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Tagore's *Red Oleanders*–Quest for Emancipation of Humanity

by

Bhola Nath Dallakoti

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This thesis entitled "**Tagore's *Red Oleander*–Quest for Emancipation of Humanity** " submitted to the Department of English, Ratna Rajya Laxmi Campus, Kathmandu, by Bholanath Dallakoti, has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

Supervisor

External Examiner

(Anand Sharma)

Head

Department of English

Ratna Rajyalaxmi Campus

Kathmandu

Date:

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Chapter-One

Tagore as a Literary Figure and Philosopher

Introduction

Human spirit is the natural state of mind of each human being; it can be meant as the feeling, attitude and character of a man as well as his inner energy. Spirit is also defined as the soul of a man though the concept of soul is somehow abstract to our understanding. Human spirit is the matter of courage and determination, it is an inner self of a man it identifies one's independent existence among the others. Spirit is always strong. It longs to make a free decision and goes against human bondage, material and conceptual obligation. It is an essence of being man.

Modern development of science and technology has geared up industrial development and it has enslaved human spirit for greed and material power. Human value has been degenerated; men are dehumanized and mechanized. Essence of human identity has been perished. Human essence has been imprisoned and only physical body has been acting like a machine under the order of the master of industries who is crazy for material possession. The play, *Red Oleanders*, exhibits all these phenomena of minimization of human value (spirit). Along with this, the play has also sought the way for emancipation of the degenerated and imprisoned human spirit. It is the story of struggle between authoritarian ruler and suppressed people for emancipation from both tyranny and material power.

Emancipation literally means freedom from legal, political and social restrictions. In the play emancipation means the freedom of human essence/human value and human spirit from the material and possessive imprisonment. The Raja of Yakshapuri Town has lost his own identity and self human spirit and snatched the spirit of other men employed in his gold mine. He sees nothing other than the gold

and administrative power of being a state head. He does not know that he has been self-imprisoned for the want of power. He is so crazy and ambitious for gold that he has been as miser as Shylock in the Shakespearean play *The Merchant of Venice* and as miser as the king Midas in Greek mythology. Nandini fights for the emancipation of total human being and their spirit; her struggle is against the material possession and power of the king, who at last conquers his power and frees all the laborers of Yaksha Puri Town as well as the greed imprisoned heart of the king.

All the characters of the play have been divided into two opponent forces as rulers and ruled, masters and slaves, state and individual, imperial power (Emperor) and the colonized people. Some characters like the King, Governor and Chandra represent state power and the material power for oppression whereas the characters like Kishor, Bishu, Ranjan and Nandini represent the individual of the state, who have been employed and exploited by the state. The king has appointed the governor, policemen and other administrative members in charge of carrying out his orders, for generating and protecting his wealth. Raja, (King), the antagonist is another major character of the play, around which all the other characters move. Nandini as a symbol of beauty, simplicity, truth and survivor as Durga (the goddess of Power in Hindu mythology) marches into the ring of human bondage and struggles for identity and emancipation of the degenerated human spirit.

Human being is not only a biological and physical essence of man but also a spiritually conscious free being. Both material (physical) essence and spiritual essence constitute the social being. Modern science and technology has geared up industrial development; it has enslaved and threatened human spirit, freedom and humanity or the spiritual relation with love and respect among each other (universal brotherhood and sisterhood). Human value has been degenerated; men are dehumanized and

mechanized. Their ability has been viewed compared with the efficiency of a machine. So the essence of a being has been imprisoned and minimized to a lower level and only the physical body has been acting like a machine under the order of its master or operator. Distinct human interests, ideals and meaningfulness of a being have been cruelly attacked for the want of material prosperity, self and power disregarding the duty to serve humanity. Paraphrasing Tagore's major work *Gitanjali* Mohit Chakrabarti writes:

. . . triumph of human endeavour whatsoever or howsoever only indicates the agonies of the soul within the agonies that prize one with vain pride and futility only to be renewed in crystallized consciousness. (64)

Tagore and Humanism

Tagore is the man of human values and spirit. As Dante and Leonardo Da Vinci of Renaissance period Europe, Tagore is preaching for humanism. As in the writing of Gandhi and Mulkraj Ananda humanism is the basic philosophy of life in Tagore's poems and plays. Tagore expressed his view on humanism in course of his visit to China, Japan and Britain. Regarding Tagore's philosophy on humanism Stephens N. Hay in his book *Asian Ideas of East and West* states:

The opposition between eastern spirituality and modern western secular and materialist civilization, Tagore's constant refrain was also one of the Radha Krishna's favorite themes. Tagore believes that western civilization is more mechanical than spiritual, more political than religious and more mindful of power than of peace in one hand. On the other hand, the peoples of the east do not organize themselves

for power but for perfection. They do not hate and kill, suspect and envy but live and adorn, love and worship. (269)

Tagore is against material civilizations of the west which has put the world under its grip so that the non-western countries are exploited. The spirit of humanity in the dry world of superficiality is also meant in *Gitanjali*, the most celebrated and widely read poetry of Tagore for which Nobel Prize was awarded. Giving introduction to *Gitanjali: Song offering* W.B. Yeats writes:

We write long books where no page perhaps has any quality to make writing a pleasure, being confident in some general design, just as we fight and make money and fill our heads with politics all dull things in doing while Mr. Tagore's, like the Indian civilization itself, has been content to discover the soul and surrender himself to its spontaneity.

(xiv)

Tagore expresses his view on humanism and complains that western countries lack human sentiments and values. Exploring Tagore's philosophy on humanism B.C. Chakravorty on his book *Rabindranath Tagore, His Mind and Art*, under the title Realism and Humanism writes:

Tagore assured us as very few contemporary poets have done that in spite of the bloody revolution human beings must unite on the basis of a common brotherhood. The modern world is in the grip of two gigantic forces- imperialism and industrialism. In *Muktadhara* and *Red Oleanders* Tagore gives us a concrete picture of the crisis in civilization and tells us that humanity can be saved not by a miracle ' as T.S. Eliot's suggestion the waste land but by the dauntless sacrifices of such heroic and noble souls as Abhijit and Ranjan. (267)

Red Oleanders (Raktakarbi) is a one act musical play not because it is small in size but because it lacks proper division into acts and scenes to be a full length play. It is one of the most widely read and staged plays of Rabindranath Tagore in India and abroad. *Red Oleanders* is the story of a man who has been imprisoned by his own material possession and administrative power. The man whose identity was limited with material power has confessed his guilt as being the victim of power after a long counseling of Nandini who represents a lady of beauty, freedom, love and truth. The king of Yakshapuri, longs for more gold to be extracted from under the earth by employing the workers who have lost their identity as they are called by their numbers as 47, 6g Ng. etc. Nandini, who has been an eager, inspired and empowered woman is the central character of the play and represents philosophy of Tagore. She challenges material success and gigantic industrialization in modern development.

Red Oleanders has been designed in one-act but has many scenes though not numbered. The first scenes depict the process of extraction of gold for industrialization and exploitation of labourers. Human beings are treated as a machine and the labourers are called using numbers instead of their names. The dialogue of Nandini, Professor and unseen man (Voice) in the middle portion of the play explores the human exploitation and the conflict between individual and state, rulers and the ruled, colonial power and the colonized citizens. The play presents the rhythm and uniform movement of the actions to show the development of industrialization, full-fledged exploitation and the freedom fight for existence of human spirit against the bondage of material possession. This idea represents Tagore's entire philosophy of humanism, self-degeneration and emancipation. Regarding the story, plot, characters and theme of the play, Krishna Kripalini judges:

The Kingdom of Yakshapuri flourishes on gold mining and forced labour. Its king lives behind the locked door, veiled in mystery and awe. In his name the Police Chiefs rule the land with a ruthless exercise of the whip and a judicious use of religious superstition. It is the save card, says a victim, that makes the whip and binds the rosary. Into this 'brave new world' comes a young and willful girl, Nandini who fears no one and whose beauty charms everyone. (307)

According to this judgment humanity or human spirit has been chained and imprisoned by the material possession as gold and administrative power of the king of Yakshapuri, but the arrival of Nandini blows the conch- shell of freedom for humanity. She emerges out with rebellious out burst. Gauri Ayub comes with similar view:

The labourers in the Raktakarbi who are coming out of the gold pit are just nameless numbers–non–persons. With what difficulty is Nandini able to identify some of them as the boys of her own village from among a procession of faceless onces-upon-a-time human beings! They are no longer the same Anup and Upanamyas or Tal Tamil and Shaklu and Kanku. The iron has eroded, only the black rust remains. Not only dehumanization of man but also denuding of the earth filled him with rage. (233)

The laborers of Yakshapuri employed by the king have lost their original identity as Anup, Upamanyu and Tal Tamil and are called by their numbers; they are no longer the human beings because they have to work as a machine under the command of their master, the king. So the men have been dehumanized for money and power. Humanity has come to dust but Nandini as a savior of humanity, has come

to identify those nameless men as if they were grown with her. In similar case, B.C. Chakravorty opines it out:

The autumn songs heard in the distance in *Red Oleanders* draws a sharp contrast between the life in an industrial town and the life lived in close contact with nature. It is true that, barring a few exceptions, the individual characters are not distinctly drawn. But we do get living pictures of life in broad outlines: the life lived by a subject nation; the consciousness of race-superiority in the stronger nation; and the tyranny of organization in an industrial Town or factory. (156)

Natural human spirit has been tyrannically attacked and exploited by industry, material possession as well as administrative power of the nation. While in the matter of respect and honour for the mother earth and nature they remain quite empty.

Ananda Lal clarifies this phenomenon as:

Yakshapuri breaks natural rhythms and tempts men with gold; fear, intimidation and depersonalization on the one hand, and power, organization and totalitarianism on the other, characterize such a society. (51)

The Town of Yakshapuri governed by the king is an epitome of totalitarianism. Matter or the industrial possession has enslaved the human beings, so that they have lost their human value and spirit. Gold, industry, power and money have cast spell on humanity. But only the emergent power of Nandini has been able to revive the unconscious or dead humanity. K.R. Sri Nivasa Iyengar expresses his view regarding the problem as:

A 'King' can fashion a 'state' for his own greater glory with such efficiency that it becomes at last his own prison as well in the ultimate

analysis, "Big Brother" is his own prisoner number one living behind net-work of intricate pattern, - the elaborate security precautions that envelop modern Heads of state in the triple street, - but having no commerce with humanity. (67)

Man is imprisoned by his or her own greed and pride for power. He has minimized the value of humanity for his selfishness. It is evident by the destruction of the First and Second World War that have threatened modern civilization. This phenomenon is clear in Iyengar's judgement.

Tagore as a Dramatist

Rabindranath Tagore was born in 1961 into the gifted aristocratic Tagore family, one of the most important households in the history of nineteenth-century Calcutta, then capital city of British India. He disliked the institutional education but perfected himself through private tutorial education. He started writing from the age of eight. He translated *Macbeth* into Bengali verse at the age of thirteen. He played a lead role in the first musical drama *Valmiki Pratibha* at the age of nineteen which was composed by him. In 1978 he was sent to London for studying Law. There he began to write *Bhagna-hriday* a play in verse but it was later published under the title *Rudra Chandra*. Tagore's playwriting career began with *Prakrit Pratisoda* (1884). He wrote *Nalini* (1884), *Mayar Khla* (1888), *Raja O Rani* (1889), *Chitranjada* (1892), *Malini* (1896) and so on. *Prayaschitta*, *Mukut*, *Dakghar*, *Muktadhara*, *Tapati*, *Natirpuja*, *Raja and Red Oleanders* are some of the best musical plays by him.

Tagore's phenomenal dramatic career, encompassing over sixty plays in nearly as many years, occupies the prime position in Bengali and modern Indian drama. In certain ways his dominance is analogous to that of Ibsen in Norwegian literature. Both began as products of nineteenth century but ended up having revolutionized their

respective literary traditions. Both wielded tremendous influence as writers outside their mother tongues like Ibsen on other European languages and Tagore on other Indian languages. Both of them tried on various dramatic genres and styles and both remained virtually unchallenged literary monarch for more than over half a century.

About Tagore's play Anand Lal claims:

Ultimately the mature dramatic style that he evolved at the turn of the century possessed no discernible connection with occidental models. If anything, its typically musical quality suffused with a characteristic spiritual feeling and the aura of benevolent natural surroundings may recall Indian precedents such as the classical Sanskrit drama or the Bengali folk theatre, both of which we know affected Tagore deeply. (5)

About Tagore's life Sisir Kumar Ghose in his book *Rabindranath Tagore* writes:

His active involvement in politics, from which he later broke away had made deeply aware of the sources of Indian culture and creativity. Out of this came, his *Vision of Indian History*. To whom does Indian history belong? asked Tagore and gave his own answer. It belongs to all who belong to India. There was nothing sectarian about his cultural synthesis, as his poems *Indian Pilgrimage* show. From the shore of vast humanity none will turn back or be turned back. (17)

Tagore's *Gitanjali* had great impact on critics and reader. About the poet and his work *Gitanjali* John Canning comments in his book *100 Great Lives* as:

. . . reveals the intense delight which a poet both discovers and enjoys at the revelation of identification of his soul with the nature and beautiful the same mystic perception of the sense of communion with

the vast and grand natural world became more and more distinct, deep and calm as he grew older, and enriched his works with wealth of perfect sincerity, penetration and harmony. The closing years of nineteenth century saw the poet in the full vigour and ebullience of youth, completely immersed in the joy of ever developing power and in giving realization to his perception in the form of poetry, drama and novels. (258)

Critics agree that Tagore successfully blends Indian and Western dramatic tradition. Tagore's knowledge of western literature, especially that of England, was undoubtedly wide. He studied Shakespeare diligently and in his autobiography remembered being enthused by the frenzy of *Romeo's and Juliet's* love, the fury of *King Lear's* impotent lamentation, the all consuming fire of Othello's jealousy. However, the presence of symbolism in his plays sent critics scurry into Europe for possible sources, and even today many are convinced that somehow or the other Tagore borrowed the concept of symbolic play writing from the West. About his symbolic plays Kironmoy Raha expresses:

The cycle of symbolist plays its culmination in *Raktakaravi (Red Oleanders)* in 1924. More complex in design than the other plays, it has a richness of imagery and texture unattained before. A few years earlier he had written another play in a similar vein, *Muktadhara*, which, incidentally, Edward Thompson considers as the greatest of his symbolist plays. He wrote both these plays after he had returned from an extensive tour of Europe and America. Apparently, the amorality of acquisitive society and the dehumanizing effect of a social order dominated by machines saddened and angered him. Both *Muktadhara*

and *Raktakarabi* are a condemnation of a civilization dominated by these evils. (134)

Tagore's plays like *Red Oleanders (Rakta Karbi)* and *Maktadhara* focus on dehumanization of man for the use of machine that has been a part and parcel of modern human being. *Rakta Karbi (Red Oleanders)* composed by Tagore and staged by Shambhu Mitra had a great success for the same effect. About the presentation of the play on the stage Birendra Narayan comments:

Presentation of *Rakta Karbi* by Shambhu Mitra has become a landmark in the development of modern theatre. Hindi world had the chance to see a play produced in a non-realistic style which heightened its impact and the lyrical values of the whole concept was maintained. The presentation of the play highlighted yet another aspect. The play does not have much of external action and yet movement with its sense of pace and tempo was not affected in the presentation. One could see Tagore in all his glory. (105)

Some of the critics comment his plays as too poetic, too lyrical, too metaphysical, too symbolic and too unstageable. Many of the critics appear to have great difficulty in fathoming Tagore's complex level of meaning in such a play as *Raja* or *Rakta-Karavi (Red Oleanders)*. Tagore's plays blend the realism and romanticism. Inner spiritual values are mixed up with the real life situation. Tagore claims that the world is what we perceive it to be and our mind itself is the principal element of creation. Self-awareness, spiritual holiness, beauty, truth freedom, justice and humanity are the theme of his plays. He selects protagonist and virtuous character to be woman like Nandini in *Red Oleanders* and Sumitra in *Tapati*. Critics opine that he had a great respect for feminine principle. Tagore opines that woman has a sensitivity,

a sympathetic quality, an innate spirituality and a freshness of mind that eclipses the more earthly desires that woman is accepted as the symbol of strength in every aspiration of man.

Red Oleanders and Degeneration of Humanity

Degeneration is a condition when an individual or a society is unable to maintain earlier situation, falls into a lesser than previous state of being. Degeneration according to *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (1987) means as "having become worse in character, quality etc in comparison with the former state: a degenerate species or to pass from a higher to a lower condition." . . . Thus, to degenerate means to fail to adjust with the standard that provides common existence that is valid to everybody. Regarding the degeneration of humanity Gauri Ayub expresses:

Not only dehumanization of man but also denuding of earth filled him with rage. When man plunders and rips the mother earth anchal into little shreds (*Rakta Karabi*) or when man 'fights with power of God' intoxicated by the triumph of his machine in *Muktadahara* , Tagore's denunciation sounds like curse 'the vital ambition of the present civilization of Europe is to have exclusive possession of the devil. (233)

Tagore is worrying about degradation of human values and degradation of the mother earth in course of collecting wealth. With similar view about *Red Oleanders* Sisir Kumar Ghose comments as:

His mind was on other things as well *Red Oleanders (Rakta Karabi)* showed his grasp of the increasing dehumanization of life in an industrial society based on manipulation of resources, human and non-

human. He was on the side of life and nature. But heroine Nandini, seems too much of a mouthpiece, to be wholly real. The pathos of the final pastoral song, fine as it is, probably takes away the trust of the play. The anti-modern bias is obvious. (21)

In addition to the theme of degeneration of human values, Tagore's theme in most of his plays and poems is concerned with liberating human beings from the material bondage. K.G. Subramanyan assesses the Tagore's theme as:

In many poems and plays which are amusing as they are intrusive, this theme recurs – whether it is in the plays *Parrots Training* or *The Kingdom Cards* or *Red Oleander* or *Muktadhara*, their final message is subversive, the freeing of human individual from all kinds of tyranny from within and without the bondage of inertia, of superstition, of ignorance of pigheadedness or eternal oppression. (223)

Protesting Scotsman's comment in his article on the *Red Oleanders* about the emptiness (meaninglessness) of the symbols of the paly like cave, tassel of Red Oleanders, cave, network, B.C. Chakravorty further clarifies in the article *Realism and Humanism –An Assessment* in the book *Rabindranath Tagore: His Mind and Art* as:

The appearance of Nandani in the underworld starts development of action which culminates in the killing of Ranjan. This marks the crisis of the play which is followed by the denouement in the complete transformation brought about in the character of the King. It is, therefore, incorrect to say that *Red Oleanders* have no plot with exposition, development and denouement. *The Times Literary*

Supplement has failed to notice that the network stands for the barrier that the modern industrial organization has set up between and man. The caves of Yaksha Town full of nuggets of gold stand for the modern world of commerce and industry. The King is the symbol of power callousness of modern industrialization. (263)

The Age-old struggle between the individual and the state, between the liberative impulse and compulsive will, between free intelligence and cold, calculating intellect, which has assumed sinister proportions with the development of the scientific technique, is the theme of the play.

In the similar spirit of freedom for then colonial India Ananda Lal in his book *Rabindranath Tagore's Three Plays* remarks on the *Red Oleanders* as;

As we have seen Tagore made its political implication quite clear, but the thinly disguised condemnation of British rule had not escaped readers either: One contemporary reviewer had hailed the play predicting that for future generation "it will be a momentous landmark in the history of their political regeneration. (50-51)

Tagore is against British empire which ruled over many countries of Asia and particularly India. He has expressed his hatred towards colonization in his plays, poems and novels. Furthermore he encourages people to fight against such step of colonization through out the world.

Nandini's Quest for Emancipation in *Red Oleanders*

Red Oleanders by Tagore portrays the picture of dehumanized beings of the modern day world in which the self-imprisoned Raja has been emancipated by the struggle and counseling of Nandini, a savior of humanity. The humanity and the

human value are looking for liberation from the world of bondage, suppression and oppression. Nandini fights in the play for the eternal emancipation of humanity.

The term 'emancipation', therefore refers to that kind of situation where one can get entire freedom from any social barriers that he /she faces. Emancipation according to the *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary* (2000) means "freedom of somebody especially from legal, political or social restriction." In other words, emancipation implies a situation of an individual who finds himself/herself occupying a space with full of choices for the development of his/ her personality. Realization means purgatory of self and freedom for all from the bondage. Judging on the meaning of emancipation Mohit Chakarbarti comments:

The soul of the inner man awaiting the language of emancipation as Tagore thinks defined is the destiny of man. Civilization would proclaim the victory of that's inner mans soul out of the crumbling dust to hold his head high in the boundless open sky. Let the unobtrusive sky of belief in man invoke the advent of man victorious. (124)

Human spirit has been degenerated by the ambition of collecting the goods of materials value. As a consequence man has been engaged in demonic (satanic) act of sucking blood of the fellow being. Morality, ideals, social norms, love and freedom have been laughed at like by Midas of Greek mythology and Shylock of Shakespeare play *The Merchant of Venice*. One man lives on another man's flesh and blood. Nandini is fighting for the freedom of such man who has been sucking and humanity in total. In addition to the theme of degeneration of human values , Tagors's theme in most of his plays and poems is concerned with liberating human beings from the material bondage and modern technology.

While Rabindranath was creating his poems, play, story and novels, India was ruled by British Empire on its full swing. There were protests by different parties and nationalist politicians through out the country. As a result Tagore,s writing particularly *Red Oleanders* and *Muktadhara*, are deeply influenced by the sense for freedom and struggle for it. Laxmi Subramanian and Rajat Kanta Ray opine.

It was Tagore's belief that counter aggression from a sense of injury would not release the humiliated Indian from his enslavement; he would have to rise above his own injured self-esteem and direct his anger against transgression of the eternal law. (242)

Emancipation from the degeneration and material bondage is the main theme of the *Red Oleanders*. Tagore wants to emancipate the imprisoned humanity through a woman freedom fighter i.e. Sumitra and Nandani. May be it is to highlight the Non-Violence Movement against the British imperialism. On similar theme of *Red Oleanders* Krishna Kripalini judges:

While the earlier play was concerned with the diabolical use of technological knowledge, symbolize in machine, for colonial exploitation, this one raise the more fundamental issue of the free spirit of life set against the more terrible machine of a highly organized and mechanized society which turns men into robots reducing names to number. The Age-old struggle between the individual and the state between the liberative impulse and compulsive will, between free intelligence and cold, calculating intellect, which has assumed sinister proportions with the development of the scientific technique, is the them of the play. (306)

Red Oleanders depicts the influence of western European civilization of science and technology. It has rubbed and sucked out the human self and spirit. Where as the Eastern culture still preserves the serenity and truthfulness of soul that realizes the human self. This sentiment of sympathy for human being is also reflected in Tagore's speech in China and Japan.

Yakshapuri symbolizes the gigantic material power of the West that suppressed and killed many voiceless people of the colonized countries and exploited resources in the name of organization, politics and development. But Tagore is always complaining about organized body and mechanism of the state which continuously exploits people. In similar view as of Tagore, J. Krishnamurti comments on such exploitation in her book *The First and The Last Freedom* as:

There is in men, not in society, not in systems organized religious system, but in you and in me. Organized religions, with their mediators, their sacred books, their dogmas, their hierarchies and rituals, offer only a false solution to the basic problems. (4)

Social, political and economic organization has been a centre of exploitation for modern man. People are kept under the pressure and punctuality of organization. Machines are operating human psyche. Man's freedom, intimacy and unity have been dismantled. M.K. Gandhi, famous freedom fighter and follower of Non-Violent Movement of the world prescribes the inner realization of self for freedom and truth. M.K. Gandhi in his book *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* writes.

What I want to achieve what I have been striving and printing to achieve these thirty years-is self realization, to see God face, to attain Moksha. I live and move and have my being in pursuit of this goal. All

that I do by way of speaking and writing, and all my ventures in political field, are directed to this same end. (X)

Red Oleanders's symbolical meaning is to fight against British colonial rule in India and other countries. Gandhi commenting on British rule and freedom fight for India and South Africa opines:

When the war was declared, my personal sympathies were all with Boers, but I believed then that I had yet no right, in such cases to in force my individual convictions. I have minutely dealt with the inner struggle regarding this in my history of the Satyagraha in South Africa. . . . I felt that if I demanded rights as a British citizen, it was defense of British empire. I held them that India could achieve her complete emancipation only within and through British empire. (179)

Red Oleanders' political implication is clear that it attacks on British rule of then India and even Africa. Tagore as Gandhi proposed for Satyagraha, had respect for self realization and reform of self. Tagore takes side with peaceful means of reforms. Satyagraha is to understand self and demand for the rule of self, dismissing (negating) the governance of other's. Gandhi's above mentioned proposal is identical to Tagore's philosophy.

Chapter-Two

Philosophical Background for Quest of Emancipation of Humanity in

Tagore's *Red Oleanders*

Individualism

Modern society is the mass of heterogeneous individuals. Culture, society and human values are created by individuals. Human value is that value which makes an individual immortal. It brings exaltation, an urge toward life. It is a deeper spiritual understanding and it releases an individual from the petty greed of everyday existence. If one has desire he can quest for what he wants. Nandini and Kishor have desire of releasing the people of Yaksha Puri Town, whereas the isolated king (Raja) desires for more and more gold. Nandini and Ranjan's main desire is to bring individual awareness among the people for permanent freedom and holy life. They give counseling, knowledge and teach about the meaning of life to the people and even to the king (Raja). They encourage people to live simple but holy life from greed for material possession and power. Characters like Ranjan, Nandini and other supporters of human value think about struggle against material gain and richness of property. Whereas the Raja, Governor and the Police think about collecting more and more power, gold and higher individual position in the state. Both of the groups suffer a lot for their individual identity and ambition. The Raja's ambition in his life is to collect more gold. The theme of *Red Oleanders* is to struggle and retain the identity of labourers of Yakshapuri.

Subaltern Resistance

Different scholars have emphasized that the focus should be given for the development of consciousness of exploited ones or lower caste people to eliminate

social and economic oppression. The scholars of subaltern studies group spearheaded by Ranjit Guha have categorized all suppressed, exploited and marginalized people as subaltern, which is a word coined by Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci to denote the politically unrecognized and economically disadvantaged mass of the people.

Subaltern study group and historians have included lower caste and exploited people in subaltern group due to their marginalized position and situation of being exploited by the society and the government. The scholar of this group in their writing seek to assemble a counter-history of popular form. They write their works from the perspective of marginalized ones. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak for the first time feels the voice of subaltern in her book *Colonial Discourse and Post Colonial Theory: A Reader* inner sense and raises the question of subaltern. In her essay "Can Subaltern Speak?" She writes:

Let us now move to consider the margins (one can just as well say, the silenced centre) of the circuit marked out by this epistemic violence, men and women among the illiterate peasantry, the tribal, the lowest strata of the urban sub-proletariat. (78)

Spivak turns her attention towards the large majority that has left no marks upon history. The majority was not allowed to make their voice audible or they could not make their voice heard by themselves. "Million and millions have come and gone under the colonial dispensation without leaving a trace for men, but even more so women" (Berten 211). Many critics and theorists have moved ahead with the issues of subaltern people with a new concept which is known as subaltern studies that deals with the emancipation of the subaltern group of working class people.

Obviously, spirit of emancipation has been a constant factor of human history and development. Always, new changes occur and are expected to occur when the

existing system has been found inadequate to meet the growing need and expanding aspirations of the people. Hence, the repressed people (labourers) in *Red Oleanders* sought shelter under struggle or revolt for quest of their entire emancipation and even emancipation from greed for power. Subaltern's voice arose after subaltern criticism came into being.

The first emancipatory act that the subaltern studies projects to restore the tribes and lower class group as the historical beings. For Spivak, writing about subaltern is to create counter-history including all minor incidents and discontinuities and from the perspective not of colonizers and power holders but that of the marginalized and exploited people. In this connections she observes, "Their project is to rethink Indian colonial historiography from the perspective of discontinuous chain of peasant insurgencies during the colonial occupation" (24).

Marxism and Humanism

Marxism is one of the modern theories to make a critical analysis on the things and events. It is the socio-economic, political and philosophical ground for analysis on different subjects, aspects and text. Individual alienation (estrangement) is also associated with Marxism.

Marx transferred the idea of alienation to economic plane. He agreed with Feurbach criticism of religious alienation but stressed that religious alienation is one of the many forms of man alienation. Man not only alienates a part of himself in the form of god, he also alienates other products of his own activity in the form of commodities, money, capital etc. He also alienates products of his social activity. Till now we have been considering the estrangement, the alienation of the workers is one of its aspects, i.e. the workers' relationship to the products of his labour. But estrangement is manifested not only in the result but is the act of production with in

producing activity itself. About Renaissance Humanism Charles Van Doren in his book *A History of Knowledge* judges humanism as:

The Renaissance, in all of its manifestations, had placed man at the center of things. There was a coldness and a distance about the reorienting of man that may have irritated Montaigne. Who is to speak for man in the abstract? Montaigne, at least, could speak for himself. He could say what he was, what amused and pleased him, what struck him as vain and foolish in other men. Thus he placed himself at the center of things, believing that even if this attention might seem self-centered to some people, nothing would prove more interesting. (145)

Marx and his fellow thinkers made their theory in the following three claims i.e. the evolving history of humanity, historical change in based on mode of production and its effect on changing social class struggle; human consciousness is constituted by ideology. Expressing the opinion about Marxist-Leninist humanism M. Petrosyan in his book *Humanism* writes:

Marxist-Leninist humanism is closely bound up with the humanist legacy of the past, with the human ideals and principles embraced by the mass of the people, with the basic moral standard which they have evolved over thousand of years in their struggle against social oppression and moral degradation. These standards, principles and ideals play an exceptional part in the development of pre-Marxist humanism the great value we attach to man as an individual, the defense of his freedom, rights and dignity, the urge to liberate man from the forces that enslave him, the noble dream of happiness for all mankind, have a history extending for into the past and are inseparable

from ideas nurtured among the oppressed masses. One has only to recall ancient mythology and its immortal image of Prometheus, the selfless champion of freedom and human happiness. (15)

Marxists base their discourses on economic environment of the state. They say, the economic structure of society always form the real basis from which the superstructure of legal and political institutions, as well as of the religious, philosophical and other conception of each historical period should be analyzed. Social change is based on mode of production as the forces of production change, the existing relations of production become incompatible with the new technical developments, i.e. they become incapable of utilizing to the full the developed forces of production. A change in the relation of production takes place accordingly, but neither smoothly nor without struggle. As the change implies the transference of ownership from one class to another class, the possessing class resists the change with all its might, whereas the new rising class struggles to gain ownership. Every such change therefore takes the shape of a revolution. That is why Marx conceives all history hitherto as a history of class struggle. Similarly after the change the force which has control over material production creates the new mental state. Charles Van Doren in his book further writes about Marxism as:

In fact, political events are more epiphenomenal than politicians like to believe. Administrations, even governments, change, but the underlying changes are more important than the names of the ruling parties. Marx, better than any other man of his time, understood the underlying changes that were occurring in Europe in the middle of the nineteenth century. He was wrong about the character of the world that was emerging. (262)

Hence, the Raja of Yakshapuri with his political system, laws, administrative hierarchy, religion and judiciary constitute the superstructure of Yakshapuri, whereas the gold, diamond, agro– product, market and the people employed in goldmine form base in accordance with Marxism. So the class struggle between the ruler and ruled takes place. Mentioning about the Marxists critics M.H. Abrams writes:

But a master of realism in the novel such as Balzac or Tolstoy, by "bringing the life the greatest possible richness of the objective conditions of life", and by creating "typical" characters who manifest to an extreme the essential tendencies and determinants of epoch, succeed-often "in opposition to [the authors] own conscious ideology"- in producing a fictional world which is a "reflection of life in the greatest concreteness and clarity and with its motivating contradictions"; that is their fictional world accords with the Marxist conception of the real world of class conflict, economic and social contradictions", and the alienation of the individual under capitalism.

(243)

Discourse on Power and Possession

Discourse analysis as inaugurated in the 1970s concerns itself with the use of language in the running discourse over a sequence of sentences of and involving the interaction of speaker (or writer) and auditor (or reader) in a specific situational context.

Discourse is the way of presenting something. It is a major point in society that affects how we speak, act and interpret things. It is formative and action oriented interactions. It helps power holder to control people. The people have to believe on presented fact. Michel Foucault in his essay "Truth and Power" views:

Each society has its regime of truth, its "general politics" of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanism and instances with which enable one to distinguish true from false statement, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in acquisition of truth; the status of those who changed with saying what counts as true. (1144)

Discourse is not merely a sign but it is a set of practices that constitute the object in which it is speaking of. Most importantly it is a system of constraint or exclusion which sets boundaries of what can and cannot be said or done in our everyday life. The experts define the situation and then divide the line between reason and unreason for society. The system of discourse in regard to every thing constantly changes within years, decades and centuries according to those who has the power. These power holders use the discourse according to their benefits.

Any form of discourse is considered to be a source of power, because it tells us to speak and act in certain ways. Almost every face of social life is taken over the rules and rituals of discourse and the expert that carry it out within society. The rulers use their knowledge of power, inherit in the mastery of discourse, to manipulate and keep the ruled ones under control. Discourse is a root of power and in any case, power works through discourse and discursive formation. Bertens writes:

Discourses work like Gramscis's *Hegemony* and Althusser's *ideology*:
 We so completely internalize them that they even, include pleasure.
 Discourse organize the we see the world for us. We live and breathe
 discourses and function unknowingly as links in a good many chains.
 (157)

Power can not exist without truth and it is unstable because it is he who controls the power and also controls the discourse. "We obey power, are loyal to it, even to the point of policing and repressing ourselves because it makes us feel what we are" (Bertens 153). Material possession makes a man rich. Richness makes man a power holder. Then he can be appointed as a state owner, leader and even a king in a feudal as well as a capitalist of modern society. Power and discourse are very much interrelated. To get hold of discourse it is necessary to be in power and to make it more powerful and durable it is necessary to take the help of discourse. Foucault is in the opinion that truth and power are interrelated. The knowledge of religious books and administrative laws give feudal administrator and governors authenticity to exercise the power by means of such discourses. Foucault in his essay "Truth and Power" describes, "Truth is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produces and sustains it [. . .] it induces and which extends it, a regime of truth" (1145).

This is to say that discourses are embodiment of power and it is the discourse which speaks the power of ruling class. According to Foucault, "the modern western world is in grip of so called discourses that regulate our behaviour because we have internalized them and for all practical purposes police ourselves" (Bertens168). Discourses can possibly be misused to strengthen power.

Power holders, high caste people, administrator, governors, industrialists, landlords and policy makers keep them safe and shadowed under the discourses, laws, and bylaws. But the workers, poor farmers, mine excavators and real people should abide by the discursive laws silently without any choice and demand, as Phagulal, Bishu, Ranjan and Nandini in the *Red Oleanders*.

Chapter-Three

Struggle and Quest for Emancipation in *Red Oleanders*

Red Oleanders: Story in Brief

Tagore's *Red Oleanders* is a play in one act. It has got nineteen characters individually performing along with the group performers. The setting of the play is the window of the palace with an intricate pattern. It is the palace of Yakshapuri as historically known as the palace of Kubera, the treasurer of the king of Yakshapuri in Hindu mythology. The characters of the play have been divided into two groups. Some characters like Nandini, Ranjan, Kishor, Phagulal, represent the working body (labourer) in the Yaksha Town. They are employed to dig the gold from the earth under the command of Headman, Governors, Police Chiefs and so on whereas Raja, (the king), Police Chiefs, Headman, Governors, Professor represent the privileged group of people who command the labourers of excavating gold, diamond like valuable gems from the mine.

Ranjan works hard in excavation of gold. He is a gentle labourer working without complain. He loves Nandini and manages some time to see her. Nandini, a young beautiful girl in Yakshapuri Town also loves Ranjan for his straightforwardness and hard work. Kishor is the another digger boy employed in the work of digging gold in the Town. Kishor also loves Nandini and presents her a tassel of red oleanders as a token of love and beauty. Nandini and Kishor have managed some time to see each other and talk about their daily life i.e. the nature of work, workers and their relation. Professor, Raja, Governors and Headman are jealous of intimacy of Kishor, Nandini, Ranjan and Phagulal. So, they are very strict to Ranjan, Kishor, Phagulal and Nandini. They don't let time to the workers (diggers) for rest,

talk, personal care, affair and for social relation. According to the rule of Yaksha Town their job or life is to collect the dead wealth gold from mine like the worms.

They don't have personal freedom for social and political activities. Professor represents a philosophical and wise circle of citizen in the town. The dialogue between the professors and Nandini opens the arena of wisdom, knowledge, sensibility, duty and realization of truth. They converse about beauty, truth, freedom and duty. They pay due respect to the labourers, the diggers and sympathize on their hard life. The workers are numbered. Their identity has been minimized. Their soul has been compressed with tyranny. They cannot enjoy their personal freedom.

Nandini has impressed all the labourers, Professor and the King with her witty dialogue. She is only the person living in Yaksha Town with full consciousness, rights and duty, good and bad, freedom and exploitation. In total she is a deserving personality in Yaksha Town.

Raja is mad with the power of gold and authority. He never pays attention to the condition of labourers and their personal care. He lives behind the intricate pattern of window and speaks as if he is unseen god and power, thinking that his appearance to the public means to underestimate his power. Nandini being curious about his power and authority dares to question Raja. After a long dialogue she discovers that the king has been hidden within himself. He feels power is gigantic gold mine and other wealth. He attaches a great meaning to his mine and industry which is adding prosperity to Yakshapuri Town. Therefore, he considers the other human beings to be less meaningful than the dust of his feet. Raja arrests Ranjan for his sin to visit Nandini. He is singing and dancing among labourers for awareness to emancipate them.

Nandini then goes on to create awareness among labourers. They are all ready to break the intricate pattern that hides the king. The Raja then kills Ranjan, the representative of labourers. Nandini then marches to the king and challenges him of killing. After a long counseling and challenge, the king (Raja) accepts the subjugation of him by Nandini. He feels meaning in love, beauty and humanity. He then wants to be open and public breaking the intricate pattern. All the labourers shout for victory of Ranjan, victory of Nandini. The professor throws his books and accepts his subjugation by Nandini. Among the labourers there is joy, there is victory and they enjoy the harvest song of autumn. Though Ranjan has got martyrdom other workers could get emancipation and even the king realizes his guilt.

The subject matter and theme of the play is based upon the principle that each must fight the other, oppress or be oppressed, in order not merely that the ordinary simple needs of life may be satisfied, but that piles of accumulation may be set up. This is the world where, with every available means in his power, the king exploits the resources of the underworld, of native, of the mind, of science and of human physique and intelligence, using all the weapons of organization and the elaborate machinery of a highly centralized bureaucracy in order to add to his wealth. This wealth is measured in gold or in souls or in facts or in human body. So the men are no longer men but numbers.

The king sits fascinated as he watches this hive where every one is busy, but no one content, where all are piling cell to cell, adding honey to honey for the king. Those who ask for rest, food and freedom are killed. In to this hive flies, a butterfly, armed with no sting, equipped with no power to gather or to store, but clothed in beauty, loving the light of day and life asking all to share in her sun shine. Like strings on an untuned instrument they respond to her touch, and though the instrument had long been thrown on one side, still here and there music and harmony come struggling forth, toils and troubles are forgotten, memories are aroused of the old

scents and sounds, of the simple artistic colors and variety of nature, of the cooperative villager, where all were not numbers but neighbors, where there was music and beauty and life. We have become numbers, with numbers on our doors, our telephone, our cars, our factories, our restaurants, our votes, and our tickets at sports or theatre and so on. Human value is missing because of want for material sophistication like computer, car, industry and so on. This is the major theme of the play *Red Oleanders*.

Nandini, the mouth piece of Tagore is this touch of life and the spirit of joy in life is matched with Ranjan, the spirit of joy in work. Together they embody the spirit of love. They walk fearlessly into the world of getting, and being independent of it, they break the barrier of their love, relation and freedom even though in the process they are broken themselves,-but such sacrifice is the price which must always be paid in the effort to break down the wall of the darkness, of untruth to flood the world with light. About the theme and symbolic characteristics of the play Sukumar Sen comments:

The last and perhaps the most difficult of Tagore's symbolic plays is *Rakta Karabi (Red Oleanders)*. The characters, however, are all full blooded and human. The symbolism here is fully articulated and boldly drawn up and the drama is powerful. The blinding of greed of power and wealth that is relentlessly controlling the destiny of the civilized mankind of today and is forcing the masses to a life of indignity, ugliness, bestiality and soullessness is the theme of the play. The drama points out that the salvation of mankind is to be sought in life where knowledge and power help in simplicity of existence that is harmonious with nature, both animate and inanimate. (309)

Raja's Authoritarianism

The Raja is one of the major characters of the play. He is the antagonist. He is the ruler of Yaksha Town filled with gold and valuable gems. He lives in the palace behind the intricate pattern of window and commands the Governor, Police Chief and Headmen. They carry out his orders and maintain secrecy of the palace. Men are employed in excavating gold from the earth and is piled on cell. The Raja is crazy for gold. As the pig digs the land wider and deeper for roots of creepers, the Raja is digging and piling gold upon gold. He is pleased in veiled personality. His meaning of life, beauty and truth lies on collection of gold but the life of workers (diggers) is meaningless, for they are working under the ground. They can't take rest and talk about freedom. They are even restricted for leading their individual life and love affair. They cannot admire beauty, freedom and holy life. They are called by their numbers instead of their names.

Their duty is to serve the king and obey the order of Headman, Governors and Police Chiefs. Their humanity and personality has been minimized and underestimated. Now they are not longer men but numbered machines. Judging such phenomena about the character of the Raja, Kripalini writes:

The Kingdom of Yakshapuri flourishes on gold mining and forced Labour. Its king lives behind the locked door, veiled in mystery and awe. In his name the Police Chief rules the land with ruthless exercise of whip and judicious use of religious superstition. (307)

The King's orders are carried out by the Police Chiefs. So as the king orders the Police Chiefs march for action and whip the disobedient rebel labourers. Bhudeb Chaudhuri in his book *Rabindranath Tagore and the Challenges of Today* comments as:

The creator languishes in mute agony of the creature shackled afresh by a new mechanism, this time a creation of man's own hand, and not of nature's manipulation. Indeed this is symbolized by the lot of 'king' as conceived by Tagore in *Red Oleanders*. (211)

Raja is authoritarian. He exploits the people. He employs labourers pays very little. He minimizes the existence of them. His concern is to collect gold by exploiting earth and labourers. Expressing similar view Ananda Lal observes: "Yakshapuri breaks natural rhythm and tempts men with gold; fear intimidation on the one hand, and power, organization and totalitarianism on the other, characterize such society" (51).

All the resources of Yakshapuri have been exploited by Raja for his personal benefit and people are suppressed economically and politically. They can't sing, dance and enjoy their freedom. This very theme is carried by the following dialogue between Nandini and Professor in the play. In their words:

NANDINI. Then again, you hide your king behind a wall of netting is it for fear of people finding out he's a man?

PROFESSOR. As the ghost of our dead wealth is fearfully potent so is our ghostly royalty, made hazy by this net, with its inhuman power to frighten people. (5)

Raja is hiding in order to frighten people. He thinks that if he becomes public no one will have any fear of his mysterious power and self. He is lustful as well. The following dialogue between voice (hidden Raja) and Nandini clarifies:

VOICE. I long savagely to prove you how cruel I am. Have you never heard moans from inside my rooms?

NANDINI. I have whose moaning was it?

VOICE. The hidden mystery of life, wrenched away by one, bewails
its torn ties. To get fire from a tree you have to burn it.
Nandini, there is fire within you too, red fire. One day I shall
burn you and extract that also.

NANDINI. Oh, you are cruel ! (61).

It is Raja's selfishness, his greed and desire for power and possession that exploits the labourers of Yakshapuri Town. He is never satisfied with the amount of nuggets of gold and other gems so his men are working like worms in the hole. About such ambitious human desire for power and position J. Krishnamurti in his *The First and The Last Freedom* writes:

We are everlastingly moving from one object of desire to another which we consider to be higher, nobler, more refined; but however refined, desire is still desire, and in this movement of desire there is endless struggle, the conflict of oppositeness. (83)

The Raja wants to get everything, whatever is beautiful and valuable by hook and crook. Everybody who is going to rebel is killed mercilessly and mysteriously. Therefore the king is tyrannical and despotic and fascist. The condition of Yakshapuri and king's tyranny is also reflected in the following dialogue and song between king (voice) and Nandini.

NANDINI. Let me sing you the latest song that I've learnt.

(Sings)

I love, I love, is the cry that breaks out from the bosom of the earth and water.

The sky broods like an aching heart, the horizon is tender like eyes misted with tears.

VOICE. Enough ! enough ! Stop your singing ! (63).

Whole of Yakshapuri sky land and water is filled with tears and cries due to Raja's tyranny. Therefore, the voice of the mother earth is not heard. The sky, land and water are crying to protect humanity from tyranny of Raja. The plaintive numbers sung by Nandini is no more pleasant to Raja. He is habituated in enjoying screams, cries, moaning and tragic utterance but not the voice of change and freedom.

Crisis in Civilization and Degenerated Humanity

Civilization means the state of society that has got socio-political awareness, with standard and improved life. The need of civilization is to maintain a valid stand by avoiding evils from human beings. Modern men are boasting for their civilized life. Especially the western country men are living with the vain pride of comfortable and standard life and are pouncing on the innocent; their aim is to rule upon the unaware and needy people. Their concern is to establish their ownership over sky, land and water. They are minimizing human self for their own freedom and prosperity. World War I (1914-1919) and World War II (1935-1945) with destruction of millions men and immeasurable value of property is the example of degeneration of humanity.

The process of degeneration and fragmentation began in Europe at the end of 19th century and activated a lot after the World War I. Post War world expresses the dilemma and failure to share human values, enlightenment and confidence. Spiritual civilization, rationalism and humanity have been replaced by bizarre mysterious, irrational and unpredictable pattern. This oriented case of Western culture and civilization acted as the notion of fragmentation, disillusionment and decadence. The enormity of the war has shattered faith in the capacity of reason and dealt with crucial social and political questions. It appeals that civilization has to fight an unending and

hopeless battle against the irrational element. It also proves the fact that the old beliefs in the perfectibility of humanity, the blessing of science and on going progress now seems to be an expression of naïve optimism. Facing the evolutionary disorientation toward the traditional structural establishment western civilization, culture and intellectual field have lost their spiritual centre. Though the war's storm has passed the darkness and fear of the war still make the people restless.

Economic crisis of the present Africa and third countries symbolize the crisis of civilization. Industrially and commercially sound countries are collecting property pile upon pile while the people of the least developed counties are dying of hunger. Destruction of industries and crisis stricken state of post war. Europe too represents the similar state of crisis in civilization. Disintegration of human relation between young and the old, rich and the poor, have and have-not make the world crisis filled. Lack of proper manner, respect to each other, duty to society and universal brotherhood have been thinner as Eliot shows in his *The Waste Land* and W.B. Yeats expresses in *Second Coming*.

Nature has been exploited with out much concern for future. Forest has been cleared; unsystematic industrialization has polluted the environment. People are hurrying for gathering materials like money, car building and business firm. Culture has been degraded, art has been degrades, socio-economic stands of people has been degenerated. Human being has been compared with the efficiency of machine so as to increase production. Men don't have their real identity. They are numbered instead of named. Human relation today has been commercialized. So the crisis of modern civilization is to degenerate human value. *Red Oleanders's* theme is also related to the degeneration of human value. Judging Tagore's philosophy and theme Ananda Lal expresses:

It is the rampant materialism of the present age which ruthlessly sacrifices individuals to the blood thirsty idols of organization." He distrusted the concept of organization since it distracted and dehumanized mankind. (46)

Monarchy is an age old feudal organization of Yakshapuri where the Raja rules. The Raja is so authoritarian that he does not like to see the unity among labourers like Ranjan, Kishor, Phagulal, Nandini and so on. He wanted to detach human relation so as to degenerate humanity. Commenting on Tagore's play Krishna Kripalini writes:

. . . this one raises the more fundamental issue of the free spirit of life set against the more terrible machine of a highly organized and mechanized society which turns men into robots, reducing names to numbers. The age old struggle between the individual and the state, between the liberative implies and the compulsive will between free intelligence and cold, calculating intellect, which has assumed sinister proportions with the development of scientific technique, is the theme of their play. (306-307)

Men have turned to slaves. They are valuing money, machine and merry making. Human value has degraded because though they can get various services from a machine, the heartless machine does not understand their inner feelings and deserving features. So for money, they are giving high respect to the technology. Degradation of moral values, war and dehumanization have threatened the civilization. Judging about the present modern civilization Radhakamal Mukherjee remarks:

Civilization is the march of all values and their fulfillment among the most considerable section of the people. Cold war and preparedness for violence and aggression considerably reduce the areas of fulfillment of human values by gentle modes of human communication in the modern age with the lapse of international good will amity and persuasion, the area of value creation, orientation and synthesis is considerably reduced. Various forms of authoritarianism, coercion and constraint also lower the dimension of human needs and gratification and the qualities of human behaviour and social values. The cruder symptoms of defeat or decadence, represented by delinquency, vice, intemperance, neurosis and psychosis, are today highlighted by the lapse of moral or spiritual outlook. (193)

Humanity, spirituality, love and beauty have been degenerated due to technology, organization, production and material richness. This scenario is expressed in the dialogue between Chandra, Bishu and Phagulal as:

CHANDRA. But when will your work be finished?

BISHU. The calendar never records the last day. After the first day comes the second, after the second, the third, there is no such thing as getting finished here. We are always digging one yard, two yards, three yards. We go on raising gold suggests-after one nugget another, then more and more and more. In Yaksha Town figures follow one another in rows and never arrive at any conclusion. That's why we are not men to them, but only numbers. -Phagu, what is yours?

PHAGULAL. I'm No. 47y.

BISHU. I'm 69 Ng- (31)

Raja in the play is so crazy for his power and dug-out property that he does not value any person and nature, beauty and serenity. Like Louis King XIV of then France of seventeenth century who boastfully remarked, "I am the state and the state is I." The king crushes humanity under his feet. Som Benegal judges the play as:

Tagore contemplated the material civilization of the west with its inherent contraction and the crushing power of organized man aided by science over personal man on the one hand, and its interaction with the east on the other where the west presented itself as "a titanic power with an endless curiosity to analyze and know but without sympathy to understand, with numberless arms to coerce and acquire but no serenity of soul to realize and enjoy".
(90)

Not only the human behaviour, social manner and spiritual degradation has occurred in the civilization but also in the cycle in nature there has occurred crisis. About such crisis Bishu and Chandra in *Red Oleanders* speak as:

BISHU. To that boundless tavern, underneath the blue canopy?

Alas, the road is closed, and we seek consolation in the stolen wine of the prison house. No open sky, no leisure for us; so we have distilled the essence of all the song and laughter, all the sunlight of the twelve hours' day into one draught of liquid fire. (Sings)

Thy sun is hidden amid a mass of murky cloud.

Thy day has smudged itself black in dusty toil.

Then let the dark night descend

the last comrade of drunken oblivion,

Let it cover thy tried eyes with the mist
 that will help thee desperately to lose thyself.

CHANDRA. Well, well, Bishu, you mean have gone to the dogs in
 Yaksha Town, if you like, but we women haven't changed at
 all.

BISHU. Haven't you? Your flowers have faded, and you are all
 slaving for gold. (27)

Red Oleanders depicts the influence of western European civilization of science and technology. It has rubbed and sucked out the human self and spirit. Where as the Eastern culture still preserves the serenity and truthfulness of soul that realizes the human self. This sentiment of sympathy for human being is also reflected in Tagore's speech in China. Regarding the theme of the play Kironmoy Raha writes:

In the climatic scene of *Rakta Karabi* the King realizes how he had become a prisoner of his own power. He kills the unseen rebel Ranjan and is freed by Ranjan's companion Nandini, the symbol of youth, beauty and freedom, to come out of his room at last. (134)

Nandini protects the rights of all the people in Yakshapuri Town fighting against the oligarchy and autocracy of Raja who with the help of industrial possession condemns human beings. He imprisons human spirit bringing down the human value to its lowest level. In this regard Sisir Kumar Ghose judges the play as:

The free human spirit is caged and gagged. But the main characters, the king invisible for the most part, and Nandini, the heroine, speaks a language that takes us away from the grimness

of the issue. King is guilty and self-divided. When the king finds that his own men have betrayed him, he turns against his own force and joins Nandini too late. The melee can be heard from a far the harvest song; hinting at the renewal of life in nature. (65)

Human values and norms are being degraded along with the development of technical and mechanical social activity. Not only humanity but also the fundamental need of man that is the mother earth is being degraded. Mining is for material and material is for development, but while the metal, gold and petroleum are excavated degradation of nature land takes place which ultimately causes crisis in civilization. We know the war between France one England for wool, the war of the U.S.A. and Iraq for petroleum. Nandini's dialogue with the voice (The Raja) reflect the denudation of the earth due to excavation as:

NANDINI. One would never think you were so tired.

VOCIE. One day Nandini, in a far off land, I saw a mountain as weary as myself. I could not guess that all its stones were aching inwardly. One night I heard a noise, as if some giant's evil dream had moaned and moaned and suddenly snapped asunder. Next morning I found the mountain had disappeared in the chasm of yawning earthquake. That made me understand how overgrown power crushes itself inwardly by its own weight. I see in you something quite opposite. (18)

The Raja's narration of weary mountain is symbolic to the destruction of nature due to the continuous erosion or denudation. Nandini's dialogue with professor also depict the similar view about erosion of the earth.

NANDINI. It puzzles me to see a whole city thrusting its head underground, groping with both hands in the dark. You dig

tunnel's in the underworld and come out with dead wealth that the earth has kept buried for ages past.

PROFESSOR. The Jinn of that dead wealth we invoke. If we can enslave him the whole world lies at your feet. (4)

Yakshapuri's men are busy at work. They are groping the rock with both hands. But their life is no better than of the worms. The rulers and ruled don't value each other rather create bloodshed with the help of weapons. Raja Jai Prithvi Bahadur Singh expresses similar view while giving speech in Prague on 6th May 1929.

It showed that the people who boasted of centuries of great culture and civilization, who professed to believe in a religion of love and fraternity, could yet indulge in the most cruel and deadliest of wars compared to which even the wars of the stone Age were chivalrous and honorable enough. (70)

Commenting on the influence of western civilization and Asian countries ruled by western power Salman Rushdie remarks:

. . . but western political system both of liberal capitalist and community variety, have simply failed to deliver progress. We now know the ever expanding cake to be a myth; the citizens of the west face future of narrowing horizons, diminishing prospects. One could say that the west has lost the future and with out the future, the one validating concept of its political system is removed. (388)

Western civilization is narrowing its future with material power and pride under the name of democracy, communism, religion and internationalization. Similar view is expressed by Krishnamurti in his book *The First and Last Freedom* rightly remarks:

. . . one of them is the extra ordinary importance man is given to sensate values, to property, to name to caste and country, to the particular label you wear you are either a Muslim or a Hindu, a Christian or a communist. Name and property, caste and country, have become predominantly important, which means that man is caught in sensate value, the value of things, whether made by mind or hand.

(130)

Nandini, an Epitome of Love and Humanity in *Red Oleanders*

Tagore's main concern in his expression whether it is politics, or social life or religion is the faith on human value, freedom and self-realization. He respects nature as creator, inspirer, caressing and devoted. His faith in humanity is always expressed in every creation of him. His characters in the play struggle for freedom, for human value, for ideal social life and for unity of body and soul, for making free being.

In many of his plays he has assigned the role of protagonist to a simple woman whether it is in *Raja*, *Candalika*, *Malini*, or *Tapati* or *Red Oleanders*. His protagonist represents the voice of the voiceless, strength of the powerless, freedom against tyranny and spiritual value against vanity of material possession. It is said that Tagore has special faith in women. He thought woman as a symbol of love, faith, nature, peace, power and god. He considered that woman deserves sensitivity, sympathetic quality, and an innate spirituality and freshness of mind. Woman is considered as the symbol of strength in every aspiration of man. So it is not a surprise to find women such as Nandini or Sumitra in his plays. Ananda Lal comes up with the similar view about his sympathetic character Nandini. He rightly remarks:

Tagore thus defended his motives in writing the play, "Therefore it should cause no surprise to anybody if a poet, belonging to a continent

swallowed by the menacing shadow of Europe, gives a prominent place among the dramatis personae of his play to an apparition which now so powerfully occupies the imagination of a vast world consisting of non-western races." Once again, he ends with a portrait of Nandini, epitomizing his concepts of ideal womanhood as an alternative to the evils of twentieth century civilization. (50)

Nandini is a young, beautiful girl of Yakshapuri Town. She is a dynamic character of the play who unites all the labourers, creates consciousness and fights against Raja's tyranny. She is the symbol of consciousness for humanity. Nandini is not only the lover and companion of Ranjan but also a symbol of beauty, love, humanity and struggle for freedom for all human kind. About the role of the protagonist of the play Nandini in *Red Oleanders* K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar Comments:

Nandini is the challenge of beauty and love to the world dominated by more money and power values, and she is able to make men out of slaves and unnerve that Tagore should have so correctly portrayed in a play written in 1923 the features of the fascist dictators of the thirties and of 'Big Brother' despotism in the forties and fifties. *Red Oleanders* is the image of terrifying probability that has alas! proved more possible in recent days. (68)

Nandini charms everybody with her love, action and words. She is so deserving that even the king got lured and submitted himself to her beauty as if enchanted by some magic force. Inspired by the boldness and love of Nandini Krishna Kirpalini writes:

Nandini (the heroine in the play) is this touch of life, the spirit of joy in life, who matched with Ranjan, the spirit of joy in work, . . . love in

union, union in love, harmony before which the discord of greed
scattered as under a spell. (308)

Nandini impresses every one with her sentiment, love and duty. She unites the labourers. She as a symbol of beauty, love and duty. When love and duty merge then it becomes a power to fight against the Raja's tyranny. About Nandini's inspeakable beauty and deserving qualities, Raja (voice) in the play utters:

VOICE. Do you know, Nandini, you are half-hidden behind an
evasion, -you mystery of beauty! I want to pluck you out of
it, to grasp you with in my closed fist to handle you,
scrutinize you, -or else to break you to pieces. (15)

Nandini is really very attractive internally as well as externally so that even the king is enchanted with her beauty. Raja (the king) wants Nandini in his domain and enjoys talking and merry making with her. Tagore himself says that the spirit of love dwelling in the boundless realm of surplus, emancipates our consciousness from the illusion bond of the separateness of self and love reflects eternal in man. Gauri Ayub comes with similar view of Nandini's character as, "with what difficulty is Nandini able to identify some of them as the boys of her own village from among a procession of faceless once-upon-a-time human beings" (233).

Nandini is not a simple woman who is busy in her daily chores but an undaunted girl who is challenging king (Raja) as mightily as goddess Durga or Kali. Following dialogue between King and Nandini in the play shows her character as bold as goddess Durga in Hindu mythology as:

NANDINI. King, the time is indeed now come!

KING. Time for what?

NANDINI. For the last fight between you and me.

KING. But I can kill you in no time- this instant.

NANDINI. From that very instant that death of mine will go no killing you every single moment. (114)

This shows Tagore's belief to have a woman fighting for freedom of humanity. Raja kills the labourers like Ranjan who go against his will. Nandini is obsessed with the feeling of tragedy from Ranjan and dares to fight the king in return. It is the fight between love and hatred for protecting humanity.

Struggle and Emancipation in *Red Oleanders*

Struggle means a series of sufferings for existence and freedom. Struggle for Charles Darwin is a basic fundamental characteristics of each living being in nature. General philosophers and politicians use the terms 'struggle' for political independence and individual identity. They believe that everybody should struggle to exist as a conscious and free being. The conscious being offers to struggle against fate or heroic pursuit of the unattainable. Marx's class division in society as proletariat, workers and bourgeoisie always go on struggling for their existence in their society. In this way, life is a series of struggle. Tagore's main concern in his philosophy, plays and story is to struggle consciously for identity, humanity and human value. Tagore, times and again expresses his philosophy to maintain humanity, and respect for fraternity. Actually, his philosophy for struggle is for independence of India and entire world from colonial power and for spiritual independence in human beings.

Emancipation means freedom from social, legal, political and economic exploitation. Emancipation is the consciousness in feeling, attitude and perception that changes a person to the sublime thought of being free. The interest and eagerness to understand one's self is a fundamental characteristic of emancipation. The spirit of emancipation in Tagore's *Red Oleander* seems to have been greatly influenced by

Karl Marx and Gandhi. Nandini, Ranjan and Kishor's reaction from the inner level of their mind and sentiment against Raja's exploitation is related to Marx's philosophy for class struggle.

Red Oleanders is a series of exploitation, awareness and struggle for emancipation. A large number of workers are employed by Raja for extracting gold from under the earth. Raja is despotic, who hides himself within the palace widows. His men such as Professors, Police Chief, Governors and Headman are busy in commanding labourers for collecting gold. They make plan and policies for piling more gold by exploiting labourers and the mother earth. Raja's concern is nothing but to suppress the rebels, conscious citizens and collect gold for Yakshapuri's prosperity. Men are working like a queue of worms with blocks of gold on their heads. The king of the palace torments and kills thousand of workers. Therefore, the citizens and workers can't raise a voice for their rest, comfortable life and liberty. Nandini, (the mouthpiece of Tagore), the main character of the play appears in the palace. She is all deserving character of the play who raises awareness among the workers. Her dialogue with the unseen voice (Raja), Professor and workmen reveal that she is working for freedom of the workmen, freedom from greed, pride and power. She is the one who unites labourers for struggle against Raja; she is the one who creates self-consciousness in Raja. She is the one who saves mother earth from denudation and the whole humanity (mankind) from material bondage. Her relation with labourers develops from her love to Ranjan (a symbol of hard work) and love to Kishor. The following dialogue represents her relation:

KISHOR. Have you enough flowers, Nandini? Here, I have brought
some more.

NANDINI. Run away, Kishor, go-back to your work, quick! you will be late again.

KISHOR. I must steal some time from my digging and digging of nuggets to bring out flowers you. (1)

Nandini an epitome of freedom establishes good relation with all the stake holders of the Yakshapuri Town especially with labourer and make them rebellious. Judging on her character Krishna Kripalini puts:

Into this 'brave new world' comes a young and willful girl, Nandini, who fears no one and whose beauty charms every one; she upsets the whole order, not only making the workers rebellious but luring the king himself out of his hiding. (307)

According to Kripalini, Raja exploits human values and dignity. Every one in the Yakshapuri Town is suffering. They are threatened, tortured and killed. The moaning heard by the labourers symbolize the frequent death of Yakshapuri people by Raja. But Nandini's arrival in the palace plays the beagle of freedom from Raja's claws. Her behaviour influences everyone to be united and fight against king's authoritarian rule. She marches out and challenges the king (Raja). Bhudeb Chaudhari in his book *Rabindranath Tagore and the Challenges of Today* under the title of article Rabindranath Tagore: Poet of Creative Humanism remarks:

Man the creator-the master of free conscious will-has had to encounter a two pronged attack; one from the mechanical forces of nature with their crippling pressures on the freedom of the self dominant spirit, and the other is an intricate, inner combat to be fought with the creature with in-with its inexplicably selfish designs. (210)

Red Oleanders shows the similar struggle of man with socio-political exploiting mechanism and struggle with the selfish nature of himself. Exploitation of labourer in Yaksha Town is portrayed in the words of Chandra, Bishu and Phagulal as:

CHANDRA. Very well. Then why don't we fly from here, and go back home?

BISHU. Your Governor has closed the way as well as the will to return. If you go there today, you will fly back here tomorrow, like a caged bird to its cage, hankering for its drugged food.

(28)

The above dialogue depicts the struggle of labourers for freedom. But many times the labourers are afraid to fight. They are hesitating for fear. The following dialogue between Phagulal and Bishu shows this hesitation.

PHAGULAL. What does that matter, Bishu? You have risen high in your esteem.

BISHU. Discovery only means death. Where your favour falls there falls the Governor's glance. The more noisily the yellow frog welcome the black toad, the sooner their croaking points him out to the boa-constrictor. (30)

Their desire for freedom is challenged by Governor's glance. When the Raja kills the rebel like Ranjan and torments many others, the labourers unity become firm and challenges the suppressors. Then the labourers led by Nandini break the flagstaff of the palace, wall of the building and jails releasing prisoners. Nandini says, "Ranjan's way to victory lies through my heart" (65).

Nandini represents the unity of labourers. Her heart means the red blood as a red oleander means revolution. As the labourers launch revolutionary activities, Raja is losing confidence and is short tempered. The following dialogue between Antiquarian and professor reveal Raja's action inside the palace as:

ANTIQUARIAN. I say, what is this infernal noise going on inside?

PROFESSOR. The King, probably in a temper with himself, is engaged in breaking some of his own hand work.

ANTIQUARIAN: It sounds like big pillars crashing down one after another. (70)

Nandini and Professor are talking about exploitation by the palace and are persuading each other to fight against authoritarian and colonial forces of Yakshapuri in the following dialogue between Nandini and Professor as:

NANDINI. Must they? If it is necessary to die in order to live like men, what harm in dying?

PROFESSOR. . . . the tiger does not feed on the tiger, it's only man who fattens on his fellow man. (80)

Raja collects more gold and rules authoritatively. He does not respect humanity. He neglects labourers' demand for rest and freedom. The labourers of his gold mine grow thinner and thinner but the king, day by day grows richer and fatter. He lives on man. So Nandini inspires the people to unite and fight against the king for their dignified life. As the action of the play reaches the climax the King's men are treating the united labourers cruelly. Gokul and Chandra's dialogue depicts these phenomena of cruelty as:

GOKUL. That with must be burnt alive, before everything else.

CHANDRA. That won't be punishment enough. First knock off that
 beauty of hers, with which she goes about running people.
 Weed it out of her face as the grass is weeded with a hoe.
 (107)

The exploited labourers challenge the king. They break the prison wall and release the workers and rebels. The king goes for flag worship the symbol of power and the king's family deity and observes the act of revolution. Nandini's undaunted personality, truth and beauty demoralize the king. The king no longer believes on his power, courtiers, Police Chief and Governors but realizes the truth, the power of the exploited labourers, the power of the working class for their emancipation. Counseling of Nandini and her challenge make the king realize his guilt and greed. Now the king wishes he would be Nandini's comrade. Raja's words go like this. "Be brave Nandini, trust me. Make me your comrade today" (114). Then the king himself destroys his flagstaff and fights against his own men Governors and gold filled palace.

Now the king finds the meaning of life and love and in realizes death. Labourers fight against the long prevailed tradition of Yakshapuri and the kingdom. They break the intricate pattern made by king. All the labourers are free. They live their life by their own. They shout victory for Nandini and victory for Ranjan who united with love break the structure of degraded human value, humanity and fraternity and make the men permanently free with consciousness. The autumn song heard by the characters in the play *Red Oleanders* at the end evokes such emancipation:

Hark 'tis Autumn calling,-
 Come, O come away!
 The earth's mantle of dust is filled with ripe corn!
 O the joy! the joy! (122)

After the labourers fight against the sophisticated palace and the proudest Raja, the palace the representation of centre for exploitation is dismantled. Even the king has been rescued from his own dungeon of pride. The imprisoned people are free. They are no longer a slave of machine and money. Therefore, they are celebrating for victory of humanity. Pleasant and peaceful scenario of the autumn makes their celebration very crucial as it is the symbol of freedom for all human being. There are fruits in the trees and mother earth is filled with crops. There is hope, there is life and there is love for all.

Chapter-Four

Emancipation of Degenerated Humanity in Consciousness

Humanity is the nobler characteristics of mankind. It is the existence and true meaning of a civilized being. The ideas of equality, freedom from slavery, sense of personal dignity of working people, respect to each other, and giving value to the individual existence is humanity. Modern society in the name of development has expanded its claws with sharp nails to snatch human value. Machines are worshipped, working system and mechanism is highly respected, and gigantic scientific innovations are valued where humanity is being disregarded. Men are replaced by machines. Government system and administration is working to suppress people in the name of peace and production.

Power holders are exploiting the resources of country and piling the dead wealth. Like Raja of *Red Oleanders*, the rulers are collecting gold and dollar for securing their future. The common people are working hard silently for collecting gold and dollar to the rulers. They are oppressed; their demand of freedom and happiness is not heard. Rather they are attacked tyrannically, imprisoned and killed.

In most of the Tagore's literary works, novels, short stories, plays and poems he seems to be preaching in support of humanity, freedom of people, freedom from greed and in favour of protection of natural resources for holy life. Tagore rejects the evil, greed, cruelty, suppression, exploitation and degeneration of humanity. Evil is the man who is good only on to himself. He, who lives but for himself is justly likened on to a dead man.

Raja of Yakshapuri Town is such a selfish giant who employs the people to extract gold from the under earth and adds to his property. His government system is

the symbol of tyranny where his men like Governors and Police Chiefs whip the rebel and freedom seekers. The system has minimized human value by employing the people for the Raja's selfish purpose. The system has minimized the human value by numbering the employees than by naming. Their existence as a human being is lost. The mechanisms of extraction of gold has minimized the human value by suppressing and killing the freedom fighter, supporter of beauty, truth and humanity for the material gain.

The kingdom of Yakshapuri symbolizes the exploitation that thrives on its gold mines run by indentured labour. Numbered like machine, driven like cattle, drugged with wine, degraded and dehumanized, the mass of workers don't even know what they have lost. This kingdom is run in the name of the king (Raja) that is never seen, but by a Governor who is soft spoken but ruthless in action. Into this rich dead world there come Ranjan for whom work is but an expression of joy and Nandini (the heroine of the play) for whom life is but an expression of beauty and love. These two characters of the play work hard and succeed in awakening the suppressed humanity and manliness of miners in Yakshapuri. Though Ranjan becomes a casualty during the campaign, labourers succeed well enough to make the king (Raja) himself rebel against the system run under his name. The king realizes the fact that he was crazy for gold than his people forgot his own value for power.

The play deals about the oppression of humanity, domination of power and greed against freedom, beauty and truth. The play seeks freedom from the domination of western big power for subaltern people of under-developed country and their people. Tagore has also expressed his view against British colonial power that ruled over South Asia and Africa exploiting the resources and people. Therefore, the fight for emancipation by the exploited characters of the play like Nandini, Ranjan, Kishor,

Phagulal and others symbolize the freedom fight against colonial power and economy for the dominated working community.

Emancipation is an internal process. It involves a process of liberation of the self from the old internalized prejudices. In the case of *Red Oleanders*, the ultimate goal in this process is dissolution of exploited labourers and dehumanizing of self and seeks a construction of spiritual and socio-economic equality for alternative mode of thinking. Thinking for humanity, thinking for human ideals, thinking for mankind, to lead for emancipation of degenerated humanity. For this, both consciousness and struggle are the tools. Consciousness of self produces love for human dignity. It is the consciousness that leads exploited people and degenerated human value to independence and emancipation from submissive mentality and greed. Empowerment of the self is an internal phenomenon that promotes the features like self assertion, self-awareness and emancipation.

Tagore's one of the best plays *Red Oleanders* describes such conflict between machine and free human spirit, conflict between greed and generosity, conflict between ruler and ruled. It is a critique of the ideology of regimentation and exploitation of technology leading to dehumanization. Nandini is a symbol of undying love and humanity. Free life beckons every one to come out and share in the abounding joy of sun light. Love and humanity assert through death and recreate themselves for emancipation.

Struggle between Raja of Yakshapuri and Nandini with her supporters in *Red Oleanders* symbolizes the struggle between rulers and ruled, powerful and powerless, technology and humanity, greed and generosity. The struggle comes to a success with love, work and humanity. Therefore, human value, self-respect human ideals, consciousness, love and joy should be expressed and spread. Liberation brings

happiness and realization of self. It refers to the inner being of a person, which directs and controls his/her social interaction. 'Victory to Nandini' and victory to Ranjan, symbolize such emancipation of humanity from dehumanization and suppression.

After a long critical analysis, this researcher has come to the conclusion that Tagore's *Red Oleanders* demonstrates the struggle of Nandini, the protagonist against material, industrial and commercial oppression to emancipation. This kind of situation however, is not of Nandini and Ranjan's only; it is the representation of situation of the entire commercially exploited and dehumanized human beings. Tagore's portrayal of king for greed and Nandini for human ideals and emancipation pave the way for justice, human value and spiritual emancipation from material bondage.

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