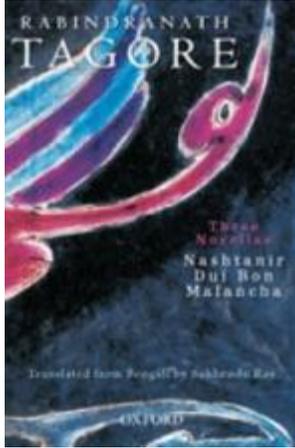


Book Received and Reviewed

Rabindranath Tagore: Three Novellas
Nashtanir, Dui Bon, Malancha

Translated from Bengali by Sukhendu Ray with an Introduction by Bharati Ray



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Review by
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Subhendu Ray's translation of *Three Novellas* by Rabindranath Tagore is linked by the theme of "conflict of love, more particularly extramarital love". The relationships explored include Bhupati, Charu, Amal (*Nashtanir*, translated as *The Broken Home*, 1901), Sasanka, Sharmila and Urmi (*Dui Bon* 1933, translated as *Two Sisters*) and Aditya, Neeraja and Sarala (*Malancha*, 1934, translated as *The Garden and the Gardener*). In a finely written introduction Bharati Ray contextualises these stories within the backdrop of the changing notions of the nuclear family, the gradual challenge to the woman within the *antahpur* (household) and the influence of the romance on contemporary relationships. Each of these stories engage in the woman defying her circumscribed space and personality to face moral and societal dilemmas as Tagore deftly explores the conflicts that such situations throw up. Although separated by almost 30 years these stories bear testimony to Tagore's keen awareness of the transformation of the domestic space and the emergence of alternative versions of female selfhood, even if these stories do end rather conventionally. It is the craftsmanship that outlines the nuances of intoxicating attractions, guilt, pain and trauma, that these stories remain strikingly haunting for the contemporary reader.

Ray confesses the difficulty in translating Rabindranath especially since the three stories adopt different registers in their narrative. The slower and the

more ponderous language of the translation of *Nashtanir* alerts us to the use of a more Sanskritised language in the original. The author is faithful to the text, referring to the Bengali equivalents wherever they bristle with suggestiveness. The more direct and dramatic force of the last two stories are the finer achievements of the translator in their ability to locate the fluxes in personality.

There seems to be hesitancy in the use of tenses in the translation. The use of the past tense suddenly gives way to the present at points in the text. This remains a jarring note in the translations, especially considering the finesse of the effort.

Ray's work shows us an aspect of the multifaceted talent of Tagore. It reveals a Tagore caught in the cusp of a moment of transition, keenly aware of the winds of change for the new woman; yet uneasy about the deeper impact on familial and societal structures. The careful translation, the choice of inflections and nuances makes it an enjoyable read while attempting to remain faithful to the complexity and craftsmanship of the original. The introduction embellishes the volume, contextualising it for the contemporary reader. This is a volume that will be greatly appreciated by Tagore enthusiasts and scholars alike.

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