope for cultural assimilation as well and in the text Kamala's wilful transformation from Hindu to Muslim is a suitable example for this argument and the practical side of this, can be best seen at Visva Bharati, Santiniketan which undeniably, is the 'Nest' (as Tagore rightly used the word) of cultural confluence. Hence, in educational context, it is apt to say that exercising to live in harmony not only enables us to inculcate the values of universal brotherhood but also opens a new vista for the creation of a sustainable society, which of course, is the larger aim of education.

Streer Patra (The Wife's Letter) (1914)

Relevance in the 21st Century Society

Women empowerment is still one of the most important concerns of 21st century. Practically we observe International Women's Day every year but we should ask questions to ourselves that has a woman been truly empowered? Or the concept of women empowerment is only to eulogise women? Because women in our society are still a victim of various social evils. The unequal gender norms are still prevailing in our society in terms of education, employment and social structure. In this context, Mrinal's question to her husband is not just the her personal one rather it is the collective voice of the women against the patriarchal society which is undeniably relevant in the 21st century as it was in the 19th century. The girl like Bindu can still be found in our society whom we may term as socially dis-empowered because they receive ill-treatment from our society for which they considered themselves as underprivileged. Hence, it can aptly be said that Tagore's *Streer Patra* (The Wife's Letter) (1914) is a text that is perennially fresh and interesting because it reflects such an issue which is contemporary to all the centuries to come.

The Text as an Instrument of Social Change

As we know that the realities of society reflect in literature. Therefore, like all other literary creations, the short story *Streer Patra* (The Wife's Letter) (1914), a literary genre, can be considered as an important tool or instrument to change the outlook of our society towards the women in a positive way. The content of the text is purposeful because it clarifies the fact that women empowerment, truest sense, is possible only when each and every woman in our society can be able to promote their

self-worth, their ability to determine their own choice, and their right to influence social change for themselves and others.

Totakahini (The Parrot's Training) (1918)

Relevance in the 21st Century Society

Nowadays, in conventional teaching-learning practice (means formal education) the term values-based education, is very popular, in candid, it denotes learning about self and wisdom of life. In order to make the formal education self-exploratory, the experts are designing the curriculum in such a way that could be favourable to develop the abilities and behaviour of a child in a systematic and scientific manner, so that the child could disseminate the positive values in the society in which he/she lives. Thus, it is noteworthy that in the National Education Policy-2020 a special emphasis has been given to educate the child with vocational courses from the school level so that a child could be able to connect his life (self) with the society at a tender age. Interestingly, Tagore not only visualises the values of vocational courses way back in 19th century but also, he implemented and practised the very course at Sriniketan in 1922 as the subjects like art & craft, pottery, ceramic, wood craft etc. had been given equal status with the mainstream subjects like literature, science, mathematics and others. In this light, it can aptly be said that as our society gets mirrored in literature, so, in *Totakahini* (The Parrot's Training) (1918) the Parrot's death has been caused due to the absence of values in education. Hence, the freshness of the text lies in its content as it depicts such issue which is the need of the hour, so, it can aptly be said that the particular story is equally relevant in the 21st century as it was in the time of Rabindranath.

The Text as an Instrument of Social Change

As one cannot deny the integrity between society and literature, therefore, like all other literary works, the short story *Totakahini* (The Parrot's Training) (1918) can be considered as an effective tool or instrument to change our outlook because it enables us to perceive the necessity to restore the values in conventional teaching-learning process. As an instrument of social change, the subject-matter of text reflects the urgency of such curriculum in present education system that can help the students to become more and more responsible and sensible to understand the perspective of life in a better way and lead a successful life as a responsible citizen, in addition, he/she can develop a strong relationship with other members of the society.

Bolai (Balai) (1928)

Relevance in the 21st Century Society

In modern time, as far as the idea of ecological consciousness go it needs a deep respect for the natural word and all the things within it, therefore, in such cases the cognitive, ethical and emotional aspects of a person are regulated through the lens of ecological consciousness. Notably, in the character, Bolai one can observe all three developmental aspects that is required to be considered as an ecologically conscious individual. In this light, it is noteworthy that, the modern society speaks for the improvement of the quality of life, plying on the path of sustainable development, and to do so, a person's healthy interaction with the natural environment is the utmost necessity. In addition, it must

be mentioned that a truly eco-coconscious person should have the quality to create a balance between his social activities and his environmental activities. For instance, in the text *Bolai* (Balai) (1928), when the little-boy was separated from the tree due to his father's intervention, instead of getting nervous, he accepted the situation because it was the demand of his family, but though he stayed away from the silk-cotton tree, he asked his aunt about the tree through letter, it reflects the balanced attitude of Bolai towards life and environment. Thus, it can aptly be said that Tagore crafted the content of the text in such a way that has a contemporary feeling, for which the story remains relevant in the 21st century.

The Text as an Instrument of Social Change:

As literature is an inseparable part of our society, so, like all other literary products of Tagore, *Bolai* (Balai) (1928), the short story can also be considered as an effective tool to change the attitude of people of the society towards environment. The content of the text remains instrumental to social change because from the overall character of Bolai we can imbibe the spirit of becoming ecologically aware by educating ourselves in such a way so that we can apply our pedagogic sense of the natural world for the protection of environment and the society at large.

Musolmanir Galpo (The Story of a Muslim) (1941)

Relevance in the 21st Century Society

Today, in order to co-exist peacefully, communal harmony, is a prerequisite for any country. For example, a country like India, in 21st century, with its diverse population and cultures, seeks recourse of mutual tolerance, which undoubtedly, is a necessity for all times for all races. It is noteworthy that we cannot live in peace if we will not tolerate each other's customs and rituals. In this context, it is worth mentioning that India observed the period of chaos in between 1921 to 1940, as in 1926 on the day of Muharram, 28 persons were killed in a communal riot. It is interesting to note that the drafting time of the story *Musolmanir Galpo* (The Story of a Muslim) (1941) was one year after that turbulent timeline. In addition, India witnessed its worst communal riots in 1948 after the partition at Noakhali in Bengal; in August 1893, Mumbai observed its first major communal riots; there are several others like Ahmedabad riots (1969), Sikh riots (1984), Merrut riots (1987), Bhagalpur riots (1989), Mumbai riots (1992), Gujarat riots (2002) etc. In this light, it is apt to say that Habir Khan and Kamala are not just two characters in the text rather they are the representatives of mutual tolerance, which undoubtedly, is the need of the hour. Hence, it can be said that the content of the story is contemporary forever, as a result, it will be relevant in the present time but also in the coming centuries also.

The Text as an Instrument of Social Change

As literature portrays the realities of our society, therefore, it is apt to say that *Musolmanir Galpo* (The Story of a Muslim) (1941), like other Tagorean creations, can be considered as an instrument of social change because the subject-matter of the text ushered us to perceive a very significant idea, i.e., violence is futile. In addition, regarding the purposive orientation of the text it is the philanthropic view Tagore that has been reflected very clearly in the character of Habir Khan. Thus, it is noteworthy

that the two major characters- Khan himself and Kamala, are the two major tools for Rabindranath to bring desirable changes in the acts and deeds of his countrymen as both the characters supports the spirit of each other's religion which Tagore wants us to imbibe in order to become a successful peacekeeper of our society.

Conclusion

Tagore's short stories depict the social realities of the contemporary society of colonial Bengal of the 19th century. The issues related to women, education, environment and communal problem were burning at that time. The short stories such as *The Wife's Letter* (1914), *The Parrot's Training* (1918), *Balai* (1928) and *The Story of a Muslim* (1941) became not merely a text rather these short stories became the voice of the need of that hour. *The Wife's Letter* (1914) speaks for the need of Women Empowerment in our society, *The Parrot's Training* (1918) talks about the urgent need of the Restoration of Values in Conventional Education, *Balai* (1928) significantly focuses on the awakening of Ecological Consciousness within us, and lastly, *The Story of a Muslim* (1941) documents the urgency of Communal Harmony in our society. At large, the subjects like Women Empowerment, Restoration of Values in Conventional Education, Ecological Consciousness and Communal Harmony are social issues. As society and education complements each other, thus, these short stories are nothing but a medium to educate the people of our society. The social aspects in Tagore's short stories therefore have a deep educational implication as it aims to change the outlook of the society in a comprehensive manner. Needless to say, that the short stories of Tagore have become an instrument of social change. The depicted social issues like Women Empowerment, Restoration of Values in Conventional Education, Ecological Consciousness and Communal Harmony are not only the problem of the 19th century but also it is a burning problem of the 21st century. After the second world war, gradually, our society has changed in all the aspects. Still in our society women are dominated by the patriarchal superiority, the formal vis-à-vis conventional education has mostly become a field of competition, the environment is degrading day by day because of our unscrupulous plundering, and lastly, communal violence has become an everyday news of this time. So, it is high time to inculcate the spiritual values instead of inclining towards materially in order to make our society sustainable from all the aspects. It is worth mentioning that Tagore's short stories are the best possible way outs of these problems. Although the short stories were written in In Bengal vis-à-vis Indian context but the issues addressed in those short stories have a global appeal which is relevant in the 21st century as well.

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