



***Palliprakiti* and Girlhood in the Anthropocene:  
Studying *Samapti* from Tagore to Ray**

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**Abstract**

The Anthropocene era, where human beings are the sole cause of ecological disruption, leads the paper to explore the significance of rural nature and girlhood ties. It examines how rural nature can shape girlhood to support ecological human-nature coexistence and a breakdown of hierarchical stratifications, given the increasing impact of urbanization in rural areas. Using Rabindranath Tagore's short story *Samapti* (1893) and Satyajit Ray's 1961 adaptation as a starting point, this paper investigates Mrinmoyee's close relationship with the natural environment and the non-human world. In this paper, the relevance of the rural nature-girlhood subject in the Anthropocene is primarily explained by Rabindranath Tagore's concept of *palliprakiti* (rural nature) and its organic relationship with women.

**Keywords:** samapti, rural nature, girlhood, anthropocene

*Engagement with the natural world from a formative age is the only way to restore humanity to spiritual and ecological health.*

Tagore

**Introduction**

Ever since its inception, the word Anthropocene has attracted the attention of academic scholars in the field of scientific and humanities research. The term Anthropocene was proposed by chemist Paul Crutzen and biologist Eugene Stoermer (2000) in a short article

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entitled “The Anthropocene” to emphasize the central role of humankind in geology and ecology in the current geological epoch” (Zottola and de Majo 454). The Anthropocene refers to the current geological age in which human beings and their activities dominate the earth’s climate and environment. Although the concept is a 21<sup>st</sup>-century phenomenon, the beginning of the Anthropocene could be marked roughly in the AD 1800 when the Industrial Revolution had almost wholly transformed England and had spread to many other countries in Europe and across the Atlantic to North America” (Steffen et al., 849). The Anthropocentric era also celebrates human exceptionalism due to its massive advancement in the industrial and technological world, positioning humans at the top of the hierarchy of living organisms in the ecosystem. The destruction of the earth's ecosystem can therefore be attributed to human beings in this new geological era. The rapid increase in urbanization is also a potential threat to destroy the rural nature of this planet. In order to maintain the balance in the ecosystem, rural nature and its abundance must be acknowledged as being critical to good health for the earth. In the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Rabindranath Tagore apprehended this inevitable deterioration of rural nature due to the invasion of urbanization, and he addressed the issue in his lecture entitled “The Robbery of the Soil,” which he delivered at the University of Calcutta in 1922, along with Leonard Elmhurst. In Tagore’s words, “the city, in its intense egoism and pride, remains blissfully unconscious of the devastation it is continuously spreading within the village, the source and origin of its own life, health and joy” (“The Robbery of the Soil” 869). In an Anthropocene era, where humans extend their hierarchal domination over the natural world and non-human creatures, this paper discusses how rural nature aids in shaping girlhood that ultimately promises an ecological human-nature co-existence and a breakdown of the hierarchal strata. In analyzing Rabindranath Tagore’s short story “Samapti” (“The Conclusion” 1893) and its filmic adaptation of the same title by Satyajit Ray in 1961, the article explores how the female protagonist Mrinmoyee in her girlhood develops an inseparable bonding with the village’s natural surroundings and non-human world. The article uses Tagore’s concept of *palliprakiti* (rural nature)<sup>1</sup> and its organic ties with the rural women folk to establish an integral relationship between the two. It demonstrates that Mrinmoyee's childhood experience, in close

association with the village's natural surroundings and non-human beings, has contributed to a reconsideration of the human-nature relationship, which is much needed in today's human-dominated Anthropocene.

### ***Palliprakiti and Girlhood***

On the occasion of the 7<sup>th</sup>-anniversary celebration of the establishment of the Sriniketan (1921), Tagore's modeled village near Shantiniketan, he delivered a series of lectures addressing the future plan and ideals of the Sriniketan village. These lectures were later collected in the book titled, *Palliprakiti* (1962). These lectures equally addressed the prevalent problem of Indian peasants and provided practical solutions to them during that time. However, when "Samapti" (1893) was written, Tagore's idea of *Palliprakiti* referred to the blissful presence of nature in the rural landscape of Bengal. In the last two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Tagore frequently traveled to his family (zamindari) estates in Selaidah, Sazadpur, and Patisar in rural (east) Bengal. As a city-bred man from Calcutta, this was his initial exposure to the vastness of rural nature. In his book *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*, Nirad C Chaudhuri observes Tagore's stay in his family estates:

Calcutta was wholly outside the true Bengali landscape in which the blue of the sky, the green of the vegetation, and the grey of the waters mingled to create a vast expanse of tender stillness. Thus it happened that it was during his stay in his country estates, often floating in his houseboat on the rivers, that Tagore wrote some of his best work both in poetry and prose. (qtd. in Dutta and Robinson 109)

Commenting on Tagore's communion with rural nature, Satyajit Ray contemplates:

His own gains from this intimate contact with the fundamental aspects of life and nature, and the influence of this contact on his life and work - are beyond measure. Living mostly in his boat and watching life through the window, a whole new world of sights and sounds and feelings opened up before him. (qtd. in Dutta and Robinson 109)

Tagore was enamored by the bountiful presence of nature in rural Bengal. In his book *Chinnapatra (Scattered Letters, 1912)*<sup>2</sup> Tagore notes many inexpressive moments in the blissful company of nature during his time in the rural estates, which are reflected in his poetry and other literary works. In one of his letters to his niece Indira Devi, Tagore sketches the beautiful scenario of a sunset:

SHELIDAH, 1888

Just like that, beside this tiny river amidst the calmness of the trees, the sun goes down on its routine; and gradually, upon the horizonless grey and peaceful sand shore, the noiseless rise of uncountable twinkling stars in the evening sky— one must experience this here to perceive the wonder and magnitude of such a sight...-all like an enchanting dream in the evening light.

It's hard to perceive the wonder and beauty of nature when one is in Calcutta. (32)

During his supervision of the family estates, Tagore discovered a close affinity between women and nature. While looking through the window of his house in the estate or dwelling in his boat on the river, Tagore had the occasional opportunity to observe the daily lives of the village folks closely. He reflected on how women always feel an inseparable connection to nature compared to men. Once, while resting in his boat on the river, he eloquently described an episode of the river ghat, demonstrating a connection between the girl and water. Tagore believed women and water share equal traits as nature's creations and wrote:

The younger girls never seem to get through their sporting in the water; it is a delight to hear their careless, merry laughter. The men gravely take their regulation number of dips and go away, but girls are on much more intimate terms with the water. Both are like babble and chatter and ripple and sparkle in the same simple and natural manner; both may languish and fade away under a scorching glare, yet both can take a blow without hopelessly breaking under it. The hard world, which, but for them, would be barren, cannot fathom the mystery of the soft embrace of their arms.

Woman is more at home with the water, laving in it, playing with it. (*Chinnapatra* 104-105)

The woman shares equal traits with nature because “she has had a uniformity of rhythm and beauty since her creation, unlike the men” (194). “The women are like all other nature’s beautiful creations, which are complete, organized and compatible” (194). Tagore believed this has been why “women have ever been compared with the songs, poems, creepers, flowers, and rivers” (194). For Tagore, not only do women resemble nature, but nature’s plan functions in shaping a woman as “an accomplished being who maintains an unbroken consistency in the manners, customs, speech, and adornment. Because for ages, nature has assigned her the role and has been helping her adapt to it” (193). Furthermore, “nature has molded the woman with its best craftsmanship by making her a mother” (194).

#### **Mrinmoyee’s Girlhood in the Village’s Natural Surroundings**

As the mystery of the rural nature and the quotidian lives of the village folks gradually unravel for Tagore, he comes across a village girl who intrigues him:

Shazadpur, July 1891.

There is another boat at this landing place, and on the shore in front of it a crowd of village women. Some are evidently embarking on a journey and the others seeing them off; infants, veils, and grey hairs are all mixed up in the gathering.

One girl in particular attracts my attention. She must be about eleven or twelve; but, buxom and sturdy, she might pass for fourteen or fifteen. She has a winsome face—very dark, but very pretty. Her hair is cut short like a boy's, which well becomes her simple, frank, and alert expression... Her half-boyish, half-girlish manner is singularly attractive--a novel blend of masculine nonchalance and feminine charm. I had no idea there were such types among our village women in Bengal. (*Chinnapatra* 77)

The sight of the girl proves to be an immediate source of inspiration in molding the central character, Mrinmoyee in his short story “Samapti” (1893). Evidently, in Tagore’s story, one gathers that rural nature seems to shape the girlhood of Mrinmoyee. In Bangla, ‘Mrinmoyee’ means ‘made of mud/soil’; therefore, her name could be a metaphoric implication that she is an inseparable part of the village’s soil. Mrinmoyee is introduced in the story’s opening while sitting casually on the top of a heap of bricks by the riverbank and taking an interest in watching the predicament of newcomer Apurbo, drenched in the muddy surface of the riverbank. The narrator also informs that she visits the riverbank frequently to see the foreign boats mooring in the village river ghat, unlike the other villagers who never dare to visit there. Not only do the other villagers find her unique among the other girls her age, but the narrator does as well, stating that she befriends the village children and continues to play with them amidst the natural environment. The narrator attributes the qualities of various natural phenomena within Mrinmoyee. These qualities within her are meant to give the impression that Mrinmoyee shares a closer affinity with other natural beings. Her indomitable woman spirit represents ‘a running forest deer’ (Tagore “Samapti” 386). Her two big dark eyes show no fear, shame, or emotion— no humane qualities (386). Mrinmoyee’s eyes are like ‘a shining, clean, and sparkling lake’ (388). She stands on the riverbank like ‘a fearless fawn without the fear of hunter and observes the newcomer passengers from the foreign boats’ (386). Not only does she possess the qualities of natural phenomena, but she also champions a direct way of communication with natural objects. The resonant laughter of Mrinmoyee reverberates through the air and in the rustling leaves in the branches of the village trees. Her laughter plays and sounds like the anklets of nature, dancing in the blue sky (388). Again, her laughter could play an alarming sound as its sweetness and waves can wake the birds of the nearby banyan tree (386). Therefore, by endowing Mrinmoyee with the inherent characteristics of natural beings and making her able to communicate with nature, the narrator establishes Mrinmoyee as an inseparable component of the natural realm. On the other hand, looking from an ecological perspective, Tagore’s characterization of Mrinmoyee reiterates that “humans are biocultural creatures... who are embedded in various ecologies and networks of relations and who can integrate their acknowledgment of

their embodiment, animality, physicality, dependence, and vulnerability into their self-conception and their orientation toward and modes of being in the world” (Frost 3). Timothy Morton’s claim— “[A] human is made up of nonhuman components and is directly related to nonhumans”— substantiates Tagore’s depiction of Mrinmoyee that she as a human is not “any special or different species” (18). Instead, she embodies herself as a part of nature and its elements. Contrary to the deciding proclamation of the Anthropocene, she is not superior as a species; instead, she conforms to having the qualities of non-human beings and other natural phenomena embedded in her. Therefore, she could also become a force to protect non-human beings and sustain ecological co-existence and harmony.

In his film, *Samapti* (1961), Ray has framed Mrinmoyee’s deeper interactions with the natural world through an intricately constructed narrative. She has a penchant for climbing trees, and enjoying swinging on a chair tied to a long tree beside the river. Along with her companions, she spends time playing around an old, wheeled chariot placed on the riverbank. Besides being given the qualities of non-human creatures in Tagore’s story, Mrinmoyee befriends an animal, a chipmunk, in Ray’s film and names it Chorki (windlass). Moreover, she is concerned about Chorki’s wellbeing, and hides it inside the old chariot on the riverbank, as her mother won’t allow her to keep it in their home. Extending love and kindness to non-human pets is a recurrent theme in Ray’s early movies. In the opening scene of *Pather Panchali* (1955), Durga feeds and takes care of her pet cats. Apu and Durga are seen delighted while fetching their little pet calf back home from the field. Reasonably, although Mrinmoyee has no non-human companion in Tagore’s text, Ray’s adaptation picturizes Mrinmoyee’s connection to non-human beings in multiple scenes. It is no surprise that Ray was aware that Tagore had always advocated a kinship of love and mutual co-existence between human and non-human creatures. Tagore grieves for the merciless human behaviors towards the non-human. In a letter to his niece, featured in *Chinnapatra*, Tagore emphasizes ‘the sinful’ destruction of non-human lives in utter human callousness: “How many living creatures are sacrificed only to grace the dishes at a dinner-party...so long as we are unconscious of our cruelty, we may not be to blame. But if,

after our pity is aroused, we persist in throttling our feelings simply in order to join others in their preying upon life, we insult all that is good in us. I have decided to try a vegetarian diet” (204). Not only does Tagore vow to change his diet, but he proposes the best possible solution to this crisis. A great alternative to this sinful act is to spread love toward all living beings—“I feel that the highest commandment is that of sympathy for all sentient beings. Love is the foundation of all religion” (204). Tagore alludes to Banbhata, the ancient Indian poet, to signify the inseparable traits of all living beings, “in some ways, birds are like us human beings. At one point, both barely have any difference. Banbhata’s imagination caught this feeling, and he expressed the same in his writing” (206). Tagore also refers to ancient Indian scriptures where the bonding between humans and non-humans is celebrated: “to Indians, the idea of the transmigration of the soul from animal to man, and man to an animal does not seem strange, and so from our scriptures, pity for all sentient creatures has not been banished as a sentimental exaggeration” (229). By befriending a non-human creature, Mrinmoyee subverts the purported hierarchical domination of humans over other species and nature. Instead, she develops “*a relational web*— a human and non-human special web and interdependency... that undermines the positions of *human exceptionalism*” (Junker and Jennings 9; italics in the original). According to Mathew Hall, “altruistic involvement with non-humans builds up a relationship of care and responsibility... situating non-humans in ethical relationships is one of the most powerful methods for reversing the hierarchy which pervades human ecological action” (388). By displaying her kinship with the non-human creature, Mrinmoyee establishes what Junker and Jennings call “‘transcorporeality’ an ecological interdependence grounded in an embodied ‘sense of species in relation’” (17).

Mrinmoyee’s persistent communion with nature and her care towards non-human beings help her grow as an individual. Mrinmoyee lives “a fully realized human life,” which Tagore believes one can achieve if surrounded by “the participative presence of the natural world around them” (Shrivastava 331). According to Kalyan Sen Gupta, Tagore believes that when a human realizes his/her identity with nature, he/she is emancipated from his narrow individual enclosure, and the circle of his/her concerns and



sympathies extends to everything by which he/she is surrounded (61). Mrinmoyee seems to have transcended the narrow circle of human prejudices around her. Instead, she has embraced the nature surrounding her existence. As a result, she has turned into a 'spirited' and a 'free—out of bondage' girl (Tagore "Samapti" 386). While Mrinmoyee's characteristics are defined by her closeness to nature, Apurbo (renamed as Amulya in Ray's film) seems to be a person to whom the village's natural surroundings never appeal. In Tagore's story, the narrator presents Apurbo as a college-educated, proud man who 'has gained erudition and spent a very long time in Calcutta' (386). He also dissociates himself from being a simple village person because he serves as a critic for the monthly magazine *Biswadeep* (*The Light of the World*). He has rare and expensive belongings like costly essences, polished shoes, Rubini's camphor, and colored paper for writing letters. His book *Harmonium Siksha* (*The Lessons of Harmonium*) and a complete notebook will soon be published. Ray's film captures the interior of Amulya's room, which is also decorated with a bookshelf, a table clock, a gramophone, and a photo frame of Napoleon. He loves to play music on the gramophone, which produces its artificial machine sound, contrasting the natural sound of the village. The gramophone plays a song: *Bosiya Bijane keno eka mone* (why do you sit alone in a lonely place?).<sup>3</sup> Amulya is also heard humming the song occasionally. The line from the song could be a metaphor for Amulya's lonely status, as the entire village also looks like an unfamiliar place to him. The photo of Napoleon is a metaphor for Amulya's proud nature. Ray has framed a different world for Amulya in his room, which may be a misfit in the village's natural surroundings. Accordingly, Amulya initially fails to perceive the intricacies of Mrinmoyee's actions when he observes her in the village. He feels rather annoyed around her and labels her a 'shameless' and 'insolent' girl ((Ray "Samapti"). Even the servant Hari informs Amulya that she is known to the villagers as *Pagli* (a madcap). Nirupama's character is a foil to Mrinmoyee. Nirupama is from a well-to-do family in the village. Unlike Mrinmoyee, she has received formal education as she studies "Bangla grammar, geography, arithmetic, history of India and domestic science—volume two" (Tagore "Samapti" 387). She is also trained in harmonium and singing. In Ray's film, Amulya's mother hails Nirupama as well accomplished in household chores besides being

educated. These are probably the reasons that Amulya's mother wants him to marry Nirupama. Nirupama's singular appearance occurs when Amulya visits Nirupama's house to see her at a bridal meeting preceding the marriage. During the meeting, Nirupama is stunned and silent, and she answers Amulya's questions only when she receives a nudge from the lady sitting behind her. To the narrator of Tagore's story, Nirupama is a "a timid and heart-trembling girl' who is furnished, decorated, given a ribbon on her head, and wrapped in a saree, resembling 'a well-dressed heap of shyness' (Tagore, "Samapti" 387).

There is a dichotomy between Mrinmoyee and Nirupama/Apurbo vis-à-vis learning and education. Although there is no mention of Mrinmoyee's formal education in Tagore's text, she claims to have had a little formal education in Ray's film. However, her primary source of education is rural nature, which teaches and shapes her in all aspects of life. Assem Shrivastava notes how Tagore emphasizes learning from the natural world – "It is not only the formal education of the institution but also continuous engagement with the natural world from a formative age that is equally obligatory to grow as a conscious and ecologically aware human being" (331). "To retain the young minds' constant contact with nature, Tagore located his educational experiment in the rural setting of Santiniketan and not in urban Kolkata. To him, open skies, planted fields, and swaying palms are more essential to untrammelled learning and the formation of the mind than the hectic cultural exchanges a modern metropolis affords, and a village denies." (Shrivastava 331). In his essay "An Easter University", Tagore talks about "attaining a religious ideal (spiritual harmony) for the growth of the mind by making provision for students to live in intimate touch with nature, daily to grow in an atmosphere of service offered to all creatures, tending trees, feeding birds and animals, learning to feel the immense mystery of the soil and water and air" (Tagore *Creative Unity* 201). Unlike Amulya and Nirupama, Mrinmoyee claims to have little formal education and a constant entanglement with the natural surroundings, which are her primary source of learning.

### **Mrinmoyee's Marriage: An Ecological Grief**

According to Ashlee Cunsolo and Neville R. Ellis, “ecological grief is a natural response to ecological losses— loss of species, ecosystems and meaningful landscapes due to acute or chronic environmental change” (275). However, the processes of grieving and mourning can take many forms, differ across cultures, vary significantly among individuals, and even be experienced differently by the same individual each time a different loss is encountered (275). The event of marriage marks the beginning of an episode of ecological grief in Mrinmoyee’s life because the process of marriage demands a complete separation of Mrinmoyee’s bond with nature. Mrinmoyee’s ecological grief may not concern the loss of species or ecosystems but her individual life, which suffers sudden dissociation from the natural world. Although Amulya initially resents Mrinmoyee, he still falls in love with her as he perceives “not only the physical beauty but also the simplicity of Mrinmoyee’s face, which spears one deep down the heart” (Tagore “Samapti” 385). Amulya’s mother, who was initially against her son marrying Mrinmoyee, finally agrees to accept Mrinmoyee as her daughter-in-law. The film shows how Mrinmoyee, passes Amulya’s mother’s test when she asks her questions about domestic chores to be qualified as her daughter-in-law. On the other hand, Mrinmoyee’s mother is elated to receive a marriage proposal from a well-to-do family, so she leaves no stone unturned to prepare her daughter for the marriage, prohibiting her from stepping outside until the ceremony concludes.

Ray has filmed how Mrinmoyee had devised innovative ways of protesting to stop her marriage. She tries to breach the boundary of the house her mother had created for her. She wants to run away secretly but is caught red-handed by her mother. While Mrinmoyee keeps weeping as she is caged, it is evident how she longs for her union with nature. She even goes to the extent of cutting her hair short to prevent her marriage, for which she is beaten severely by her mother. Ray has artistically used the editing in scenes when Mrinmoyee is beaten, and next, she, is on the marriage pedestal with Amulya. The organic appeal of the scene seems to be that Mrinmoyee is beaten to a marriage. The marriage night offers Mrinmoyee the opportunity to express her reluctance to marriage and how it deprives her of the exposure she enjoys in the village’s natural surroundings. That is why, according to the narrator of Tagore’s story, all her

adventures with nature stop suddenly, and it seems 'Mrinmoyee's world has shrunk into Apurbo's mother's inner house within a night' (Tagore "Samapti" 389). In her conversation with Amulya on the marriage night, Mrinmoyee gathers the courage to inform Amulya that she has been forcibly married without her consent. She even alleges Amulya "Why do you close me inside the house? Free me. Let me go" (Ray "Samapti"). Mrinmoyee expresses her anger by denying her love for Amulya vociferously when the latter asks her "Don't you love me, Mrinmoyee?" (Ray "Samapti").

However, in order to make her rendezvous with nature, a courageous Mrinmoyee elopes in the middle of her marriage night. Without Amulya's knowledge, she secretly goes to the roof and climbs down the tree to run to the riverside. It follows Mrinmoyee's emotional midnight tryst with her pet Chorki, who has been kept hidden inside the old chariot. She then sways in the swinging chair tied to a tree beside the river and falls asleep in the chair beside the river. This beautiful scene of Mrinmoyee's adventure seems to have occurred on a moonlit night. The happiness on her face, which the moonlight makes visible, makes her forgetful of all the restrictions of marriage and the household. It shows her joyous union with nature until she is caged again by her furious mother-in-law. When a gradual rupture grows between Mrinmoyee and the village's natural surroundings, both Tagore's text and Ray's film concentrate on Mrinmoyee's inevitable journey of maturing from girlhood to womanhood. She goes through the ordeals of a lonely wife as Amulya returns to the city to continue his further studies. Tagore's story dramatizes how Mrinmoyee stops playing with the children and is seen barely outside the home. For Ray, the process of this transformation begins realistically. Mrinmoyee's mother disapproves of Mrinmoyee's stay at the house after the marriage. She criticizes Mrinmoyee for not securing a place at her husband's home. Mrinmoyee stays inside the house and weeps the entire day. Ray extends Mrinmoyee's transformation process while creating two consecutive evocative scenes in the film. The first of them is the death of Chorki. Through the demise of Chorki, Ray's film forces a metaphoric indication of Mrinmoyee's maturity from childhood to womanhood. Rakhai brings to Mrinmoyee the dead Chorki, and Mrinmoyee's calm face in a big close-up shows no concern for the

incident. Instead, she orders Rakhal to burn it by the riverside. Ray creates another scene where Mrinmoyee enthusiastically writes a letter to Amulya, which reads *Tumi Fire Eso* (Please come back here). This scene in the film shows how Mrinmoyee is eagerly expecting the return of Amulya. Due to her transition to womanhood, it seems that Mrinmoyee accepts the world of Amulya. Mrinmoyee's standing beside the gramophone is a metaphoric indication that she can find a place and live in harmony in Amulya's world. The ultimate closing of the door confirms that Mrinmoyee embraces Amulya's world. But Mrinmoyee's union with Amulya's world comes at the expense of her confessing that "she wouldn't climb trees anymore" (Ray "Samapti"). Mrinmoyee was able to disagree with Amulya's rhetorical question to her in their marriage, "Do the housewives climb trees or take swinging in a swinging chair" (Ray "Samapti")? She answered Amulya "I do. I like doing them. They are my happiness" (Ray "Samapti"). Thus, it doesn't seem viable for Mrinmoyee to terminate her connection with nature and conform to the social role of a wife and a daughter-in-law. But the question remains: how would Mrinmoyee maintain her distance from nature living so close to it?

As both Tagore and Ray keep the title of their works *Samapti*, which is translated as *The Conclusion*, they tend to design a denouement to the conjugal life of Mrinmoyee and Apurbo/Amulya. Writing in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Tagore was perhaps concerned with the social security of a married woman to whom her husband's home really mattered. Even Ray had followed that, substantiating his case with the impression that Amulya is not a wife-beating husband like Haran, the milkman from the village. However, it is undeniable that the happy ending comes at the price of Mrinmoyee's lifelong separation from nature, a deep and compelling union. Before her final union with Amulya in the film, Mrinmoyee confesses that she will never climb a tree anymore. Thus, to enter Amulya's world, she must sacrifice her preferences and the happiness that nature bestowed on her. However, it is also true that nature has given her simplicity and spontaneity, which could make her different from all other girls; and a rupture with nature could slowly take away the qualities she possesses. These qualities of Mrinmoyee made her different from Nirupama, whom Amulya didn't agree to marry. However, forcing

Mrinmoyee to conform to her social role could remove her differences with Nirupama. Therefore, for Mrinmoyee, it's not a transition of girlhood but rather a loss of girlhood that could be in harmony with nature. The question also remains: is it relevant for Mrinmoyee to forsake nature in order to conform to the traditional role of a wife and daughter-in-law?

### Conclusion

This article seeks to explore the importance of kinship between human beings and nature in the Anthropocene Age. When the world is facing an imminent threat to the health of the planet, humanistic enquiries cannot afford to overlook two of the greatest minds of 20th-century India: Tagore and Ray. Both their timeless literary and cinematic works can be regarded as treasures of the humanities that can provide insights into emergent concerns and questions. An analysis of Tagore's "Samapti" and its cinematic rendition by Ray recontextualizes the attention to the significance of rural nature and girlhood. Mrinmoyee's girlhood, which is shaped by the rural nature, promises a mutual co-existence of human beings, the natural environment, and non-human beings. Conversely, human beings are also gradually losing touch with rural nature. Clarifying Tagore's concern about human beings' 'gradual retreat' from the natural world, Aseem Shrivastava writes, "In the past, humankind lived in physical proximity to forests. Children were born there. This inspired a creaturely affection and empathy (*mamatwabodh*) with the forest, besides dependence upon it for countless material needs. Such a life recognized the need to nurture its habitat. Since the onset of modern urbanization, this symbiosis declined and grew remote: with greater ecological distance, *mamatwabodh* mutated into *nirmamata* (mercilessness)" (332). Thus, reading Tagore anew in "Samapti" can also accentuate the revival of human welfare in relation to natural habitation and its importance in the 21st century.

### Endnotes

1. Aseem Shrivastava, in his article "An Ecology of Spirit: Tagore's experience with Nature," gives an etymology of the word *palliprakiti*: [T]he title is difficult to render in English.

It can mean 'the nature of villages' but, more basically, 'nature in the villages' or 'rural nature', implying that villages are closer to the natural world than cities. ('*Shahar-prakriti*' or 'urban nature' would make little sense.)

2. Chinnapatra is a collection of letters Tagore wrote to his relatives, mostly to his niece Indira
3. Devi, between 1885 and 1898.
4. The song is a composition by Kazi Nazrul Islam (1899-1976), the famous Bengali poet.

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