

Gangadhar Meher's "Tapaswini": An Ecofeministic Study

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Abstract :

Ecofeminism strikes the inner cord of one's heart and brain in an intimate manner. It perceives a significant connection between the oppression of women and exploitation of nature by male dominated society and views the liberation of women and nature intertwined. The motto of eco feminism is preservation of the world it values green world which expunges the theory that ensures the preservation of nature ; green nature without harming in any manner ,in any degree the masculine power brokers should change their attitude towards women, who have to be loved and men should live happily , peacefully, sharing mutual love and reciprocal relation with their female counterparts .The aim of my paper is to find out how Gangadhar Meher was unconsciously an eco feministic in the perspective of cooperation , integration and harmony. The objective of this paper is to study,Meher's ""Tapaswini"" , the emissary of ecofeminism with special focus on man – woman relationship, integration of man – woman with nature .Relationship of woman with nature for a healthy society and how nature and woman are complimentary and supplementary to each other and why man should preserve and conserve nature and woman for his development and progress of the world .

Keywords: Ecofeminism, Woman Exploitation, nature, Harmony, Complementary, Supplementary

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I. Introduction

Swabhava kabi Gangadhar Meher's poem have global favour, yet they are rooted in the soil of his native culture of Odisha. Meher has pointed the broad canvas of ""Tapaswini"" with a naturalistic color and style with appear real, lively, beautiful and elegant in the lap of nature. As our sweetest songs pervade with saddest thoughts, so his ""Tapaswini"" with the undercurrent of sorrow is the sweetest of Gangadhar Meher's creation it is the harrowing tale of banished Sita in the hermitage of Valmiki. Who has been inflicted with intense mental agonies. The bidding agony of solitude and suffering finds unique expression in the hands of the poet. Although he was influenced by the great Sanskrit works of Bhavabhuti's Uttara ""Ramacharita"" and Kalidasa's Raghuvansham ; his ""Tapaswini"" is completely a new and original creation .The extraordinary status of a queen and the ordinary state of a women are aesthetically harmonized. Sita the embodiment of purity, devotion and sacrifice, representing ideal womanhood . It speaks the agony, struggle, feeling and emotion of woman in the lap of nature. It is pointed, intense and down to earth, spreading Sita's intense feelings from earth to sky. Nature never" did betray the heart that loved her, Wordsworth announces in his timeless classic lines composed a few miles above the Tintern Abbey. In the hermitage of sage Valmiki, where during her exile she took shelter; dawn personified, comes to wake her up with palm full of pearls as gift. The whole nature was in a welcoming mode with the cool breeze blowing, birds singing, flowers blossoming and Smitisarita Mahapatra¹, Dr Sthitaprajna²

so on.when Sita wept ,her agony evoked immediately reaction in nature. Nature with all its resources starm ted wagging war on destiny for inflicting unjust, punishment on an innocent woman. Trees, flowers, river, clouds joined a common fight against her fate.

II. Method:

Nature has got the supreme position in the hands of Gangadhar Meher, reciprocating the emotions and feelings of woman. *Indumati*, *Keechaka badha*, *Utkal Lakhmi* and *Pranaya Ballari* are his best creations. Here ""Tapaswini"" is taken and qualitative research approach is applied to prove Meher's ecofeministic attitude.

III. Observation and findings:

When left amidst the wilderness by Laxman obeying Ram's sudden harsh order, Sita stood there, anguished and pondering about the spontaneity in the manner the recent events, transpiring, she fainted. She was in deep excruciating pain reaping through her soul, which got expressed by the streams of tears flowing through her eyes surreptitiously. As expressed in English rendering

The wind grew still at the virtuous Sita's weeping All nature grieved, spanning water and sky. Quiet were the dancing crests of Jahnavi And bird-calls in the forest were hushed.

Not a single leaf shook in the trees;

All frolic ceased, as if the trees were stone. (meher, p.10)

The nature too was astounded and was quiescent to the sight of Sita's tears. Valmiki's Ashram which for eternity embodied peace all around with each drop of dew soaked of Agastya's glory, coffer beaming with cool shade, pond having the pride of oceans pristine and sublime, holding the hollows of moon, now shuddered all suddenly to the pain and tears of Sita.

Sita's piteous cries reaped through the prevailing peace and shook up incessantly, the home of lady peace. Perturbed and unable to turn deaf, she ordered a chariot to take her to the walling woman. Virgin girls of the Ashram busy in studying the winds and vives around, got distracted to a faint sound, which essentially were not the cries of the peacock or the koel's call or the queing of the dove, but was the cries of Sita deep within the forest. Tears rolled ceaselessly wetting the top of her breast. Coinciding with her tears Meher imagines the accumulation of masses of Cloud, rising in the west sky with heavy down pours. The forests started lamenting with the voice of birds, the rush of the savage wind became its breath and leaves started floating by the waves of anguish. The running deer became stand still like kids who can not utter the reasons of their mother's sorrow, found deaf and dumb. The "Emperor Palm" showed its fights with fate, roaring in rage, brandishing sword in his hand. The leaves like arrows from quiver like weaver bird's nest. Droplets from quivering stream, leapt the wave crests to heat the sandy bed. Bhagirathi started grumbling, wild flowers left their stem and leapt to earth and started combatting like the dust smeared bodies. Out of anger the creepers tore cobwebs in to shreds, considering those as the nets of fate. Not only in the Earth but the commotion stretched its hands to sky also, clouds became broken hearted rushed in raged, with blazing eyes and pearls of thunder started sprinkling cool droplets of water to bring her to consciousness. Realising the injustice, the Sun hid his face in shame.

The way a sunflower moves around, following the Sun all throughout the day, beaming with pride at Sun's cadence and withering away in despire with Sun's setting down; Nature finds its ways around Sita's moods and moulds itself to her feelings. The same nature lightens up and revives. When the great sage tried to console her the flocks of birds with all their ears tried intently to listen became stand still. When Sita tried to accompany the Sage, the same birds bursted in to loud calls of victory from the sea misery. The fawns in deep satisfaction, danced around the borders of the paths, towards Ashram. The ways to the Ashram were covered by hundreds of peacocks, young elephants, out of ecstasy, followed them with the herd jostling their upraised trunks with lotuses, cranes in rows gave the impression of white banners, leaves of trees laden with flowers showed their welcoming note, koel took the advantage of her dulcet voice sang the auspicious song. It seemed as if the chorus of the victory conches, flocks of parakeets and mynahs showered petals with their claws on their paths. Stars like welcoming lamps appeared on the sky to lighten their path on earth. Not only the sky but also the dawn lets no stone unturned in serving her. River Tamasha gained inexhaustible wealth getting the touch of Sita at her banks and Sita in the worst period of her life but found the stream nothing but truly her mother's milk. Meher, in the eyes of Sita imagines the flow of nector from the breast of mountains. The bank became the permanent refuge; the store house of love on earth. Plants like, the Muchukunda, Kunda and Boula, the Creepers like, Niali, and Madhabhi, twigs, and creatures joined hands to uplift her moods. The Joy and affection of Nature was enough to dispel the grief of Sita. The thought of princely pleasure never entered in the path way of her memory, and in her heart's clear pool the royal handsome swan was there to be frolicked about forever.

When the womb grew heavier and heavier, its reflection was found in earth's exhilaration. As expressed in English rendering

The rains poured down on Earth's head,

*Which was burning with her daughter's heat of pain. Upon rivers, ponds, forests and hills,
It went on raining indiscriminately.*

The earth's exhilaration showed up everywhere

*With sprouting grass and plants, and flourishing kadambas. The earth's surface was flooded with water
And Tamasa ran overflowing her banks.*

It appeared as if her joys had brimmed over,

Rejoicing in Janaki's childbirth so close at hand.(meher,p.86-87)

. The rains came to steal the heat of sun, clouds pulled a dark cover over the sky, Tamasha joined her hands. It appeared as if the joys of earth had brimmed over to celebrate the home coming of earth's finest gem in Sita's womb, bathing her in the ocean of filial love. The good news acquired the wings to be flown from land to land near and far. All joined in the din of celebration. Flora and fauna joined hands to make them stand up in their filial custody. Five years rolled by moulding the princes with the valour of lions; with ultimate freedom enjoyed lakes, meadows and woods. Valmiki, the ocean of wisdom taught them the lessons of life.

While discussing, the eco-feminism aspect in "Tapaswini", I feel it is pertinent to make certain references of some poets of Odisha, who might have nurtured his poetic tradition. Two such master poets, Kabibara Radhanath Ray and Pandit Nilakantha Dash, have been chosen for their eloquent utterances on woman and nature.

Radhanatha in his narrative master piece, "Chilika" has found his soul mate in the lake Chilika. The poem is, indeed, a moving record of his innate passion for nature. He was mesmerised by its panoramic beauty. In the dancing waves, the music of birds, picturesque islands and mountains, he discovered spiritual joy and peace for a life plagued with anguish. In his emotional break out, the poet addressed the lake as his lady companion in the following lines in English rendering.

*"I was scared of them Like a child to the teacher,
But yearned for you my sweet heart Day in, day out."* (Ray, p.13)

The poet earnestly longed to spend the rest of his life in the lap of Chilika amid peace and joy away from his wearied world. He opened his heart outpouring before his lady love Chilika, in the context in some intimate lines;

*If luck smiled, I could dwell On your graceful shore
Nestling in a cottage till my last At the foot hill of Jatia.*(Ray,p-56)

Here, nature becomes a metaphor for woman capable of offering balmy comfort to the tormented heart of a worldly man. For the poet, nature is a living feminine principle, a panacea for all the ills afflicting the society.

Pandit Nilakantha Das, the notable poet, scholar of the Satyabadi Era in Odia literature, in his famous poem "Ramachandire Rati" (The Night at Ramachandi) demonstrated superb creative power in simultaneously producing the contrasting aspects of nature, such as the masculine and the feminine and the fury and the grace. It expresses poet's strong desire for the feminine to prevail for the wellbeing of mankind. The context is that the poet led a group of young boys of the Satyabadi School to visit the Sun Temple at Konark. He halted for the night at Ramachandi, a place close to Konark. It was a full moon night in October, a night when the Odia people celebrated Kumara Purnima, a festival before the austere month of Kartik. To the poet's dismay, a violent storm raged and spoiled the moon-lit night. This was simply unbearable for the poet. The emotionally stirred poet appealed to nature earnestly to stop the rain and wind instantly, and allow the full moon to come out in its full glory in the following lines rendered in English.

"O wind, O rains,

for God's sake, halt and wait,

*I beg of you for the moon to bloom in full and reign the night in glory.
Let the stars smartly rise*

above the blue waves....." (Pandit Nilakantha. P.307)

This is an incredible spectacle where nature's fury is combined with the eagerness of a poet to recreate a benign full moon-lit night using flash back technique. Such a rare technique of projecting heterogenous realities simultaneously is found only in great literature. The poet's thoughts were with the mothers and sisters of the young boys who had fallen asleep quite oblivious of the storm raging outside. For the poet, the moon is the natural companion of women and children. They belong to one another emotionally and spiritually. The soft moon

light here represents the feminine aspect of nature in contrast to the fury of rain storm which is masculine out and out and disruptive of equanimity.

IV. Conclusion:

Gangadhar Meher through his "Tapaswini", has pushed eco feminism to the forefront of a callous society, with a missionary zeal. The poet upholds the gamut of feminine values of sincere love, patience and sense of pride and envisions nature as a comforting partner in the life of woman. It is an Ernst appeal of Meher for resurrection of woman and nature where they belong at their best.

The *prakruti* or mother nature has been personified, which has sympathized Sita at the darkest moment of her life. Sita in a vibrant setting in an exquisitely intimate manner that one cant help believing that woman and nature are the one. It's the microcosm of a callous masculine society dealing with the contrast from sorrow to serenity, from a feeling of deprivation to fulfilment.

The poet has universalized Sita's suffering as the suffering of all the oppressed woman as committed to each other and the ability of women to face the challenges of adversity and rise beyond it.

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