

Tagore's Two Sisters: A Psychoanalytical Study

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Abstract:

Tagore had early success as a writer in his native Bengal. For the world he became the voice of India's spiritual heritage; and for India, especially for Bengal, he became a great living institution. The novel "Two Sisters" (Dui Bon 1933) has been translated by Krishna Kriplani and was published in 1943 is mainly psychological in interest, dealing with the triangle, in this case two sisters are in love with the same man. It is as if the author is trying to show that a man seeks in woman both a mother and a sweetheart. Here Tagore shows that a woman may be forgetful of her duty but she always thinks about welfare of the persons whom she loves the most. But it also points out that the combination of the two aspects of 'mother' and 'sweetheart' in one woman is an unattainable ideal. A psychoanalytical study of the novel "Two Sisters" shows that the fulfillment of love is a rare occurrence. One can understand Tagore does not idealize woman. He presents women as he finds them. He does not attribute anything that is abnormal to their nature.

Keywords: love triangle psychological, woman, mother & sweet heart, abnormal

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I. INTRODUCTION

Although Nobel Prize-winning poet Tagore prioritized poetry, he also made notable contributions to literature as a dramatist, novelist, short story writer, and writer of nonfictional prose, especially essays, criticism, philosophical treatises, journals, memoirs, and letters. In addition, he expressed himself as musician, painter, actor-producer-director, educator, patriot, and social reformer. Tagore had early success as a writer in his native Bengal. With his translations of some of his poems he became rapidly known in the West. In fact his fame attained a luminous height, taking him across continents on lecture tours and tours of friendship. For the world he became the voice of India's spiritual heritage; and for India, especially for Bengal, he became a great living institution. Although Tagore wrote successfully in all literary genres, he was first of all a poet. Referring to the variety and abundance of Tagore's creative output, Buddhadeva Bose declared in *An Acre of Green Grass*, "It would be trite to call him versatile; to call him prolific very nearly funny." Bose added, "The point is not that his writings run into a hundred thousand pages of print, covering every form and aspect of literature, though this matters: he is a source, a waterfall, flowing out in a hundred streams, a hundred rhythms, incessantly."¹

Between 1883 and 1934 Tagore published 14 novels, several of which were translated into English during his lifetime: *Ghare-Baire* (1916; *The Home and the World*, 1919), *Nauka Dubi* (1906; *The Wreck*, 1921), and *Gora* (1910; published in English under same title, 1924). Others were translated after his death, including: *Dui Bon* (1933; *Two Sisters*, 1945), *Sesher Kavita* (1929; *Farewell, My Friend*, 1946), *Malancha* (1934; *The Garden*, 1956), and *Nashtanir* (1901; *The Broken Nest*, 1971). Most of these are fundamentally social novels, a few with strong political undercurrents. His novels are mostly based on psychological studies and complexities of human

heart. The novel "Two Sisters" (Dui Bon 1933) has been translated by Krishna Kriplani and was published in 1943.

II. BODY TEXT

The theme of the novel "Two Sisters" is very simple. There are four characters in the story. Sharmila, Urmimala, Sasanka and Nirad. Sharmila and Sasanka are married while Urmimala and Nirad are engaged. After leaving Nirad Sharmila, Urmimala and Sasanka make a love triangle. Despite being a man Tagore has dived deep into women's hearts. In most of his novels he has shown two facets of woman i.e the mother kind and the beloved kind. The mother kind wins over the beloved kind in all his novels. The novel begins with these words-

"Women are of two types- they are either mothers or lovers. If one searches for a parallel with the seasons, then others will be identified with the seasons of the rains. Rains pour forth the bounty of precious water that irrigates the parched earth to provide life sustaining food and protect from the heat of the summer. The lovers? Decidedly the season of the spring. Mysterious in its aura, magical in its spell, it capriciously stirs your heart, sends ripples through your blood, reaching the deep recesses of the heart, where rests a golden lute with a single string to be plugged to break into heavenly music- the music that transmits indescribable ecstasy to your whole being."²

The theme of the novel *Two Sisters* is premised on the dual image of woman. It deals with the problems of psychological maladjustments in married life.

Sharmila is a traditional and elegant woman married to Sasanka who finds her happiness in the welfare of her husband. Despite being childless, she is the embodiment of

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maternal instinct. She looks after him and all his needs but never expects anything in return from him. Sharmila is a bold woman who never fear from anyone. Once she takes stand against an officer on a train ride for not giving up their reserved seats even after being insisted by the station master. Sasanka was an engineer and being a government employee, knows very well to keep safe distance from the superiors, but Sharmila does not think so. The consequence to this incident was that Sasanka's promotion was turn down and an English man was replaced with his position. Sasanka was very upset but it is she only, who encourages her husband to resign from his job for the sake of prestige and also pursue him to begin his own business with her kinsman Mathur dada. She also arranges money for his business.

"At home she surrounds her husband with all her motherly care for his health and comfort, and at the same time she is ever alert to protect his public image and standing."³

It is Sharmila's selfless love that she not only at home but also in outside the world wants to see her husband stand with his head held high. When she offers him money for his business he refuses to accept that money. At that time she reminds him, "Am I not also yours?"⁴

She knows very well that to be in love is to lose all, not only her money but also her identity.

It is Sharmila's devotion and encouragement that Sasanka's business flourishes and becomes a successful business man. He is engrossed in his work all time. The richer he becomes the farther he moves away from her. He does not pay attention to her, in spite of that she continuously takes care of him behind the scene.

"This is man's world, his daily battle with his destiny. So how can a woman thwart him from his avowed mission in his journey through this rough terrain? The man will break through such hurdles, and Sharmila has come to accept this harsh inevitability with due respect."⁵

There is no one else besides Sharmila, who can take care of her home. Hence, when she falls ill, her illness makes a mess, Sasanka who has never looked after his wife, has to worry about her health and he is very busy at that time because of his two major contracts. Seeing Sasanaka's helplessness pains her. She feels guilty that because of her sickness, Sasanka's work is affecting. Then she decides to call her younger sister Urmimala to take care of Sasanka and her home. Without much thinking Urmimala gets ready to come to her sister's place.

Urmimala, whose name suggests "spring" is a beautiful bubbly young lady with full of joy and energy. She is engaged to Dr. Nirad who is a friend of her brother Hemanta. Urm comes to her sister's house to look after her sister's home and to get rid of her routine life prescribed by Nirad. Nirad is a strict, orthodox person, he wants Urm to obey him.

"Out of desperation Sharmila sends for her sister. She told Urm, 'Forget your college for a while. Come and take hold of the rudder of my home, otherwise I shall not be able to die in peace.'"⁶

Full of youth and vitality, Urmimala reveals to Sasanka a type of lady he had never seen. He is fascinated by her. She is a beloved kind lady belongs to an aristocrat, sophisticated

family. She is enthusiastic about her life and enjoys it. She is allowed to develop her sprightly personality. She can change the boring atmosphere into happiness with her presence. She is just like her brother Hemanata who died of some mysterious disease. Nirad does not like Urm's visiting to her sister's place. He is very possessive. Somewhere he knows that her relation with Sasanka would affect Urm and his relation. So he forbids her to go there. It is Nirad who realizes first before anyone else that Urm's visits to her sister's place would prove to be a disaster.

"Nirod told her. 'I have noted some similarity between Sasanka's nature and yours. He is somewhat light-hearted, and that appeals to you. Is that not true?'"⁷

Urm enjoys the domestic work at her sister's house. Sharmila, keeps on giving instructions to look after Sasanka. Initially everything goes well. The nature of Urm and Sasanka is similar, so both of them starts doing mischevious thing with each other. They do like each other's company. She makes Sasanka listening to radio, go for a shopping, and many more activities, which Sasanka has not done before in the company of Sharmila. Urm also takes interest in his work as a joyous activity. Now Sasanka ignores his work and becomes careless for his business loss too.

"The moment she got a pretext she left her books behind and entered Sasanka's life, as it were, like a spring wind. With Urmimala by his side, Sasanka's life became a "prolonged picnic" so to say. Their minds matched perfectly and they went on playing, grossly neglecting their assigned roles and duties."⁸

Sharmila and Sasanka have been together for many years. Sharmila as a dedicated wife has served her husband without any expectations. Sasanka has a well maintained his routine work only because of Sharmila. He has no hindrance in his work till Sharmila manages his house and his routine. As Sasanka does not observe all her service because of lack of time, Sharmila thinks that it is mens' nature. Sasanka and Urm spend more time with each other and under the spell of infatuation both of they give her pain to suffering.

"Men do not like to follow dull routines; they will indulge in fantasies, and it is for the wives to quietly lend their support, but go on with their work in their own way. Sharmila had done this all her life, cheerfully."⁹

Nirad moves to London for his further studies and he leaves a detailed instructions for Urm before leaving for London. He writes her letter from there. But after some time he informs her that he is settling down there and getting married too. Urm does not feel love or respect for Nirad because he always tries to bind her in rules and regulations. She tries to be a responsible daughter as her father decided her to get marry with Nirad. But Nirad deceives her and gets marry with an European girl. Thus his despicable and nature is revealed. Urm after getting these letters feels happy. She gets freedom from this burdensome relation. Tagore describes her state of mind as follows,

"This sensation of freedom so exhilarated her that she did not know what she was going to do. The first thing she did was to shred to bits her routine that she had earlier chalked out for herself. Then she flung her engagement ring out through the window to a beggar, who was seeking alms there."¹⁰

Once Sasanka tells Urmi about Sharmila, "She is not a mortal being like you and me. She is divine like a goddess. She is much above us, and there is none whom I esteem more than her."¹¹ Her love is selfless and pure as she does not think of herself and her happiness. Everyone knows her nature and simplicity. Once Nirad also said to Urmi-"Sharmila's love is serene and sober. Her care for her husband is a sacred duty to her from which she rarely relents. It is solely because of her that Sasanka can remain so fully absorbed in his work."¹²

"The novelist remarked with a narratorial voice that captured the future: "Fortune will necessarily keep back her cards, throwing dust into Sarmila's eyes."¹³ Sharmila is the woman who can do anything for happiness of her husband. She repays the loss of her husband's business without informing him. She is a woman of deep insight. She could imagine what is going between Sasanka and Urmi. She is mature enough to notice her husband getting pale and sad when Urmi is not around him. She realizes that she has given her everything to Sasanka except happiness. She thinks that after her death Urmi is the only one who can keep Sasanka happy. Hence with a big heart she decides to make a sacrifice for her husband. It is a very difficult task i.e. to change roles by entrusting Urmi to see Sasanka happy. The time comes when she declares her decision, which is the incredible decision by a woman in love who knows only to give.

"I am leaving Urmi in your hand. She is my sister, and you will find me in her, in fact much more than you ever got from me."¹⁴

After taking such a decision Sharmila's condition worsens. She is upset of her life. She is on the threshold of death. She calls her husband and tells him to get married with Urmi. Here Tagore wards off the situation. Sharmila recovers after being treated by her uncle with medicines from Tibetan roots. She is shocked as she has already told Sasanka to get married with Urmi.

"Sharmila recovered, and then another reaction set in. This is an unexpected reverse. What must I do now? My survival poses a greater problem than my death."¹⁵

Sharmila does not want to break her promise which she gave to Sasanka. So she asked Urmi to live with her as a co-wife. She said, "For two sisters married to same man is not unusual in our Hindu society."¹⁶ Sharmila's these words are bombshells for Urmi. Sharmila does not care for the society and tells them to settle down in Nepal forever. Urmi is in dilemma, so she leaves everything to the decision of her sister and asks for a week's time to settle down her father's business before going to Nepal. But she realizes her fault and she goes from there for never to return. Further she decides to move to Europe to be a doctor to fulfill her father's dream and her mission.

"Urmimala's disappearance from the mainstream of the plot saved Sarmila-Sasanka relationship from doom. But we would not judge her departure as lightly as we took of Nirad's. She is not a supernumerary character. As a character she controls the turning point in the novel. In fact, without her the novel can hardly be conceived."¹⁷

Sasanka is never shown as the man who has feelings for his wife's love. Tagore does not show conflict in his soul between his duty and desire. His old age love gradually declines when

his wife falls ill and vanishes as soon as Urmi comes to his life. He neglects his wife and also his work. Once he confesses his love for Urmi. "He declared to her, 'I am sure you must know by now that I am in love with you.'"¹⁸

Urmi does not love him, but we can say it is an allure for time being. There is an instance where Sasanka asks her to stay back. "Sasanka sought her out. Just ponder what will happen to me if you decide to abandon me now."¹⁹ Though Urmi also forgets her duties and responsibilities for some time but as soon as she realizes she moves away from their life. When Urmi leaves him, nothing happens to him. Just like an obstinate child suddenly becomes an obedient, holds Sharmila's hand and cries, "I will rebuild, recreate what I have lost, what I have destroyed. Please Sharmila, do have faith in me as you had before."²⁰

Sharmila forgives Sasanka and Urmi and also forgets everything to fall in love with Sasanka once again. Having faith in him, she accompanies in his business. Sarmila's appeasement with Sasanka is different from that of Asha's with Mahendra in Chokher Bali. Asha is a meek and innocent girl who worries of family and society first. "Sarmila is above all the doubts and questions of feminism for her love and devotion have reached to the culmination where the 'self' mingles with the one whom she loves."²¹

Urmi's decision to move away from her sister's family shows her independence and maturity, though she is infatuated by him and deludes from her path because of her restricted life decided by Nirad but she never reveals her love for him. Nirad's behaviour makes her blind morally but she is different from Binodini who tempts a man to whom she likes. Here Tagore shows that a woman may be forgetful of her duty but she always thinks about welfare of the persons whom she loves the most

"To sum up, the novella seems to suggest that the two love modes are basically different and unbridgeable at least in the world of everyday realities. Further, it also points out that the combination of the two aspects of 'mother' and 'sweetheart' in one woman is an unattainable ideal."²²

III. CONCLUSION

At the onset, the outline of the story, Dui Bon (Two sisters) reminds one of the story of Nashtanirh (The Broken Nest), but with the genders of the protagonists changed. Nashtanirh is about a woman falling for her husband's brother because of the common interests and rapport they shared; whereas Dui bon is about a man who falls in love with his wife's sister with whom he shares his innermost thoughts and easily gets with. At the end the brother and sister in the respective stories realise the complexities of their situations and leave to pursue their individual goals. The similarities between the stories end there. Dui bon talks about what qualities a man seeks in his wife. As per the Sanskrit shloka in Neeti Shastra, an ideal wife is one who has six virtues. The shloka goes, 'Karyeshu daasi, karanesu mantri, bhojeshu mata, sayanesha Rambha, roopeshu Lakshmi, kshamaya Dharitri, shat dharma yukta, kula dharmapatni'.

As per this shloka, an ideal wife is one who is hardworking, advises as a minister would, feeds like a mother, gives pleasure and happiness like the heavenly dancer Rambha,

charming like Goddess Lakshmi, forgiving like Mother Earth. In all, a complete woman who would contribute to a happily married life in all ways. However, in reality, what are the chances that a woman would possess each and every quality mentioned above? It would be a very rare occurrence. But yet, perhaps the man might still seek each and every quality from his wife. Dui bon is a story that highlights such a need of a man. When one looks at the women characters in the novels of Tagore, they mostly belong to the middle class society or above middle class society. Some are educated and some are uneducated too. They must be either young wives or young widows or the middle-aged widow mothers or the middle aged widow aunts. As most of the protagonists in his novels are young women their chief concern seems to be love, whether it is proper or improper. One cannot dismiss the fact that love is a primary sentiment in human life. But the scope of love is very wide. The novels of Tagore, present characters that are in love in the limited sense, in the sense, between a young man and a young woman. Most of the characters seem to have involved in love without any direction and purpose and without proper understanding. They involve, they suffer and they get frustrated. A psychoanalytical study of the novel "Two Sisters" shows that the fulfillment of love is a rare occurrence and hence Urmi's decision to move away from her sister's family shows her independence and maturity.

IV. REFERENCES

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