



AN ADJACENT COMPATIBILITY BETWEEN MAN AND NATURE IN TAGORE'S *SUBHA*

SANTHINI MUTHUKUMARAN

M.A., English Literature
Sri Sarada College For Women
(Autonomous) Salem, (TN) INDIA

ABSTRACT

Tagore's heroines promulgate the treatment of women and the truth about their position in the society. This paper aims to depict one such real time character who in spite of being born mute, overcomes all patriarchal views of the male chauvinistic society that existed during Tagore's days. The protagonist Subha achieves to break through these conservative shackles of the society by establishing a kinship with the elements of nature. It also discusses how Tagore synthesizes the sounds of nature with the emotions of the verbally challenged Protagonist of the short story Subha-who takes refuge at the heart of nature from which she derived all consolation because of the lack of acceptance from her own family.

INTRODUCTION

Tagore was born into a traditional Indian family at Kolkata. He wrote largely in Bengali. His works are treasured and looked upon with great regard both in India and as well as in Bangladesh. It is a world renowned fact that Tagore is the only person to have penned the National anthems for two countries that was approved officially in the constitutions of the two nations, namely India and Bangladesh. Tagore being a sensitive by nature was able to truly identify and recreate the inherent nature of women and understand their longings, dreams, gaiety and the catastrophe of their situation.

The major characters in the story are nature, and in Subha's case it was the stream and the cows that touched her heart a lot and provided solace. The protagonist of the story Subha is the youngest daughter, going by the same name as that of the title of the story, in the family of Banikantha. All through her life she was considered as a burden to her family. Her father seemed to be the only soul who loved her inspite of her deformities. Subha's own mother considered her as a source of "personal shame", because during Tagore's era impairments in children born were taken as a sign of defect and lack of potency in the mother.



Subha tried her best to communicate with her family through simple gestures, which with time her family came to understand. None other than her family could make anything out of the gestures that Subha used to try and communicate. Nobody in her family tried to look beyond her gestures. They never looked beyond her gestures into her inner beautiful self, and the thoughts of her mind remained unfathomed. This is evident enough of the failure in human nature to understand a physically challenged girl who was considered nothing more than a taboo to the family. Her life is evidence enough of the fact that nature is not mute, it is only man who is deaf.

Subha like most other girls of the age was assigned with some household chores to perform through the day. Everyday once she completed all her household chores, she went to the cow shed to meet her soul companions, the two family cows named Sarbhashi and Panguli. "I love not the man less, but the nature more"- Byron (CHP.5). This quote by Byron rings bells in one's mind, due to its incessant similarity with that of Brutus' quote in the epic drama Julius Caesar. "Not that I loved Caesar less, but that I loved Rome More (3.2.19-24)". Whenever she felt hurt due to the inconsiderate behavior of her family members, she went to her dumb friends for consolation.

There were other animals in the house as well but she was more attached to the cows. The two cows seemed to understand her much better than any other human counterpart. She would fling her arms round Sarbhashi's neck and hug them keeping her cheeks close to animals. She visited them regularly, especially during times when she felt she was badly in need of some consolation. In turn, the cows also seemed to empathize with her and were extraordinarily patient with her rather than anyone else.

Subha had also another companion among the higher animals. His name was Pratap. He was much interested in fishing and he loved to have a silent companion like Subha while fishing. He called her affectionately Su. Subha also tried her best to help Pratap so that she could prove herself to be of use to someone. She wished to be his "real aid". She thought that she could have helped him better were she to be born as a water- nymph and then she could have brought the snake's crown to him. She thought that if she were born to a rich King she would have been of some use to him. But given her situation she thought it would be far from impossible that she be born into a Royal house of Patalpur.

Many a time, she questioned herself regarding the reason of her own existence and she could never stumble upon a satisfactory answer. At times she also compared herself to the full moon, which stood all alone in the sky and was looking down upon the sleeping earth.

As Subha grew to be of marriageable age, the responsibility of marrying away their daughter dawned upon her parents as a great burden. The members of her family were trying to get her to move to Calcutta after her marriage. It was heart- wrenching for her to leave the village where she had spent all her life. As soon as she came to be aware of these intentions, she walked out of her home and hurled herself down on the grass beside the river. She was not

ready to leave her village, its nature that provided her solace and her dearest animal companions. She was married off and had to move to Kolkata. But her physical deformity was not disclosed to her husband and his family. It wasn't a secret that could be kept under wraps for long. Subha was banished from her in-law's house once her disability came to light. Her married life only further added to her misery.

Subha's character justifies the fact that it is man who belongs to earth and not the earth that belongs to man. Not just Subha, but anyone who is ill at heart, could take a deep look into nature, converse with it and they could forego their sorrows while consequently getting a better understanding of everything.

This short story can be compared to Story of My Life. In the life of Helen Keller the miracle worker is Helen's teacher Annie Sullivan. Similarly in the life of Subha the miracle worker is Nature Itself.

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