



International Journal of Research in English

ISSN Print: 2664-8717
ISSN Online: 2664-8725
Impact Factor: RJIF 8.00
IJRE 2024; 6(1): 129-130
www.englishjournal.net
Received: 02-12-2023
Accepted: 04-01-2024

Rituparna Chakraborty
Assistant Professor and Head,
Department of English, Swami
Vivekananda University,
Barrackpore, West Bengal,
India

Woman question: Tagore's attitude towards women

Rituparna Chakraborty

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33545/26648717.2024.v6.i1c.172>

Abstract

This paper seeks to address the woman question in Tagore's fiction. In Tagore's earlier fiction we see naïve, child-like heroine. His later novels, written in the third literary epoch, revoke the pattern through intellectually enlightened, mature heroines with greater social authority. As daring fictions of female Building, these novels delineate young women from orthodox culture. They are caught in the cross-currents of tradition and maturity. They emerge from this ideological strife, educated, refined and wiser for the experience.

Keywords: Woman, fiction, authority, female building, tradition

Introduction

"Woman question" in connection with religion and Nationalism, as well as in connection with the necessity and importance of women in the development of male human beings forms a very significant part of Tagore's philosophic perception and discourse. Not only does Tagore oppose male chauvinism, but he also makes it categorically clear that woman's contributions are indispensable for the maturation, stabilization of growth and an all-round amelioration of the male sex. He believes that females are needful for the fulfilment of Nature's purpose of ensuring a truly constructive and harmonious mechanism of life. In his point of view, man's tool-making power does not lead to real progress. True progress and prosperity of humanity as a whole rests upon harmony of the structure with its foundation. This ideal of stability in the Tagorian stand point is deeply cherished in woman's nature. All her vital forces instinctively work to ensure the formation of an ideal of wholeness, which is the law of life. Tagore has no doubt whatsoever that in this very restless world, rocked frequently by the storm of war and other forms of destabilizing forces, women alone, with her Nature-gifted benignity, tenderness and creativity can lead civilization to a beautiful world of harmony and stability, of a synchronic rhythmic order.

According to Tagore, "Man's interest in his fellow beings becomes real when he finds in them some special gift of power of usefulness, but a woman feels interest in her fellow beings, because they are human, not because of some particular purpose or some power which they possess and for which she has a special admiration." (Tagore, 1915: 160). Woman commands a spontaneous gracefulness, which she derives from her active and ardent interest in commonplace aspects in the everyday humdrum of life. "The domestic world", says Tagore, "is the world, where every individual finds his worth as an individual, therefore, his value is not the market value, but the value of love;" (Tagore, 1915: 162). Tagore asserts that this domestic world is where, woman can find the true use and fulfilment of her life; "She can extend the radiance of her love beyond its boundaries on all sides, and even leave it to prove her woman's nature, when the call comes to her. Tagore vents his belief that woman should implement her power of unstinted love and nurturing to break through the surface and go to the centre of her own true world, where she is born.

A crucial, yet highly controversial in Tagore's view point regarding woman's participation in politics, whether armed rebellions or the Gandhian non-violent Satyagraha, we find him to have expressed clearly his reservation against women's involvement with political movement through his depiction of two female protagonists in particular Bimala in *The Home and the World* and Ela in *Char Adhyay*. Hypnotised by Sandip's falsely charismatic appeal and rather impulsive attraction towards "Swadeshi", Bimala weaned away from the centre of her life and suffered a pathetic nemesis.

Corresponding Author:
Rituparna Chakraborty
Assistant Professor and Head,
Department of English, Swami
Vivekananda University,
Barrackpore, West Bengal,
India

Ela finds the man after her heart as one sent by her leader to kill her. For both these women, association with modernity also means contact with mass politics or revolutionary secret societies and the result is unfortunate. Like Yeats, Tagore seems to think that graceful, educated and promising women are only ignominised by taking part in modern politics. So the Irish poet rued over the passionate political involvement of his jilting beloved Maud Gonne and cautioned his daughter against "intellectual hatred" in future. (Yeats, "A Prayer for My Daughter").

In connection with the present deliberation on Tagore's outlook on woman, I would like to bring home a very significant facet of Tagore's perception about man-woman relationship. What Tagore sincerely desires is the formation of a symbiotic relationship between man and woman on the rational basis of mutual love, trust, respect and reliance. The great master of creative art has never been an advocate of feminism; but he religiously believes that a perfectly well-ordered development of personal and social life can be made possible only if such a symbiotic ties between man and woman is built up through a dialectical process.

Tagore himself analyses the very crux of this symbiotic relationship: "woman's function is a passive function of the soil, which not only helps the tree to grow, but keeps its growth within limit. The tree must have life's adventure and send up and spread out its branches on all sides, but all its deeper bonds of relation are hidden and held firm in the soil and this helps it to live."

The very equation of man-woman relationship as shown in *Gora*, through the depiction of relationship between Gora and Sucharita in particular, may be cited as an example to justify the aforesaid attitude of Tagore towards women. It is only after Gora gets into a closer touch with Sucharita and feels within himself an irresistible surge of love for her, just as Sucharita feels within herself, that the very domain of Gora's thoughts and ideas start snobolling into a much larger space. It is the soil, that is, in this case, Sucharita's graceful love, that widens Gora's mental horizon and draws his attention for the first time towards the solemn beauty and grandeur of Nature. He is drawn "into unknown primal depths never experienced before. His whole being was assailed at one and at the same time with the shocks of pain and joy. He seemed to be standing in utter self-forgetfulness on this autumn night by the river bank in the presence of the veiled mystery which prevades the universe." (Tagore: 107). As this novel progresses through a miasma of intricacies, Gora continues to idealise his beloved Sucharita, although the idea of marrying her remains out of question. But Sucharita's company gives him a glimpse of his own flawed perception of woman as well as the Nation. This is the first time, when Gora realizes the indispensibility of a woman's role in the fulfilment of a man's life mission. "What a lack there had been in Gora's conception of his country so long as its women were so shadowy and unreal to him! Gora realized in a single moment that the further we banish woman from us, and the smaller the place we give her in our own lives, the weaker does our manhood become". It is imperative for us to consider that, Gora too has had his own share of contribution in Sucharita's mental progress, although Sucharita plays a major role in unfettering himself of his caste-ridden and fanatic Nationalism. Likewise, Lalita helps in Binoy's self-assertion and Binoy fills her life with respectful love. Looking at the flip side, we see that women like Bimala flounders into a swamp of self-destructive

amorous misadventures, once she cuts loose her symbiotic bond with a very fine and liberal husband Nikhilesh. Tagore's application of the soil and tree metaphor in his lecture-turned essay, titled 'Woman', holds good in the evaluation of man-woman intrinsic ties. When at the end of the novel, Gora, now illuminated with the lamp of light of all embracing humanity, recognises Anandamoyee as "My Bharatbarsha", the metaphor of the soil comes alive again. This time, it is in the metaphor of "Bharatbarsha" (Anandamoyee), the magnanimous sea-shore of greater humanity that soothes and sustains the man and ensures the dynamism of his development.

References

1. Sogani R. The Hindu Widow in Indian Literature. New Delhi: Oxford University Press; c2002.
2. Tagore R. Rabindra Rachanavali, Vol. 7 (Collected Works). Kolkata: West Bengal Government; 1961/1985/1986.
3. Tagore R. Rabindra Rachanavali, Volume 8 (Collected Works). Kolkata: West Bengal Government; c1961.
4. Kripalani K. Rabindranath Tagore, A Biography. London: Oxford University Press; c1962.
5. Kripalani K. Binodini. Translation of Chokher Bali (1903). New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi; c1959.
6. Pearson WW, translator. Gora (1910). Madras: Macmillan; c1985.
7. Pearson WW, translator. Gora (1910). London: Macmillan; c1924.
8. Tagore R. [First edition (1917)]. In: Editor (2007). New Delhi: Rupa Publications India Pvt Ltd; c2007.
9. Sengupta SC. The Great Sentinel: A Study of Rabindranath Tagore. Calcutta: A. Mukherjee & Co; c1948.
10. Tagore R. The Gitanjali of Rabindranath; c2000.