

Mohammad A. Quayum, ed. and trans. *Rabindranath Tagore: Selected Short Stories*. New Delhi: Macmillan Publishers, 2011. 213 pp. ISBN 9780230332775.

Rabindranath Tagore is not only a pioneer but an Emperor of the genre of Indian short story, in addition to being a practitioner of a variety of literary genres like poetry, drama, essay, letters and arts like music and painting. A prolific writer, he has written as many as 95 short stories covering a wide range of themes. The common concern of all these stories happens to be the varied human relationships and the unity of human life cutting across the barriers of caste, creed or region. His holistic outlook and inclusive ideology, sympathy towards the poor and the downtrodden may be seen in almost all his writings.

Although Tagore is, sometimes, misinterpreted as an idealist writer, his stories testify to his realistic themes and style. Mohammad A. Quayum has selected nineteen stories out of the vast number written by Tagore and translated them into English for the benefit of the general reader as well as the Tagore enthusiast. The character-types like forlorn women, deaf and dumb women, dowry-less women, lovable but helpless children, indifferent fathers, motherless and neglected daughters, beloved brothers, dull students, jealous husbands; and themes like renunciation, caste, *sati*, corruption, religious hypocrisy, mysterious nature of women, temperamental incompatibility, untouchability, child's attachment to Nature, Mammon-worship, contradictory experiences of Hindus' conversion to Islam and the unexpected discovery of love and humanity in the new religion, i.e. Islam -- these are the central thematic concerns of the stories selected by M.A. Quayum, a Bengali and Bangladeshi and an ardent admirer of Tagore right from his childhood.

His translation of these stories is remarkable for its excellent readability, exactitude of equivalence, clarity of thought and fluency of language. The reader never becomes conscious that he is reading a translation, but immerses himself in it as if he is reading an original piece of writing in English. In other words the translation is happily free from artificiality and foreignisation. Some of the specifics of the source, i.e. Bengali culture or references are glossed clearly but briefly for the benefit of the reader of target language, i.e. English, thereby facilitating the process of communication from one language (Bangla) and culture (Hindu) to another language(English) and culture (Western/Christian).

A striking feature of this anthology of short stories is an excellent critical introduction to Tagore's life supported up by several references to earlier books on Tagore and Tagore's own letters and interviews.

Another important aspect of the anthology is a comprehensive critical analysis of the major themes depicted in these 19 stories, like victimisation of women and children by the masculine supremacy, father-daughter relationship,

caste rigidity, cross-racial and cross-religious relationship, village and city divide, religious orthodoxy and the element of humour etc. Here Quayum the translator has matched Quayum the critic perfectly.

The publication of Quayum's translation of the selected short stories is a fitting tribute to Gurudev, whose 150th birth anniversary was being celebrated in 2011 all over the world. The beautiful cover page showing the bearded face of the saintly writer, the excellent printing on immaculate white paper and the affordable price will no doubt captivate the heart of the sensitive reader.

Basavaraj Naikar
Karnatak University, India