

The Environmental Concerns of Rabindranath Tagore : A Case Study of his Two Plays, Muktodhara (The Waterfall) and Rakta Karobi (The Red Oleanders)

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Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), the great nobel laureate poet from India, had been a great lover of nature. His Autobiography, The Reminiscences, evince an inner craving for experiencing the delight emanating from the natural phenomena like sunrise, sunset, the reflections of sunlight creating a play of light and shadows from the midst of the dark foliage of the coconut trees lining up the small waterbody in the backyard of their ancestral house. He fondly remembered his first venture out of this family house to the garden house of Mr. Moran (which was secured by the Tagores on lease) in the French city of Chandernagore, bordering the river Ganges. Here the river was very wide and it was difficult to see its other end from one end. Here young Tagore spent nearly the whole day looking at the in its various moods, from the first blush of sunrise to the golden glory of sunset as the river ebbed and flowed the whole day. It was no wonder that the mushrooming of the Jute Mills on the borders of the Ganges, spreading the smoke of their chimneys like fearful pythons spiralling the sky above shocked him to his core. In his more mature years, when he came into contact with industrialization and its accompanying squalor invading the lives of ordinary folk, he recoiled from the impact of such indiscriminate mechanisation. His Play Muktodhara is an attempt to make people aware of the selfish motives underlying human attempts to control the flow of the free current, a free gift of Nature to benefit mankind. This play shows how the crown Prince of Uttarakut resisted the attempt of the Royal Engineer Bibhuti to control the free flow of the water by means of a dam. The King Ranjit was jubilant that he would thereby be able to deprive the recalcitrant province of Sivatarai and its inhabitants of their irrigation facilities, curtailing their production of grains and their prosperity through its sale. The Prince, who came to learn that he had been born beside this flowing current and was picked up by the childless Raja for adoption, began to be haunted with visions of the unrestrained flow of the water, which he identified with his personal freedom. The play ends with an end to the life of the Prince, while trying to demolish the Engineer Bibhuti's monstrous creation. He was swept by the gushing waters when the free current was finally unchained. The threat to the livelihood of Sivatarai was thereby removed. The second play, Rakto Karobi, or red flowers probably signaled revolution to protest against the way human beings were being emasculated in the mechanized workshops, factories and 05nes and had become victims of a system which had even subjected its own perpetrators. The dry as dust Professor who had devised these morbid schemes had taken shelter behind the pile of his books when he felt inwardly disturbed by this Frankenstein of a system which his knowledge had brought into being. The lively girl Nandini here probably symbolized the hope for life, inspiring young workers like Kishor and thereby to keep the dream for free life alive. Nandini was frantically looking for Ranjan who could awaken this Yaksha Town from its deadly pursuit of dead wealth to the exclusion of the touch of liveliness. The earth gave ripe corn for the sustenance of lives yet greedy human beings dig up her breast to find out her hidden wealth by wrenching the poor villager from the usual life in his hamlet and forcing him to drudge in the Yaksha Town to satisfy the greedy design of a deadly set of men. When the oppressed souls got restless and craved to return to their roots in the villages they were tried to be assuaged by the moral preachings of the priest Kenaram Gosain. If that did not work and men still yearned for freedom then the fearful Governors came down upon them and threw him into prison. It was the mission of Nandini to gather men , break the walls of the prison and rescue the King from behind his screen to be able to breathe in fresh air and think independently for himself. Nandini, the message of life and Ranjan who was her messenger both laid down their lives in the end to break up the whole system to enable people to be able to breathe in the fresh air. Through the symbol of the Red Tagore was symbolically preaching revolt against the capitalist system , which squeezed the life blood of human beings and extracted their labour for amassing their own wealth. The Prince of the Mukto Dhara (The Waterfall) and Nandini and her messenger Ranjan in Rakto Karabi (The Red Oleanders) both gave up their lives to revolt against the evil design to ruin the gift of God inherent in Nature for the welfare of mankind. Through these two plays Rabindranath Tagore tried to awaken in his readers a concern about their environment and its inseparable connexion with human welfare.