

THE CLARION CALL FOR FEMINISM: A STUDY OF TAGORE'S CHITRA

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ABSTRACT

Tagore's rational and humanistic approach to the woes of women led him to sound the clarion call for the freedom of women. He explores and explains the possibility through the play 'Chitra'. He exposes the male chauvinism of Arjuna by duping him with two Chitras the warrior Chitra and the angelic Chitra. The feminine pride of warrior Chitra is hurt by the refusal of Arjuna. She traps him with her new beautiful form. The captivated Arjuna falls for her and stays with her. On the appointed day the beautiful Chitra gets back her original form and shows the inner and outer strength of a woman and expresses the need for treating woman as his equal. She refuses to go with him for she is not cut out for the life of surrender and submission but achievement and assertion. Her life will be fulfilled only if both the facets of the personality are respected, accepted and acknowledged.

Keywords: Clarion call, Tagore, Chitra

INTRODUCTION

'Feminism' the term has become a common aspect of discussion. The aspiration of feminism is not to resist or subdue men, but to live equivalent to them. The perception of men and women does not remain the same at all occasion. One is objective and the other is subjective. But it is a fact to reckon with that the men writers first championed the cause of freedom for women. The paper focuses on a man's portrayal of a suppressed woman.

Contribution to Feminism through vocal and libretto can be done by any men. They might struggle for egalitarianism of women. Apart from exemption, in real not most of them consider women to be equal to them. The Hindu society deifies woman as 'Sakthi' and worships her. But in the same society men oppress and suppress her when they become 'wives'. This contradiction takes place even in this 21st century. Women are not permitted to take decision almost at all state of affairs. They are, but that is a marginal minority. Women are treated as a frail vessel because of the fear of men over women as she establishes herself tremendous in the rare opportunities provided to her. This is why men constantly suspect women and find fault with her.

Status of Historical Women

The sacred epic 'Mahabharata' which serves as a model for the life of every Hindu is also subjected to feminism. When Arjuna wins Draupadi and brings her home without realizing that the gift is a girl, the mother commands them to share it among the five. The sons were such obedient and respected the words as declared by their mother. What is the position in which these five men regarded the woman in question? It is obvious from the story that she is an object of pleasure. Poor Draupadi protested, argued and wept when she was disrobed and at last lost her case. But she took a vow to destroy the man and saved her prestige and dignity. In 'Ramayana' Sita is a true patience on the monument, perhaps the first Hindu feminist, but she is a passive feminist. She rejected Rama and resigned to her fate. She did not fight or launch or protest.

Colossal Reformation

The introduction of British education brought changes in the perspective of the problems. Reformist-minded statesmen sought to purify the traditional society of some of its wrong conception, unjust practices and aged superstitions. Leaders like Raja Rammohan Roy crusaded against child marriage and 'sati'. Rabindranath Tagore, the personification of humanism and idealism, sounded the clarion call for the need to liberate women through his writings. His inscriptions had been a great support in the Indian Literary Renaissance. A study of his plays reveals both the internal and external conflicts – between man and nature, society and some other ideal, inner and outer self. In revealing this conflict Tagore uses broad, clear cut, detailed discussions which give his plays a didactic air.

Angelic Resistance

In Tagore's 'Chitra' Chitra is the earliest feminist, who voiced her wish to establish and express herself. Chitrangada, the beautiful daughter of Chitravahana, the King of Manipur does not let his daughter to grow with womanish characters. Chitrangada, the princess grew up as a boy with very plain looks who wins the love of her subjects by virtue of her manly powers, which gives them security. As Chitra is not acknowledged by Arjuna in her male garments, she penances to get perfect beauty. Chitra is granted the boon of beauty for one year by the Gods Madana and Vasanta. Arjuna loves Chitra after she becomes beautiful, beauty is recognized in place of love and he treats Chitra as an object of pleasure and nothing more.

Arjuna falls a victim to the apparition of perfect beauty namely Chitra who enjoys the bliss of loveliness endowed by the Gods. Her identity is revealed to him by stating that she is falsehood, an illusion and a deceit of God. She is more saddened than elated. Arjuna is stricken with love and forgets her vow of celibacy. He is prepared to lose himself in the world of dreams rather to listen Chitra's advice. There is a decline in Arjuna's infatuation. He dreams of 'home'. Chitra points out that such evanescent loves as theirs is not meant to be taken home. She is too self-conscious or too distrustful of the outcome of their love. Chitra shows that a woman is not merely a passive flower of her husband.

CONCLUSION

Chitra, typifying faith, purity, love and sacrifice embodies the noblest virtues of womanhood. She is the symbol of the idea of equality of women. Chitra bursts the male chauvinism of Arjuna in three ways.

When she lays a trap for him with her supremely beautiful figure - This is a blow to his weakness.

She rejects his offer to take her home – This is a blow to his pride.

She offers to be the helpmate of the night and helpmeet of the day – This is a blow to his idea of contempt for women.

Tagore had seen women in a new light which was unthought-of of in those days.

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