

AN ATTEMPT TO RELOCATE AN ECO FEMININITY BETWEEN THE LINES OF RABINDRANATH'S MUKTADHARA

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ABSTRACT

The concept that the term gender in general, and “woman” in particular, are troubled terms constantly being relocated in the complex matrix of actual, symbolic, linguistic/cultural, socio historical and many other significances/meanings struck me during a casual reading of the play “Muktadhara” composed by Rabindranath Thakur with its power of confronting the readers with an overwhelming consciousness of an absent presence of something/one whose concrete/actual embodiment is interestingly absent in the text itself - the femininity/woman-ness. The play does not construct many significant flesh-and-blood woman figures, but femininity, rather a female-ness, makes its power felt through both the ideologies and architectonics of the text.

Long before Eco Feminism got established as a sustained systematic theory, here the “woman” exists as nature, but her presence is felt more pervasively in form of an ideology which challenges the rubric of patriarchy, offers alternate definitions of both life and death, victory and defeat, and many like binaries. With the irresistible flow of the fountain of life the principle breaks the bounds of the apparently fixed structure of the hegemony. What is projected is not the conventional idea like primordial nature versus science/civilization, rather it shows how science is deployed following a specific principle and to attain the specific goal of domination/subordination. The exhibition of power and the irresistible desire to establish the authority are the unalterable characteristic of patriarchy. The machine manufactured by Bibhuti was a conscious conspiracy against nature, a manifestation of man’s wish of sealing paternal authority/ownership upon the process of creativity (imprinting “name”) in various ways: limiting the flow to compensate for the lack of divine/natural power of providing life-giving water on earth, implementing the foundational policy of colonialism of destroying a community’s spontaneous natural resource and self-sufficiency through mechanical force and creating artificial dearth to make them dependent upon the latter. Patriarchy works through prioritizing its interest as it is founded upon domination, not partnership: the victory ride of science to trifles like the spoiling of agricultural lands, materially and culturally destroying the native resource of a class (based on culture, gender and others), making fertile feminine space the tool to fulfil their own need. The effeminized labour community is made scapegoat to the altar of the signifiers’ missionary project and like women, the society-sponsored atrocity is eulogized in glorious annals of willing self-effacement silencing all dissenting voices.

Interestingly, the patriarchal structure faces great challenge in every line of the play without the physical presence of any powerful female figure. the great visionary author introduces a bunch of male characters who uphold the so-called feminine ideology of affirmation of life and of feminist resistance. A new regime is conceptualized: Nobody can hold Abhijit, because the ideal stands out greater than the individual professing and following it. Those love him, both the individuals and the community, are not allowed to die for/with him. but live to embody and concretize the continuum of the principle of life through action.

KEYWORDS: *Absent, Presence, Woman-ness, Nature, Colonizer, Principle of Life*

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