

World Of Ramapada Chowdhury's Brilliant Short Stories: 'Bindute Sindhudarshan': A Brief Analysis

Dr. Sreyasi Ghosh

Assistant Professor of History Department,
Hiralal Mazumdar Memorial College for Women,
Dakshineswar, Kolkata

Abstract: Author Ramapada Chowdhury, one of the stalwarts in world of Bengali short stories, emerged as a successful litterateur in 1940s (during World War II) besides his identity as a journalist of Anandabazar Patrika and he was contemporary of another eminent author Bimal Kar. Ramapada Chowdhury earned immense popularity for short stories more famous than his novels. His first story entitled 'Udayasto', based on everyday's monotonous struggle of lower middle class life, was published in 1944. He nurtured his interest to emerge as a reputed story-writer while studying in Presidency College. He was deeply stirred by deaths and destruction caused by the Second World War, famine, mass unrest, communal riots during India's Partition and refugee crisis and established the fact that literature could not be confined within any pre-defined boundaries –' ...Ami kokhono kono niyam mene cholini. Bishay nirbachane uttarkeru theke dakshin merute amar jatayat. Kokhono ujjwal bhashar mohe abisto hoyechhi, kokhono notun notun shabdo chayon korechhi, kakhono kakhono niralankar sahaj nirahankar bhashay bichitro kinba sadharon choritrer manush ekechhi.'

He shaped individual style as an author, was gifted with romanticism, and was quite efficient in depiction of all types of human beings from primitive tribal population to Bengali middle class urban people. He became famous for description with social realism and originality of expression. Some of his well-reputed stories were- 'Darbari', 'Rebecca Sorener kabor', 'Nariratna', 'Bharatbarsha', 'Manush amanusher galpo', 'Karunkanya', 'Sati thakruner chita', 'Rumabai', 'Jhumra bibir mela' etc.

In this article, I will try my best to unfold complexities of stories of Ramapada Chowdhury and will discuss pictures of struggling women and overall population of lower depths in his illuminating writings.

Keywords: Complexities, everyday's life-struggle, middle class, sexual exploitation, subaltern

I. INTRODUCTION

Ramapada Chowdhury, considered as one of the stalwarts in world of eminent Bengali short story-writers, and honoured with awards like Ananda Puraskar (1963), Rabindra Puraskar (1971), Sahitya Akademi Award (1988) and Rabindranath Tagore Memorial International Prize (2011), started his journey as a writer during 2nd World War. Born on 28th December 1922 in Kharagpur, the author had to move with his family from one region to another place in India due to his father Maheshchandra Chowdhury's job in the railways. Ramapada Chowdhury during his youth, lived in many towns of India with different lifestyles such as Ranchi, Raipur,

Bilaspur, Guwahati and Dibrugarh; and undoubtedly those lifestyles, he observed and studied, had deep-rooted imprint on his literary works of early stage. Several well-reputed litterateurs like Bani Basu, Dibyendu Palit, Achintyakumar Sengupta and Nrisingha Prasad Bhaduri acknowledged with praise his significance as a writer with 'sharp and witty' mind, ability to experiment with varieties of story-telling forms while perfectly maintaining conventional styles, attention to quality writings, excellent expertise in beautification of use of language, craftsmanship in short stories besides novels etc. Ramapada produced 50 novels and about 150 short stories in his whole life and never adopted path of quantity games. He was engaged with Anandabazar Patrika for a good number of

years and as an editor, was adequately successful in drawing out quality writings and nurturing many talented young souls into becoming proficient writers. With a probing gaze, he explored weakness of middle class mind and societal faultliness. He unfolded trauma caused by famine, communal riots/ holocaust, bloodbath of Partition and refugee problems of India in his stories skilfully. His stories had been published in many periodicals namely *Yugantar Samayiki* ('Udayasto'), *Purbasha* ('Ratnakut', 'Sahajog', 'Bonbatas', 'Kusidasrito', 'Chandrabhasmo', 'Atasi Ujjawal'), *Dwando Patrika* ('Swarno-marich'), *Chaturanga traimasik* ('Aral', 'Sishumedh', 'Tintara', 'Abhisar Ranganati', 'Imli'), *Masik Basumati* ('Jhar', 'Raktobij'), *Achalpatra* ('Jwalahor' and 'Tamogahon'), *Basumati Sharadiya sankhya* ('Buri dihinger sako'), *Saptahik Desh* ('Nashtonari', 'Titir-kannar math', 'Sharadiya Desh' ('Basuki basundhara', 'Karunkanya', 'Rumabai', 'Ray', 'Manush amanusher galpo', 'Sudhu kerani'), *Suchipatra masikpatra* ('Darbari'), *Sharadiya Janasebak* ('Madirekshana' and 'Bourani'), *Sharadiya o barshik sankhya Anandabazar* ('Babui', 'Latua ojhar kahini', 'Rebecca Sorener kabor', 'Jhumra bibir mela', 'Nariratna', 'Lobh', 'Straino', 'Ek ser begun'), *Sharadiyo Ganashakti* ('Meki') etc.

Some famous collections of his stories were 'Tin tara', 'Swarno marich', 'Abhisar ranganati', 'Darbari', 'Kathakali', 'Trayodoshi', 'Dehali diganto', 'Swarnolatar prempatro', 'Jhumra bibir mela', 'Postmortem' etc.

His several stories had been translated into English by Saroj Acharyya, Jagannath Chakraborty and Lila Roy. Renowned scholar Srikumar Bandopadhyay wrote an article in *Jalarka Patrika* on short stories of Ramapada Chowdhury.

II. GLIMPSES OF COMPLEXITIES IN SHORT STORIES OF RAMAPADA CHOWDHURY

Ramapada Chowdhury, an eminent story-writer of 1940s, depicted World War II, famine, communal riots, mass unrest before India's independence, Partition of our motherland and refugee crisis etc. through his outstanding stories. He brought originality in both themes and structural pattern of stories and upheld perennial humanity crossing geographical boundaries. He had shown same expertise while describing life of primitive tribal people of forests and urban middle class intelligentsia of Bengal. He emerged both as a romantic and a realistic author and explored negative hypocrisy and double-standard of middle class mentality with piercing eye.

Some of his renowned stories are – 'Udayasto' (monotonous daily life of lower middle class household), 'Ratnakut' (frustration and anger of a lower middle class youth after failure in translating his ambitious dream into reality), 'Sahajog' (sexual exploitation of women), 'Bonbatas' (jealousy of widow mother-in-law towards her beautiful/sexually attractive daughter-in-law), 'Chandrabhasmo' (conspiracy of Mulchand Marwari of making healthy children of impoverished families handicapped for using them in flourishing business related to beggars), 'Sishumedh' (illegal abortion to save social prestige of women even at the cost of death), 'Babui' (hidden compromise between the Port office-owners and the labour

class in Goa), 'Tintara' (sexual exploitation of subaltern womenfolk and domestic violence's scenario), 'Swarnomarich' (hatred of beautiful young wife for her old and suspicious husband), 'Atasi ujjwal' (psychological turmoil of a married woman due to memory of molestation in her pre-marital life), 'Angapali' (rape of Hindu womenfolk during bloody days of Partition and trouble of rehabilitation due to social stigma), 'Tamogahon' (pathetic life of an extremely ugly man deprived of love and affection), 'Buri Dihinger sako' (happiness found in liberal minded husband's love by an innocent girl, molested in her pre-marital phase), 'Nashtonari' (traumatic condition of a woman losing sanity after departure of her beloved from her life and unwanted marriage), 'Meki' (world full of men as embodiments of faultliness), 'Karunkanya' (an ill-fated woman's troublesome situation during her rehabilitation after being forcefully abducted and sexually violated in days of communal riots before Partition and her returning being compelled by circumstances with her child to the household of her abductor/ unwanted husband and father of that child), 'Darbari' (outcome of a love affair between a wealthy white man and a poor tribal woman), 'Raktobij' (gang-rape of an unfortunate young woman by foreign soldiers during days of World War II and later never-ending life-struggle to save her terminally ill husband), 'Bourani' (a woman's illicit love affair while her husband was alive but later in widowhood adopting strict norms of chastity), 'Bibikaraj' (a woman's troublesome life as a caretaker of children of colliery labourers in crèche after rejecting advancement of a local influential person, tragic death of her daughter and leaving her settlement with paralytic husband), 'Latua Ojhar kahini' (failure of a tribal medicine – specialist blind old man before omnipotent modern science), 'Khuni bou' (revengeful attitude of a wife against characterless husband), 'Sambhav asambhav' (a married lady's endless sacrifice staying in her parental house enshouldering all financial responsibilities and being victim of criticism of in-laws), 'Rumabai' (life of a love-thirsty, influential woman and her several affairs creating scandal), 'Imli' (ill-fated woman's endless harassment in life as a beggar and trauma of losing her beloved), 'Rebecca Sorener kabor' (cangaroo court's brutality on women in tribal society and love affair of a tribal woman with rich white man), 'Sati thakruner chita' (protest against widow-burning which once dominated society of kulin brahmins), 'Jhumra bibir mela' (sexual exploitation like a quite normal incident in daily life of subaltern rural womenfolk), 'Nakalchi' (curse of absence of communal harmony in society), 'Ray' (brutal outcome of a small mistake done by a woman in her adolescence and troubled married life in backdrop of conventional rural society), 'Ami ekti sadharon meye' (lower middle class, commonplace girl's abusive life after marriage and premature death of all her dreams), 'Sudhu kerani' (an unhappy working woman's dream of contented married life and utter despondency), 'Jhinuker kouto' (monotonous conjugal life of a middle class couple facing frustration), 'Stroino' (frustrated life of a middle-aged married person who was a so-called obedient man for his legal wife but in his inner world, in reality deeply attracted to another woman), 'Dam' (fathomless despair of a husband whose wife was involved in an extra-marital affair and his urge to settle with a new woman after

divorce), 'Almarita' (a middle-class educated man's self-criticism after understanding that he was not a person with desired masculinity before women of his family), 'Sesh brishti' (deprived life of an unmarried working woman of middle-class family), 'Dressing table' (anger and despair of a middle-class housewife due to monotonous conjugal life with her loveless husband), 'Jaal' (middle-class man's boastful attitude after adopting art of deceit skilfully), 'Autograph' (a young woman's infatuated condition for a famous author and later being utterly dejected), 'Barobajar' (dominance and hegemony of market economy), 'Chhoto Prithibir galpo' (a so-called happily married woman's advancement towards her former lover violating social norms of chastity), 'Post-mortem' (piercing gaze of investigative neighbours for discovering real cause of a man's suicide) etc.

III. WOMEN'S LIFE-STRUGGLE THROUGH RAMAPADA CHOWDHURY'S PIERCING GAZE REFLECTED IN SHORT STORIES

Widow-burning, communal violence and rape/molestation during India's Partition, social stigma faced by so-called fallen women especially with children during Post-Partition rehabilitation phase, domestic abuse, wrath of conventional kangaroo court in tribal society towards targeted law-breaker womenfolk, tragedy of poor tribal women after being victim of lustful gaze of wealthy and influential white men with so-called civilizing mission etc. had been described by Ramapada Chowdhury with honesty through his stories.

'Sahajog' reflected lustful advancement of a white man namely Cornell Johnson towards a middle class Bengali housewife Amita, whose spouse was Biren who himself had been compelled by circumstances to accompany his attractive wife to the bungalow of Johnson, an extremely powerful person as Director of Babuldihi. The author here exposed hypocrisy of lower middle class Bengali men like Shibnath, who had infatuation for Amita, wife of Biren but was not at all ashamed to suspect his own loyal wife Rani and compared the commonplace Rani with the seductive beauty Amita. In 'Sishumedh', Sukomal's character was a symbol of double-standard of upper middle class Bengalee intellectuals who were ready to cross the barrier of *nyay, niti, dharma, aain, samaj* if own domestic spaces' women's prestige was at stake but vehemently used to oppose slightest deviation from conventional morality when outsider women's social position was in danger. Sukomal, a doctor, refused proposal of abortion of Ishita, who was pregnant as a result of her extra-marital affair and at last faced tragic death because her position as *Ranibandher badhurani* was in danger. But the doctor gave solace to his wife Sushama when she became disheartened discovering pre-marital shameful pregnancy of her younger sister Sushila. 'Tin Tara' reflected marriage of Bengali middle class educated girls like Kaberi based on manufacturing consent of bride and condition of subaltern women like Lakhia as victim of domestic violence and as a sex-object before greedy eyes of white colonisers such as Huggins. 'Atasi ujjwal' explored psychological trauma and turmoil of an educated girl, Sarama, earning her livelihood as a nurse, after marriage with her beloved Sanjib, because she lost her

virginity in pre-marital stage due to sexual exploitation by Himanshu.

'Angapali' upheld troublesome condition of raped Hindu women like the character of Sabita, victims of communal riots and India's Partition during their so-called rehabilitation phase and exposed unwanted situation of their children, fruits of forced physical intercourse with those women's abductors from another religion. 'Jwalahor' was story of terrible domestic violence. Here Shyamali was terror-stricken due to daily abuse by her alcoholic husband Indranath who whipped his wife when Shyamali's elder sister Siuli tried to stop the torture overhearing Shyamali's painful scream in night. 'Basuki basundhara' was based on Anuradha's never-ending struggle to save her domestic space with paralytic husband Krishnakant and to enshoulder the responsibility of bearing expenditure of treatment of her former lover Nayanmoni, who became terminally ill. In 'Buri Dihinger sako', Abraham Lakhindar, a poor man was falsely accused of making sexual relation with Damayanti, an innocent girl of aristocratic Bejbarua family, who became pregnant before marriage. Actually the child was outcome of another man's forceful intercourse with her against her consent and she tried to commit suicide but was saved by her affectionate husband Lakhinder's timely intervention.

'Karunkanya' was story of trauma and despondency of Arundhati, a rape-victim during the turbulent and blood-thirsty days of India's Partition and later compelled by circumstances to go back to the domestic space of her most-hated abductor and father of her son after witnessing her mother's deep apathy towards the child and discovering the truth that her so-called liberal lover Subimal also prioritized physical chastity of womenfolk over mental purity.

'Raktabij' reflected fathomless hatred of Nilima towards war because she was mercilessly gang-raped during the World War II by many American soldiers who cleverly befriended her elder brother to make entry into their family. The character of Nilima became embodiment of never-ending fighting spirit of our Indian women because in spite of facing terrible hardship, humiliation and bereavement in her life, she tried her level best to save life of her ill husband Mrinmoy using all her might.

'Jalrang' highlighted troublesome life of beautiful tribal girls like Rupamani, working in colliery because they had to fulfil the desire/ undue sexual advancement of lustful people such as Munshi Gopi Singh and tough battle to save life of her love-interest Pariyag even compromising her own dignity.

'Bibikaraj' had shown fathomless trauma of Anupama, whose husband was a paralytic patient and who was compelled by circumstances to enshoulder the responsibility of taking care of children of women labourers of colliery in a creche. She refused to accept the lustful advancement of Jyotirmoybabu towards her and afterwards faced his wrath. She was accused of negligence in her duties of nurturing children of *kamins* and was criticised for fulfilling needs of her own daughter only. Anupama had no way out but to leave her little daughter in home and soon the dead body of the little Munnu was discovered by local santal fishermen in one of the coal mines. Devastated Anupama left her job. The author ended the story with the striking statement that-'...*Andho*

kamonar agune ekti chhotto sishur pran pure chhai hote pare, se satya amra jenechhi.”

‘Sambhav asambhav’ reflected life-struggle of a married working woman namely Nirupama, who sacrificed her own domestic bliss for sake of her parental house, especially her ever-demanding widow mother. Her mother constantly pressurised her to stay at her parental house and so she was criticised by her husband Anilendu’s mother. Nirupama faced psychological turmoil and finally could not be free from the bondage. Anilendu was utterly frustrated but could not find any suitable way out in this complicated situation.

‘Imli’ was based on life of an impoverished woman Imli who tried to earn her livelihood in city of Calcutta but at last was forced to adopt life of a destitute beggar. Her love interest Phalsa left the place where they used to meet and the devastated woman while asking for food in line of refugees, was mercilessly beaten by several men.

‘Rebecca Sorener kabor’ highlighted plight of a tribal woman Rupamati, who was penalized by her society’s kangaroo court due to her alleged affair with a white Christian man. That man promised to marry her but later left her after making her pregnant for his father’s continuous pressure. Rupamati, now entitled as Rebecca after her conversion to Christianity, died due to poverty and starvation. Her infant son was taken care of by friend Sonamiru and none but former tribal lover Laloa Kurukh remembered her with deep affection.

‘Sati thakruner chita’ is an exceptional story upholding vehement criticism and protest against the age-old widow-burning system prevailing in colonial Bengal through the character of courageous Jashai Pandit, a person of lower caste. Jashai drove out superstitious Akalanka Barujje, who forced his widow daughter Kalyani to face death being burnt alive as sati and instructed that brahmins, who were habituated of cruelty of making their women sati, must not get entry in sacred place/*akhra* of Jatrasiddhi, his worshipped Dharmathakur in Moynapur village.

‘Thag’ upheld tyranny prevailing in traditional joint family system of Bengali middle class and had shown that always its victims were women. Ranimamima was discarded by her father-in-law due to her minor skin disease which was discovered after marriage by him and he became furious on the daughter-in-laws’ parental house regarded as shameless liars by him. Rani had good relation with her husband but due to rage of the authoritarian father-in-law, she had to leave and he forced his son to marry another woman namely Bulumamima here. Bulu could not get love and affection of her husband who loved his first wife and so being utterly disgusted Bulumamima left her in-law’s place. Years later, Rani was rehabilitated in her husband’s house after father-in-law’s demise, but Bulu’s entire life was destroyed due to the turmoil.

‘Talak’ reflected plight of Chandbanu, who was deeply loved by poor Kasem, but was married to wealthy and influential Karim sahib by her parents. Karim had other wives also who regularly harassed her and she was accused of extra-marital affair with Kasem. Karim gave her talak but she was compelled to return to that abusive husband’s place after her short union with Kasem. According to her social custom and law, she could not return to Karim after getting talak without

temporarily marrying another man. So she married Kasem, who understood that he could not offer her anything excluding love and so he had to make his beloved Chandbanu return to her wealthy spouse’s house.

‘Ami ekti sadharon meye’ reflected endless harassment and psychological abuse faced by commonplace girls in in-law’s house after their marriage. Sometimes they harasses new bride in their parental homes and the same ill-treatment usually returns to them in marital life on daily basis as a most common practice and so-called normal incidents.

‘Sudhu kerani’ was a story of a unhappy working woman, who had been deprived of marital bliss and her young age already vanished. The same despondency and helpless situation was reflected in the story entitled ‘Sesh brishti’ through the character of Jayanti, a working lady, criticised by her relatives due to her unmarried condition.

IV. REFLECTION OF SUBALTERN LIFE IN THE AUTHOR’S STORIES: MIRROR OF SOCIAL REALISM

Ramapada Chowdhury had expertise in description of subaltern life through his illustrious short stories and he had shown same capability in its depiction like making scenario of middle class urban life of Bengal. In some of his well-reputed stories such as ‘Tin tara’, ‘Darbari’, ‘Latua ojar kahini’, ‘Imli’, ‘Rebecca Sorener kabor’, ‘Sati thakruner chita’, ‘Jhumra bibir mela’, ‘Nariratna’ and ‘Manush amanusher galpo’, one can observe harsh reality of everyday’s life of downtrodden people struggling with poverty and all types of social exploitation. In ‘Tin tara’, life of santals of area of Argada colliery was described skilfully. The author had shown excellent capability in depiction of that primitive region- “*Lateharer paschime buno paharer range. Dirghosirsho ekok Palamou paharke ghire ajosro paharikar ghat. Nrimundamalinir kanthomalar moto. Shyamolimay dhaka durer dikchakrabal tenechhe shal-shirisher ghanobon ghanishthata, pahare pahare.*”

Oraons and Mundas had been converted into coolies by timber merchant Brijlal and impoverished couple (raut of Chattisgarh) like Shaon and Lakhia were victims of this flourishing trade. The author rightly stated that- “*Jantrer jontrona. Octopasser ajasro bahur bandhan jeno ek gosthite bendhe phelechhe sokole. Dehati oraon, Chattisgarer rejarojmajur. ... Sob dater manush ese milechhe ekhane. Mishe gecche.*”

Through story of married couple Shaon and Lakhia, Chowdhury described brutality of domestic violence as a habituated practice in life of poor woman of labour class like Lakhia. She started to love Anupam, an employee of Brijlal to escape from torture of former criminal Shaon but Anupam betrayed her and became a bride to send her for fulfilling the greed of Huggins Sahib of colliery for monetary profit, offered by Brijlal, agent of Huggins.

‘Darbari’ is a story based on santal life in a nondescript station Lapra where a white man had to give his life with his beloved tribal wife whom he married in spite of all kinds of social hindrances and prejudices. Jonathan McClusky settled down in that suburban area and tried his level best to befriend

local mundas with deep admiration for their culture. He married Shonia, a tribal lady keeping his promise. Rituals and festivals of mundas had been described by Ramapada Chowdhury. Gradually with emergence of church and formation of Anglo-Indian colony life, indigenous culture of Lapra was in danger and Jonathon himself admitted that disease, immorality, incest characterized this type of colony-life. Jonathon's own son hated his tribal mother because due to her presence, his love for a white woman Iva, daughter of Huggins could not be translated into reality. The mundas became infuriated and bloody clashes could take place between the colonisers and the mundas of Lapra. At last Jonathan and his wife Shonia had been killed by the clergy Reverend Brown in an attempt to stop conflicts between the local mundas and the European settlers but the murder was shown as suicide of the couple.

In 'Latua ojhar kahini', life of extremely poor santals had been described. Ramapada depicted life of central character Latua Ojha and his family with precision and perfection- '*Andhakuper moto chhoto ekkhani ghar. Nongra. Pachai mod ar basi bhatar gandho. Chal theke dorite bandha asankhyo jinispattor jhulchhe badurer moto. ... etokkhone dekhte pelam Latua Ojhake. ... Mathar chul sada hoye gechhe, duti andho chokhe gholate drishti....ar opashe duhate buk dheke je meyeti darie ache, ...komorer kachh theke hatu abadhi sudhu ekkhana shatochhinno moyla kapor tar dehe.*'

Latua, once an expert in tribal medicine, became blind due to attack of a bear in forest and after that nobody came to his home for medicine. His compassionate daughter Surmoni exposed this helpless situation to a middle class Bengali babu who trusted Latua Ojha over modern science. Actually Latua was physically alive only but his identity as a doctor among the santals, mundas had been obliterated long ago.

'Imli' is a story based on life of a beggar woman who once successfully earned her livelihood but later became a destitute and mercilessly harassed while searching for food. The author unfolded negative sides of middle class mentality and their lustful gaze towards impoverished women taking shelter on pavements- '*Footpathar opar sari sari manusher cartoon... Footpathar gayei duto na tinte be-daroja khupri pore achhe andhokare...rastar opar jara shuye ache, tader doleri koekjon ese asroy niyechhe ghar ko'khanar bhetor... rat no'tao hoyni takhon,duto bhadralker poshak ese daralo sekhane. Takalo...ghumonto kono meyer jagor kono ansher dikeoekjon,...khato sarir dheutar dike jhuke pore ki jeno dekhte chailo. Sange sange meyeli konther protibad elo-aurat dekhoni kokhono, ullu kahaka.*'

Imli survived in urban space of Calcutta selling honey collected from forestry of Sunderbans. In city she fell in love with Phalsa, a small trader of utensils, but became utterly depressed when her beloved suddenly left that particular place. She became molested in hands of so-called *bhadralk* of Calcutta and at last was beaten mercilessly in her life as a beggar while trying to collect food from lines of refugees in Sealdah station.

'Rebecca Sorener kabor' is an outstanding story on basis of love between beautiful Santal girl Rupamati and Makusahib, son of a wealthy white man Furnwhite. Ramapada Chowdhury here gave authentic description of village rituals and entertainment among tribals. Rupamati was warned by her

friend Sonamiru that she might face wrath of tribal kangaroo court's verdict entitled *Bitlaha* due to her flirting gestures towards a white sahib and during *kabiganer larai* entitled as *bhikhariar nach*, her lover Laloa Kurukh was terribly excited hearing her scandal through songs. Due to rage and excitement, Laloa attacked the singer. As a result Rupamati was targeted by the elders of tribal society and Laloa lost his one hand during confrontations. Rupamati's condition became hellish- '*Bitla! Bichar dilo baro Panchayet. Ar sange sange sara gayer chele-chhokrara dale dale bashi ar madol bajiye nachte nachte ghire phello Rupamatike. ... Thatta bidrup hasahasi. Ar ashilil gaan. Keu tiner khoncha dilo, keu tanlo tar sarir anchal.*'

Rupamati was saved by Makusahib and converted into Christianity being newly entitled as Rebecca. Her white beloved promised to marry her but later his father Furnwhite compelled him to leave the place for marrying a white woman within own community and from same class. In the mean time Rebecca gave birth to Makusahib's child but could not nurture that child due to her death in starvation. After that only ex-lover Laloa Kurukh remembered her with unfaltering passion- '*Bhullo na sudhu ekjon. Laloa Kurukh..... Hat boloto kaborer matir opar... tarpur eksamay matir prodipta jwele diye chole jeto Laloa. ...Madho Sorener meye Rebecca Sorener kabor... Ajo Karanpurar collieryte Rebecca Sorener kabor ghire sari sari prodip jwole.*'

In 'Sati Thakruner chita', Chowdhury vehemently opposed and criticised the widow-burning system prevailing among Kulin brahmins in colonial Bengal. Jashai Pandit, a youth of degraded lower class, suddenly used to get respect in Moynapur village of Bankura worshipping idol of Dharmathakur entitled as Bankura Roy and became fatally attracted towards Kalyani, the beautiful daughter of local influential Brahmin Akalanka Barujje. The Brahmin pandit became annoyed and to avoid further advancement of Jashai, an untouchable dom towards his daughter, he forced her to marry an octogenarian kulin Brahmin of his village. After death of her husband, Kalyani had been compelled to burn alive as sati with dead body of her spouse due to directive of cruel father Akalanka Barujje and Jashai left village being frustrated due to his failure to save his lady love from brutal death. After some times he returned to this village and established idol of Dharmathakur as Jatrasiddhi replacing and demolishing idol of his previously worshipped Bankura Roy. Jashai ousted Akalanka from his village because he forgot his duty as a father and due to superstition, made his daughter burn alive. The author concluded the remarkable story with the statement- '*...keui hoyto khabor rakhe na, Satidاهر kalanka muchhe phelar jonyo prothom bidroho ghoshana korechhilo dom-pallir ekti ashikkhito pujari.*'

In 'Jhumra bibir mela', one can observe the storyline based on affection of Miamajhi for his beloved son Budhan Kisku, a dangerous dacoit of santal-village Sonadi of forest areas of Ekrampur. Miamajhi was convicted as murderer of his son Budhan after surrendering to local police thana and had been put behind the bars. The father was not hanged to death because he got public sympathy as the son Budhan was not only a notorious dacoit but also killed a young Santal girl, Asmina, daughter of Jhumra bibi. Superstitious belief in witchcraft prevailing in tribal society was depicted here by

author- ‘...Panchayet bolle, bidhaba Jhumra bibir sange Budhaner pirit hoyechhe. Bhoy dekhie jorimana kore kono kichhutei jakhon kaj holo na, takhon sabai bolle Jhumra bibi daini. Oke gaa theke tarate hobe. ... Gaaer lok haramdaram maar dile, be-abru kore bhagay dile maa-betire. Agatya gaaer baire giye dera badhlo Jhumra.’

Later Miamajhi committed suicide because his son Budhan did not adopt peaceful life rejecting path of dacoity. Budhan was actually not murdered by him and in reality the father told a concocted story before the police. But when he witnessed that his dream for his only son could not be translated into reality, he took his own life in frustration. Thus Miamajhi died a tragic death, but the memory survived through local Jhumra bibir mela of Sonadi village in each winter season.

‘Nariratna’ is an exceptional story based on life of Moyna Kisku, wife of Bhukhan Kisku of Sonadi village. Dhulan Tudu was captured as murderer of Moyna’s husband Bhukhan and Moyna gave the statement that actually Dhulan killed her husband because he confronted Dhulan while trying to molest her against her consent. Dhulan himself also committed the crime but later daughter of Moyna exposed the truth that Moyna had long-standing extra-marital love –affair with Dhulan and the daughter told about the illicit affair to her father Bhukhan. But unfortunately during confrontation, Bhukhan himself was murdered by wife Moyna who did not hesitate to give statement against her lover also as a murderer. Dhulan was utterly frustrated because his beloved woman ruthlessly framed him for such a crime that he did not commit at all and had to face death penalty. The author sarcastically named the story as *Nariratna*.

‘Manush amanusher galpo’ is a remarkable story based on the rough and tough life of poor *bandar-mara* people travelling from one village to another to earn their livelihood killing troublesome monkeys disturbing peace, security and property of villagers. Rachhan and his wife Tikali were leaders of that particular group of monkey-killers who came to Sankhabhanga village and made a verbal contract with *morol* that they will be given money and clothing if they could destroy all monkeys in that rural area. Their life had been skilfully depicted by Ramapada Chowdhury- ‘Gaaer ek prante ekta bokulgachher tolay giye dera bandhle bandar-maarar dal. Kath-kathi jogar kore anle meyegulo, purushgulo berie porlo metho indur, jola bang kinba khatash-khargosher khonje.Rat kore phirlo purushgulo...purushgulo shikar kore phirtei indur ar khatashgulo guje dilo gangane agune. ... Kajo milechhe e gaaye, shikaro milechhe. Ekhon din koyeker jonyo nischinto. Rachhan ar Tikalio.’

Tikali provoked lustful Ride Kotal to extract all things from Pankhe Morol as per previous contract and made physical proximity with Ride purposefully. This enraged Rachhan; he wounded Ride Kotal and expressed his hatred towards Ride by naming him as a *ba-n-da-r*, who tried to exploit his beautiful wife Tikali. Ride Kotal paid the price for his fatal attraction towards Tikali facing wrath of the violent and suspicious husband Rachhan.

V. CONCLUSION

Ramapada Chowdhury had rightly opined that –‘*Sahitye kono badhadhora niyam nei bolei amar biswas. Na bishaybastute, na bhab-prakorone, na angike*’. He was quite aware of the fact that perennial truth of human life and psyche could be explored through limited arena of short stories and so he explained in introductory part of his book entitled ‘*Galpo-samagro*’ by making comparison between world of novelist and sphere of short story-writer that- ‘*Ranakhetrer damama beje uthlo. Ek desher sange arek desher judhho, ek jatir sange ar ek jatir. Oupanyasik takhon kono minarer churay uthe notebooke tuke neben samosto drishyata. Rajar ange lal makhmaler parichhad,.... Senapatir duusahasik abhijan, sainyader chitkar, esober ekta kothao bad deben na oupanyasik. Juddho joyer por sainyodol deshe phirbe jakhon, takhono pichhane pichhane phirben oupanyasik. Tarpur hathat tini chhotogalpo-lekhakke dekhte paben pather dhare, ...E kon unnasik lekhak? –mone mone bhabben oupanyasik. Kono minarer churay uthlo na, dekhlo na yuddher itibritto, sobhajatarar sango nilo na, e kemondhara sahiyik!.... Chhotogalper lekhak bolben sudhu ekti drishyoi ami dekhechhi. Pother oparer kono gabaksher dike angulinirdesh korben tini, sekhane ekti narir shankakatorchokher kone ... ashribindu phute uthechhe-ke jeno phereni, ke ekjon phereni. Chhotogalper lekhak sei byatha-bindur, chokher talomolo ashrrur bhetor samagro juddher chhobi dekhte paben, bolben hoyto bandhu he, oi ashribindur madhyei amar ananto Sindhu.*’

Ramapada Chowdhury depicted everyday’s monotony of lower middle class life, sexual exploitation of subaltern women, domestic violence, rape/ molestation of girls during bloody days of India’s partition and hellish life of uprooted people as refugees, especially harassment faced by womenfolk with unwanted children during rehabilitation, kangaroo court’s brutality on women in tribal society etc. with precision of language and dispassionate sharp gaze. He was an exemplary author who believed that quitting in time undoubtedly is an art and so during his interview in 2005 with Shirshendu Mukhopadhyay, he announced his unprecedented decision to retire from literary writing.

Nowadays also he is remembered with admiration as one of the most illustrious short story-writers of modern Bengali literary space.

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