

## Nature and Man in Tagore's *Red Oleanders*

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Tagore's contribution as a playwright is remarkable. He has included various styles to bring out a new version in the writings of dramas. They are comprised of symbols, soliloquies, satire, songs and contemporary issues. The play "Red Oleanders" is known as *Rakta Karabi* in Bengali. Though the author represents mythological name of the town, king and his officers, the theme of the play is connected with the serious and contemporary issues. It also provides platform to discuss ecocriticism, ecofeminism, marxist environmentalism, modernism and post colonial aspects.

Nature and man are always interconnected. Ecological balance is possible with the right relationship between these two. Nature's influence on man is existed in such a way that it cannot be ignored. But the various conceptions regarding the global pollution traces out the rift between human beings and nature. The furious situation is present in the world with man's domination over nature.

*Red Oleanders* tries to discuss the increased exploitation of the natural resources. Tagore has noticed the issues of workers, mines and environment in the provinces of Assam. These are closely linked with the contemporary global capitalism and corporate greed. As a result of this, man is departing from human values, morality, spirituality and nature. Alienation is extending its shadow on the man's life and predicting the phase of disaster. Thus the writer stresses the sustenance of man with nature as inevitable.

The mining city Yaksha town is controlled and dominated in the name of a king. He wishes to grab the entire sources of gold and appoints the common people as labourers in the mine. His appearance is unknown to everyone and he always remains behind a curtain. His voice signifies the totalitarian administration over nature and men. Deputy Governors, officers and henchmen share this cruel task with the greedy king.

Tagore has made use of character like king and kingship. In spite of using the primitive administrative system, he touches the present political scenario with selfish politicians, deceitful activities, irresponsibilities and insensitive attitude towards the commoners. The king in Yaksha town ignores his citizens and escapes from all responsibilities. His system enforces rigid norms, slavery and inequality.

Modernity, Industrialism and materialistic desire turn the powerful class into a machine. Capitalist ideology annihilates the peaceful life of the citizens. It provokes anger, suspension and fear and they are speechless to claim their liberation and justice. If somebody tries to protest, they are punished with

imprisonment. Along with this, in the name of religion all mining workers are compelled to work endlessly. The word welfare is isolated from the lives of these workers. They are deprived to think of their happiness, individual life and peaceful existence. The dictators sale liquors to these workers and this intoxication spoils their ability of contemplation and misleads them.

Contrast to this suffocating system, the author makes entrance for two characters: Nandini and Ranjan. Living in the midst of the mining diggers, they have attempted to understand the critical structure of this town. As the play ends, the readers are surprised with the transformation in the king. He is upset with the plot of his own officers and is moved with the ideologies of Nandini. He comes out and wishes to establish a new administration.

Symbols in the play are effectively used. Red Oleanders symbolize love as well as revolution. "It inspires curiosity, distrust, dedication, anger and so on. All of these emotions guide the characters into acting out, eventually resulting in the revolt." With these, it is clear that red oleander flowers in the hands of Nandini have affected many characters in the play. Even the character, Nandini is symbolized as an agent of change with his partner Ranjan. Yashka town which is considered as the town of Kubera in the mythology, includes rich resources of gold. After the assassination of Nandini, Bishu gathers flowers and decides to continue the movement against the barbaric situation. The king stays inside his fort as a strong man and neglects the identity of his own citizen. He himself is a prisoner in his administrative system and a solitary person. Nandini is resembled as a red oleander flower. She drags attention of everyone with her beauty and brings change in them.

M.Kalaiarasan finds the same issues of man and nature in the finest Tagore's play, *Muktadhara* and states

Tagore has given a new dimension to the gamut of Indian writing in English translation. The plays *Muktadhara* (the Waterfall) and *Raktakarab* (Red Oleanders) show his liberal thoughts. These two plays centers on the conflict between machine and human freedom and deal with the other side of love and sacrifice (1).

Colonial discourse is visible in the play, *Red Oleanders*. Yakshapuri town has a class structure where the powerful class oppresses the other class. Human rights, individuality, identity and progress are curtailed to this marginalized section. The mining workers are the victims in the hands of the tyrannical rulers. The post colonial view allows to know that these diggers have accepted the humiliating condition as their fate. They are barred with the suppression and avoided to raise voice against the system. Utilization of sources of gold and labourers for the prosperous life of a particular group is visible. The rebellious stance is established only with the support of Nandini and Ranjan. They challenge the non-human treatment for the diggers and interrogate the imbalanced status in this society. The author introduces a twist with the king's

act of destroying his own created system and exploitative atmosphere. Thus, deliberately caution is offered to the Indians about the colonial rule and modernity.

Ecological disaster is making its appearance through global pollution. Man deserves the blame for this, who has involved himself in the increased exploitation of nature, individual development, materialistic obsession and capitalism. So, Ecocriticism proposes a theory to show our concern towards natural things, health and human values. In the play, a mechanical world opens before the readers and brings out the mechanical life of the diggers, who are disconnected from the green nature and joy. Entire earth of this town is like a dark deserted place with the continuous mining work. Chandra expresses,

Give us leave, sir governor, do give us leave, let us to just for once and see our waving fields of barleycorn in the ear and the ample shade of our banyan tree with its hanging roots. I cannot tell you how our hearts ache. Don't you see that your men here work all day in the dark and in the evening steep themselves in the denser dark of drunkenness? (194).

These words express the exploitation of man and nature. The conversation between Nandini and Kishore in the beginning of the play displays the barren region. Kishore with a great difficulty gets red oleanders to Nandini. The phase of materialistic desire is formed in contrast to the natural world. In the mode of profit, the powerful class pushes the earth to the miserable condition.

Mining problem in the urbanized area is familiar to everyone. The realization of the king at the end of the play extends the idea of careful exploitation of nature and less dependency on the capitalist mode of production. Workers always engage in digging in the underground tunnels. They are crushed into the dark world and resisted to visit their green covered village. Ranjan works with the diggers and inspires them to know the beauty of life and nature. Even Nandini with red flowers makes all these workers to give attention towards nature.

Human life is encountering sober situations in Yakshapuri. The king intends to collect the whole wealth and remains inside the palace. And the workers are deprived of love affection, merriment and sympathy for his sake. The accumulation of wealth is centered to the particular group. The play throws light on the contemporary capitalist mode of benefit and multicorporal world. Inequalities are also depicted with the realistic contexts. Administrators are not the victims of pollution in the town of Yakshapuri. But the diggers face various health problems and live in a distributed environment.

The ruling class has a kind of madness to exploit the gold. The workers like caged birds are degraded and dehumanized. The king, who is always engaged in amassing wealth with the destructive force, becomes victim at the end. It illustrates how the man's greediness towards money, power and materialistic things goes on increasing. The story ends with changes in the constructed social

system and in the attitudes of the characters. Nandini's song of autumn tries to create feelings and interests in the king towards nature.

The leading female character of the play is pointed as the representation of nature and beauty. In the view of ecofeminism, the constructed conventions attempts to destroy Nandini and nature. The process of extracting natural resources and oppression of women are provided with the instances of Nandini's death, disapproval of Chandra's requisition to visit her village, and workers' pathos. The digger class women and their deplorable conditions are not clearly discussed

In Yaksha town, the earth is limitlessly destroyed to gain riches. The beauty on the earth is greenery, which is eclipsed with the work of digging and deep tunnels. The digger class women and their deplorable conditions are rarely visible. Nandini sacrifices her life in the shackles of patriarchal society and reveals her strong personality. She tries to transform the imperialistic mode of social system with her knowledge. She is so influential that her thinking ideas are shared by other characters and continue the movement.

Critically appreciated literary work, *Red Oleanders* takes a stand to enlighten all human beings regarding the ecological imbalances. Every scene makes the readers to contemplate over the contemporary issues of ecology. The author advocates the people to understand the inadequacy of natural resources. Both positive and negative sides are discussed like beauty, nature, freedom, love, song, sympathy, happiness on the one side and oppression, ignorance, loss of identity and sorrow on the other side. Idealistic views are indicated for the administrators to create awareness to serve the citizens.

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