

AMOGHVARTA

ISSN : 2583-3189



Feminism in ‘Where the Mind is Without Fear’ by Rabindranath Tagore

Abstract

“Where the Mind is Without Fear” is a beautiful poem by a noble laureate, Rabindranath Tagore, who expresses his overwhelmed heart in this extremely famous literary composition. He exhibits his far-sightedness for a loving nation by showering his absolute trust in the master of the Universe. This poetic literary piece is well received and appreciated as an inspiration for the women fraternity supporting for an improvement in their social and economic status. Women of our nation shall come out of the shackles of strict domestic four-walls and that is possible by educating them. Education will further lead to social justice to sustain their healthy and strong existence. This thought provoking poem truly conveys an action-idea to eliminate the rudimentary dead habits Like Sati system, Dowry system, and Child marriage etc. from our regular practices working upon the

ORIGINAL ARTICLE



Author

Dr. Usha Sawhney
Assistant Professor
Department of English
SMP Govt. Girls PG College
Meerut, Uttar Pradesh, INDIA

upliftment of our Indian Women. This Research study aims at igniting and raising the voice for the most needed freedom of women. Also women to avail an active support and participation in the nationalist movements and securing eminent positions and offices in administration and public life in free India. It channelizes the strength so as to empower the women by directing their efforts towards perfection.

Key Words

Rudimentary, Igniting, Empowering women, Women’s freedom and Action.

Introduction

Rabindranath Tagore’s writing is clearly acceptable in both Indian and Western learning systems. He not only has brought fiction to study and analyse but also has contributed with his poetry, songs, stories, and dramas. His literary pieces also emphasized upon the common people’s lives, literary criticism, philosophy, and social issues. He was a fair-hearted brilliant and progressive thinker. He always looked into his subjects’ lives with utmost understanding before describing each one of them. His pen has been as effective as a weapon while portraying his women characters. It was his pen, which could bring the spirit of empowering women to put their feet in front to combat for the battle of their rights. He made all the efforts through his writings to provide equality, freedom, justice, power and equality and rights to women. Tagore took the charge of campaigning for women’s freedom and get their due respect and rights. Also, took the initiative to begin with the foundation of co-education in Shantiniketan. He was well aware of the role of women in the

society. He knew that women were expected to live inside the four walls of home and they possess no rights to acquire proper education and enjoy liberty in any sphere of life.

Rabindranath Tagore, introduced the idea of feminism in the country through his literary accomplishments. His female characters talked about individuality, liberty, freedom, justice, power, dignity and rights playing the role of his lead roles in his writings. These characters would challenge patriarchal system and bring forward those practices which were considered as taboos. Rabindranath Tagore challenges the traditional view of women as the weaker sex; a clear concept of Feminism. It was one of those challenges which were undertaken by most of his contemporaries as the supporters of feminism. Thus the paper concentrates upon the philosophically spiritual aspect of Tagore's by advocating feminism in his literary writings, inclusive of dramas and poetries.

"Where The Mind Is Without Fear" by Rabindranath Tagore is one of those poems which has been vastly read and discussed. It was originally composed in Bengali possibly in 1900 under the title "Prarthana", means prayer. It appeared in the volume called 'Naibedyā' in 1901. Later in 1911, he himself translated the th poem in his Nobel-winning anthology "Geetanjali" (*Song Offerings*) published by the Indian Society, London in 1912.

Aim of the Research paper

This paper analyses to look forward to the feminist approach in the poem "Where the Mind is Without Fear". Women are considered to be the pioneers of the nation and the source of inspiration to men for their high endeavours and worthy achievements in life in this poem. Without women's contribution and participation, a nation's progress cannot be rapid and swift because they are the strongest pillar of the society

To work towards the society's progress and well-being, we shall try to provide freedom to the women fraternity from the pleasing feature of conservative beliefs and norms. Putting efforts to break the old-fashioned and confining ideology for women can definitely be supportive in the transformation of the smallest unit i.e., home and the largest which is, the nation. By educating women, country's future can undoubtedly be progressive, rising and fruitful. Women are not only the backbones of the home but also the society. Through this poem, Rabindranath Tagore tries to help in comprehending the value of women's freedom and empowerment to the nation. The people need to change the mindset towards women as it's the need of the hour as they are equal to the men fraternity for playing their greatest part in the development of the society or the nation.

Review of Literature

Ezra Pound States: "Mr. Tagore is their great poet and their great musician as well. He has made them their national song, their Marseillaise, if an Oriental nation can be said to have an equivalent to such an anthem. I have heard his "Golden Bengal," with its music, and it is wholly Eastern, yet it has a curious power, a power to move the crowd. It is "minor" and subjective, yet it has all the properties of action."

Anjali Enjeti on Rabindranath Tagore's Poetry and Porochista Khakpour's Fearless Criticism states that: "I had not considered myself a lover of poetry until I picked up Rabindranath Tagore's Gitanjali. (And I'm not just saying this solely because my first name is part of the title.) Gitanjali was originally published in 1910, which is hard to believe because the verses (also called songs or song offerings) feel so timeless and contemporary. I neither speak nor read Bengali, but the copy I own has an image of Tagore's handwritten verse in Bengali on the left side of the page and his own translation in English (in type) on the right side. This presentation makes it feel as if I'm discovering his process alongside his words."

Kamali, Saad: Rabindranath, Nari O Bibaho (Rabindranath, Woman and Marriage), writes: "Tagore did not send his five children to school on the advice of Sister Nivedita. This is strange because other children of the extended Tagore family that included some older than Rabindranath, daughters, sisters, daughters-in-law, grand-daughters and even widows attended noted schools and colleges across the country and beyond. This stands in direct conflict with Tagore's great and unique contribution to education and to the founding of

the unique institution Viswa Bharati. He was acutely aware of the importance of educating boys and girls in science, general knowledge and craftsmanship and made every attempt to contribute to the movement towards an alternative way of formal education.”

In the poem, ‘*Where the Mind is Without Fear*’ the poet is truly wishing and strongly expecting our country to acquire freedom from the stereotypical mindset of victimizing the womanhood and tries to put-forth the *well-being of women* in opposition to the *ill-being* of women. He believes that once the country will be free from the conservative practices, old convictions, and absolute strict beliefs; women would get an opportunity to live without being afraid of anything and will also get instilled with confidence in them. The poet dreams of a society and a country where the treasure of knowledge is open to one and all. He believes that the knowledge and education are the strongest ingredients to guide people to see the light and leave behind the darkness. The poet also desires for a nation which is not broken down into various groups, clusters, communities etc on the basis of different castes, colours, creeds, class and categories, etc. He expects through this poem that the nation must be truthful and do respect the women from the depth of their hearts. Only a nation, where women would be participating with their best and hard work, can only achieve the ultimate goal of perfection and the best civilization. The poet also dreams and wants the women of his country to have the power of reasoning and not to sacrifice it to any age-old superstitious beliefs. He also prays to the Almighty to shower the blessings upon the mankind so as to accomplish a progressive thought process in men towards women. He suggests that this positive mindset will surely lead to instill logic, progressive thought process and let men acquire broad-minded outlook. The poet’s feminist view expresses that women should be made free from the mistreatment and discriminations in the name of a home angel.

A huge contribution can be analyzed by Rabindranath Tagore in feminism. He has put lot of efforts in providing freedom, equality, justice, and understanding of their rights. Tagore used to write extensively for women’s comfort, his focus was on making women live their lives freely in our country. He wanted the citizens of our country to break their old practices of rigid rules and regulations that provide them all the social rights to be dominating. According to Tagore, it could be made possible when the same rights will be provided to women as what the men possess. Although, he knew that it wasn’t so easy because people’s thinking about women was not fair. The fact is that that our country has been freed from the British Government a long time ago but still the understanding and the thought process of maximum people works with a belief that women are made only to give birth to children and only perform the household chores. The old practice of the ‘veil compulsion’ freezes the minds of people that women must be confined in this on-going tradition to weaken their individualities. This particular belief and practice is not only the major reason behind women’s uneducated selves but also it pushes them to stay inside the four-walls. They aren’t allowed to step outside the threshold of the house as they aren’t trained in a way to handle the situations beyond the boundaries of the house. Now, it’s high time to train them to be an active participant in worldly affairs and not only restricted to the home affairs.

For an example: Nirbhaya’s case, it was pathetic that a girl moving out with a boy couldn’t be accepted as normal rather it was considered in a way that if a girl is out in the night hours; she can be brutally raped and pushed to death. The other case, wherein a lady doctor named Priyanka Reddy was raped and burnt alive to death. Such incidents scare people and create havoc. All this can only be changed by educating each and every human being and instilling the understanding of equality of gender along with valuing a female and her life.

Education is the strongest weapon that can help in development and breaking down the social barriers like divisions on the basis of caste, creed, category and one’s economic status as well. Educating people can play a massive role in contributing to the enhancement of the power of the nation at a broader level in the world. The country’s progress can take place rapidly by new inventions and by sharpening the technology only if the nation gets thoroughly educated.

Rabindranath Tagore emphasizes on education because it's the one that can provide women a path of progress toward their goals, so as to fulfill their ambitions and dreams. It's absolutely like having medicine to cure a disease and regain a healthy body. An educated woman gets strong enough to maintain the balance in life concerning the personal and professional life. The moralistic aim of education is to instill physical and intellectual strength within the mind and body of a child, be a girl or a boy. Knowledge is limitless; one can acquire education so as to become knowledgeable, more knowledgeable and continue increasing knowledge over the period of time by studying and also practicing life.

An educated woman get her skills polished, remain informed, and is full of self confidence which helps her in becoming better parent, professional, and above all a good citizen. Today's women are not to be considered less than any man; a sense of equality is to be brought forward. Men and women are equal as per their own psychological, emotional, mental and physiological establishments.

Today's women is getting aware of their rights and growing a suitable understanding to fight against social evils such as domestic violence, dowry demand, low wages etc. Names of some women of our country who make our country proud Indira Gandhi, Kalpana Chawla, Anandi Gopal Joshi, Anna Chandy, Mother Teresa, Arunima Sinha, Maithili Raj, Pratibha Patil, Kiran Bedi, Sania Mirza, Saina Nehwal, Mary Kom, Indira Nui, Sushma Swaraj and many more. These are few names of such women who make our country proud. These women set an example for many others not to think lowly of them and achieve the maximum that they can. They need to believe that they are strong in every manner and know how to fight for their rights along with fulfilling all the duties as well. They know how to win their battle sensibly.

Conclusion

The dream of the poet for his countrymen to think correctly and act courageously is still applicable. Though, the country is free from the shackles of British power yet the women's condition is supposed to be taken care of. Feminist have a different outlook which says independence is not in our control as women are still lacking behind at many fronts. They need to be empowered first. In order to bring women empowerment in our society, it strictly requires understanding and followed by eliminating the main cause of ill practices against women which are patriarchal and male dominated system of society. It needs to be open the mindsets and strongly work upon changing the old mind sets which is against women since ages. It needs to be worked upon the constitutional and other legal levels pro-actively. Although, it will not be that easy because changing the thinking of people towards women is not an easy task because 70% of people of our country look at women differently. The freedom is must for the women that they can feel themselves liberated but most of the population thinks the other way round. Such, thinking of people hinders the development of women elading to a slow development of the nation as well. We all need to join hands in hand to change such rudimentary thinking for women at all the levels. The upbringing of a child at home, beginning from the smallest unit of society to school, surroundings and then to the public places etc. It has to be worked upon vigorously so that girls can get educated at the initial stage and further functioning to contribute with their best of the abilities by their independent status, understanding and activities. The nation will surely grow rapidly and move the label of being 'a developing nation' to 'a developed nation' if the major population of the nation i.e., the women fraternity will be educated rightly. The poet's expectation of a better world through his poem '*Where the Mind is Without Fear*' shall be fulfilled by twenty first century definitely.

Reference

1. <https://fortnightlyreview.co.uk/2013/04/rabindranath-tagore/>
2. <https://bookmarks.reviews/anjali-enjeti-on-rabindranath-tagores-poetry-and-porochista-khakupours-fearless-criticism/>
3. https://learningandcreativity.com/the-conflicts-in-tagore-chitrangada-versus-chandalika/#_edn1

---==00==---