

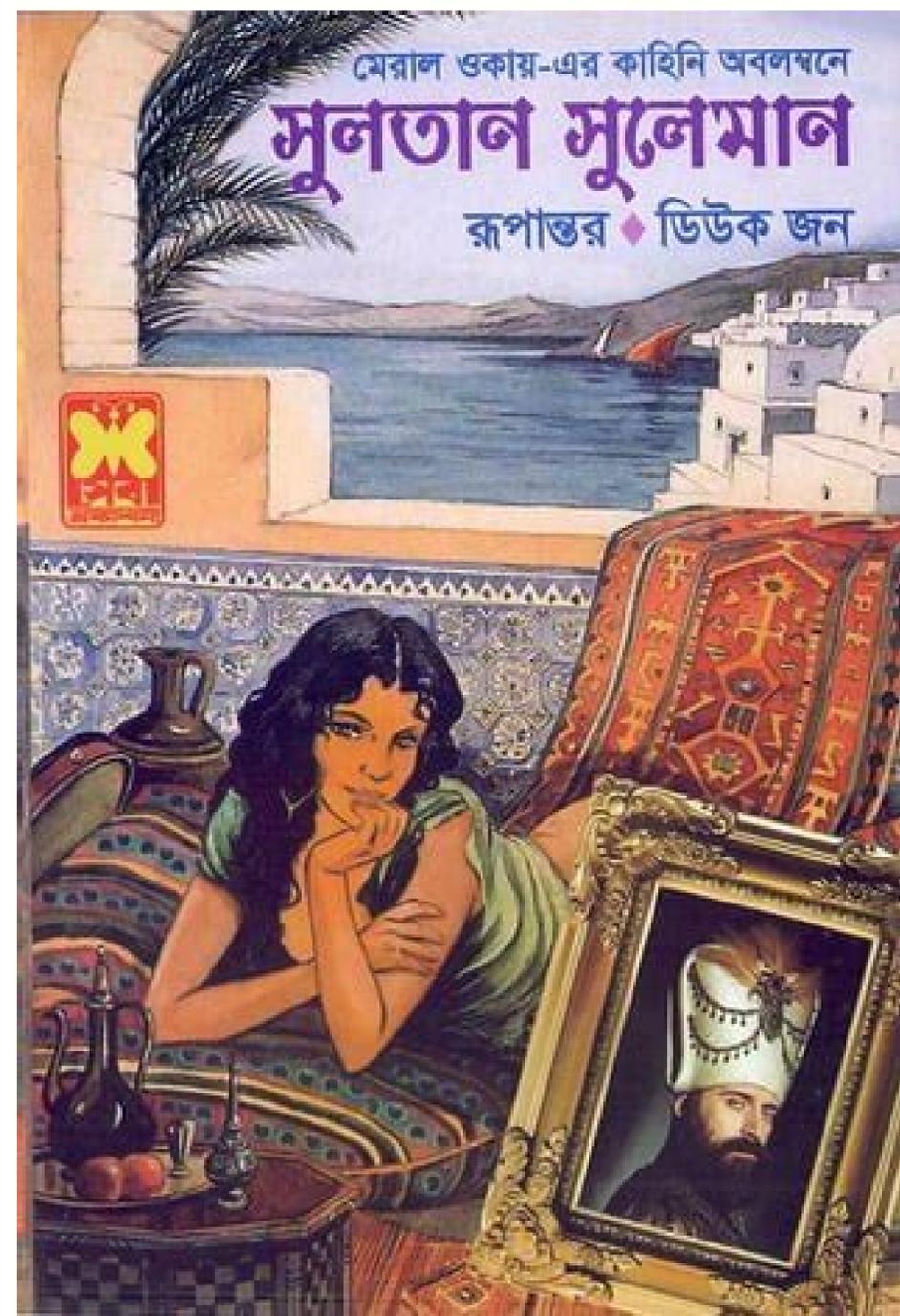
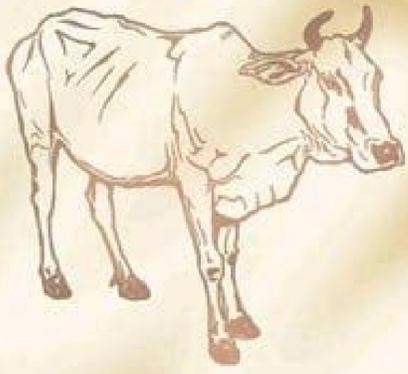
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# মহেশ

শরৎচন্দ্র চট্টোপাধ্যায়



# RABINDRANATH TAGORE<sup>1</sup>

(1861–1941)  
Narmadeshwar Jha

## Family background and early influences

Rabindranath Tagore was born on 7 May 1861. At some time towards the end of the seventeenth century, his forefathers had migrated from their native lands to Govindpur, one of the three villages which later came to constitute Calcutta. In the course of time, the family came to acquire property and considerable business interests through the pursuit of commercial and banking activities. They had particularly benefited from the growing power of the British East India Company. Rabindranath's grandfather, Dwarkanath Tagore, lived lavishly and broke the Hindu religious ban of those times by travelling to Europe, just like his contemporary, Rammoan Roy, the nineteenth century social and religious reformer.

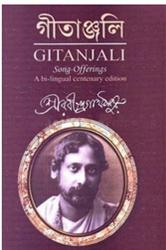
Roy started a religious reform movement in 1828 that came to be known as the Brahma Samaj Movement. Rabindranath's grandfather supported Roy in his attempts at reforming Hindu society. Dwarkanath's son, Devendranath Tagore, also became a staunch supporter of the Brahma Samaj Movement. In order to encourage its spread, in 1863 he established a meditation centre and guest house on some land about 100 miles from Calcutta at a place called 'Santiniketan', the Abode of Peace.

Although deeply steeped in Hindu and Islamic traditions, Tagore's family contributed large sums of money for the introduction of Western education, including colleges for the study of science and medicine. This peculiar situation explains the combination of tradition and experiment that came to characterize Rabindranath Tagore's attitude to life.

Rabindranath's father was one of the leading figures of the newly awakened phase of Bengali society. He had been educated at one stage in Rammoan Roy's Anglo-Hindu school and had been greatly influenced by Roy's character, ideals and religious devotion. Devendranath Tagore was well versed in European philosophy and, though deeply religious, did not accept all aspects of Hinduism. He was to have a profound influence on his son's mental and practical attitudes.

Rabindranath was the fourteenth child of his parents. His brothers and sisters were poets, musicians, playwrights and novelists and the Tagore home was thus filled with musical, literary and dramatic pursuits. The family was also involved with diverse activities at the national level.

Important changes were taking place in Bengal at the time Rabindranath was born. Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar had been attempting to reform the position of women in society. Schools using English as the language of teaching were being established, alongside the traditional Sanskrit schools. Vidyasagar had established Bengali-medium schools at different places in Bengal with little or limited government support. He had also established a centre to train teachers for these schools. Rabindranath attended this school and, as he says himself, owed his love of Bengali language and literature to it. He was also sent to a number of English-speaking schools, but he did not like their



Contribution of rabindranath tagore in literature. Aparichita story by rabindranath tagore. Aparichita rabindranath tagore story pdf. Rabindranath tagore ideas on education.

Rabindranath Tagore's story "Aparichita" ("The Unknown Woman" [1], 1916) relates how the course of a young man's life is fundamentally altered in an unexpected fashion by an "unknown woman". This story served as the basis for the 20th episode, "Aparichita" [2], of the anthology television series *Stories by Rabindranath Tagore* (2015), which was under the general directorship of Anurag Basu. Samrat Chakraborty wrote the screenplay and dialogue for this episode, which was directed by Debatma Mandal. Tagore's story "Aparichita" is interesting in several respects. In common with a number of stories in this series and in alignment with a significant Tagorean theme, it features an independent-minded young woman striving to find her way in a traditional male-dominated society. In particular, aspects of this story hinge on specifics of the way traditional Indian arranged marriages are/were structured. And although the story concerns a potentially romantic hookup between a man and a woman, it doesn't evolve the way most such encounters do. The story is told from the perspective of the young man who meets this unique woman, but there are some significant differences between the way Tagore tells the story and the way Chakraborty and Mandal tell it. Tagore's story is a first-person narration, and the events covered are described in a linear timeline. However, in this filmed version, the events are dramatized, and their presentation is laced with several flashbacks that may have a confusing effect on the viewer, as I will discuss below. The story of "Aparichita" in this filmed version passes through six phases in a nonlinear fashion. 1. On the Train The story begins with a young man in his early twenties, Anupam (played by Kranji Prakash Jha), who is accompanying his widowed mother on a train to Haridwar. Anupam is clearly a well-mannered son who is attentive to his mother's comfort. While their train is stopped at a station, Anupam hears from his train compartment a young woman, whose name we will later learn is Kalyani (Abigail Pande), outside on the station platform shepherding some young girls in her company as they look for some vacant seats on the train. In Tagore's story we are explicitly told that Anupam was bewitched by the mellifluous tones of the young woman's voice, but in this filmed version we only see his smiling facial expression. In fact in the story, Tagore expresses his appreciative wonder over the charms of the human voice [1] - "I have always been fascinated by the human voice. The physical beauty appeals to everyone but to me it is the voice that really conveys the essence of what is unique and elusive in a person." - and this concern has some significance in the original story that may be overlooked by viewers of the filmed version. In any case, the sound of this woman's voice evidently causes Anupam to ruminate over some events that transpired two years earlier. 2. Two Years Earlier - Harish Visits Anupam has recently been graduated from the university, and he is visited by his friend (and perhaps cousin) Harish (Asim Ahmed) from Kanpur. Harish, after cordially scolding Anupam for not having the gumption to find a suitable wife for himself, informs his friend that he has found an ideal marriage candidate for him. The girl's name is Kalyani, and she is the only child of businessman Shambhunath Sen in Kanpur. After getting Anupam's consent, Harish approaches Anupam's young uncle Ajit (Harsh Khurana), who is now the head of his mother's household, to agree to arrange for the marriage between Anupam and Kalyani. We see quickly that even though Ajit is only about thirty years old, he is an assertive and prideful man and that the respectful Anupam is always obedient to his demands. As with many traditional Indian families, Ajit is not concerned whether Anupam and Kalyani are a good match but instead whether the two families are a good match, i.e. whether the Sen family is worthy of being conjoined with their family. So Ajit sends Anupam's older brother Vinod to Kanpur in order to inspect the Sen family. While Vinod is visiting the Sen family in Kanpur, Anupam calls up their residence to speak to his brother, and we see a young lady, presumably Kalyani, answer the phone. At this point the viewer can see what Anupam can't - what Kalyani looks like and that she is the same woman that Anupam would encounter two years later on the train. In fact given the rigidity of Hindu Indian marriage arrangements, the lesser commonality of photographs at that time, and Anupam's subservience, he is unable to see what Kalyani looks like until the actual marriage ceremony, itself. Note that this early connection between marriage candidate Kalyani and the unknown woman on the train is something that was not made in Tagore's story, which followed a linear timeline. Connecting the two of them at this point early in the film was an aesthetic decision on the part of the filmmakers that, similar to *Random Harvest* (1942), had dramatic tradeoffs that you may question (although the filmmakers of *Random Harvest* hardly had a choice in this matter). 3. On the Train (again) Back on the train again two years later, Anupam can be seen overhearing with pleasure the chatter from the next train compartment, where the unknown woman (Kalyani) has found empty seats for herself and the young girls in her company. Anupam would like to talk to them, but he is too timid to knock on their door. It doesn't matter, because after awhile Kalyani and her girls are dispossessed of their seats by people who have reserved them, and Kalyani asks Anupam's mother if she and her girls can move into their compartment. Anupam's mother cordially informs her that she and Anupam have reserved the entire compartment for themselves and that Kalyani and her girls are welcome to join them. 4. Two Years Earlier - the Wedding Continuing the narrative thread of two years earlier, Vinod reports back to Ajit that the Sen family is acceptably humble and that, as per his instructions from Ajit, he has gotten Shambhunath Sen (Kali Prasad Mukherjee) to agree to all their demands, since the bride's family must host the wedding ceremony. The wedding arrangements proceed as planned. However, just before the actual ceremony, Ajit tells Shambhunath Sen that he wants his own goldsmith to assess the true value Kalyani's wedding jewels, which are part of the bride's dowry. Naturally, Shambhunath Sen is silently offended, but he agrees to go ahead with the inspection if Anupam is in agreement with Ajit's intentions. Anupam is summoned and as usual quietly expresses his submissive assent to Ajit's inspection. The inspection goes ahead, and the bride's jewelry is confirmed by the goldsmith to be authentic and of a high standard. Then Shambhunath Sen unexpectedly feeds a dinner to all the wedding guests and afterwards informs everyone that the wedding is cancelled. He will not have his daughter wedded to a family that thinks her father could be a swindler. Ajit is furious and vows revenge. And Anupam has still not set sight on Kalyani - he still doesn't know what she looks like. So it is finally clear to the viewer why Anupam doesn't recognize Kalyani later on the train. 5. On the Train (once again) Returning to the later narrative thread on the train, we see Anupam again charmed to listen to Kalyani read fairy tales to the young girls who are with her. But then at a train stop they are confronted by two pushy male British passengers who demand possession of their train compartment and order them to vacate. Anupam is timidly ready to submit to their demands, but Kalyani refuses to budge, insisting that they have the legal right to remain in their compartment. After a brief standoff, the insolent British passengers give way, and Kalyani triumphantly returns to her seat. This is a seminal moment in the story, because it delineates a fundamental difference between Anupam and Kalyani. While Anupam is respectful and genteel, he is too timid to stand up for what is right. Kalyani, on the other hand is a principled idealist and will fight for what is right. Impressed by Kalyani's brave stand, Anupam's mother asks her name, and she replies that she is Kalyani, daughter of Shambhunath Sen from Kanpur. It is at this point that Anupam finally learns that this charming woman is the person he was supposed to marry two years earlier. 6. Two Weeks Later Hoping to rectify his past errors, Anupam approaches Shambhunath Sen and begs his forgiveness. He says that he has long since disconnected himself from his pride-hungry uncle Ajit and that he really wants to marry Kalyani. Shambhunath Sen says he has no objection, but the decision is really up to Kalyani. When Anupam approaches Kalyani, she courteously tells him that he just wants to assuage his guilt feelings and that he should forget about her. She flatly rejects his renewed marriage proposal. In fact, she tells him, their earlier marriage fiasco was a blessing in disguise for her. It allowed her to discover something that would give true meaning to her life - a career devoted to educating young orphan girls. The final scene shows Anupam writing a letter to his friend Harish. He tells him that he is now working in Allahabad supporting Kalyani's efforts to launch a school there for orphan girls. He adds further: "Kalyani can never be mine. The two banks of a river can never meet. But they can at least move together. I just want to be a small part of Kalyani's big dream." So the story ends on a curiously positive note. What the rudderless Anupam needed was not a traditional wife, but a person who could inspire his basically well-intentioned self to take the bit between his teeth and positively engage in a meaningful mission, one based on the idealistic principles that his new life's guide, Kalyani, believes in. This episode is interesting and well-made, with excellent dramatic performances by all. However, as I mentioned above, it would have been good if the filmmakers had placed more of an emphasis, as did Tagore's original story, on the engaging effects of Kalyani's sweet-sounding voice on Anupam's soul. ★★½ Notes:

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