

admonishes Helen for a number of reasons and ultimately dismisses her, claiming that Helen's signature garment, the low-backed yellow dress, is taken from her without permission. Plunkett's infatuation for Helen as well as Maud's own sense of colonial superiority compels her to take such a standpoint of a 'patriarchal woman'. But as the narrative gradually unfolds, multiple dimensions are added to the character of Maud. The apparently subjugated wife reveals her crucial position as sufficiently aware of her own values and thus becomes a fully realised static character. Apart from these three central female characters, there are few other women who inhabit Walcott's epical world. Of them, mention must be made of Christine, Ma Kilman's niece, who, at the end of *Omeros*, comes to work in the No Pain Cafe. This country girl is projected as the new Helen since through her, it is said that the cycle of subjugation and seduction is carried forward:-

... She was Ma Kilman's niece
fresh from the country, and the village was for her
a startling city, its music widening her eyes
like a new Helen ...
She very obedient. She will make a good maid. (O,316)

Again there is Catherine Weldon, an actual figure from history in fictional guise. She was a widow from New York and her commitment to the cause of the Native Americans which led her to the Indian territories of the Dakotas in the 1890s, is presented by Walcott in such a manner that consciously or unconsciously, she becomes as emblematic and unfathomable as Helen:

When one grief afflicts us we choose a sharper grief
in hope that enormity will ease affliction,
So Catherine Weldon rose in high relief
through the thin page of a cloud, making a fiction
of my own loss. (O, 181)

Further, we see a very minor yet noteworthy presence of another woman character, Antigone, the Greek sculptress, who also appears to be the lover of the poet-narrator, Walcott in Book 1 of *Omeros*. Although the character of Antigone emerges for a very meagre amount of time since she almost at once returns to her native island, being tired of America, the way she etymologizes the title of the work, *Omeros*, keeps on resonating throughout each pages of the text:

"O-meros," she laughed. "That's what we call him in Greek",
... and *O* was the conch-shell's invocation, *mer* was
both mother and sea in our Antillean patois,
os, a grey bone, and the white surf as it crashes
and spread its sibilant collar on a lace shore. (O, 14)

Moreover, there is the character of Alix Walcott, the aged mother of the poet-narrator who makes a single appearance in *Omeros* only to re-confirm and emphasize the origin of her son: "You are my son'./Warwick's son, she said./ Nature's Gentleman" (O, 166). However, her appearance resonates throughout the epic in Walcott's portrayal of Maud Plunkett. Walcott's presentation of the female spirit is revealed at its best through

his attempt to project the island of Saint Lucia as the “Helen of the West Indies” (Wikipedia);- “the island was once/ named Helen” (O, 31). The tropical beauty of the island and the rhythm of the ocean that cradles her justifies the innumerable fights that France and England has undertaken to occupy her. In fact, for Walcott, the charm of Saint Lucia is synonymous with the promiscuous vacillation of the Antillean Helen, both of whom were caught between two jealous contenders. In short, just like the dark-skinned Helen, the island, on one hand, is depicted as an object of subjugation; on the other hand, the same island, for Walcott, becomes a seductress, “oblique but magnetic”, that bewitches generations of men with its lush flora and fauna, beaches and coastal water, hills and mountains and thereby substantiates its feminine epithet. Walcott's most ambitious English language poem, *Omeros*, re-imagines the Trojan War of the Homeric epic as a Caribbean fishermen's fight and women, particularly Helen, occupy a major role in both the epics. The legend of Helen has received numerous interpretations through ages from history to classical mythology. In most of the cases, she has been projected as lewd and unchaste, as in Book 1 of *The Histories* by Herodotus. Caribbean literature and folklore is no exception. In fact, women in general have endured a stereotypical presentation in Caribbean literary creations. But Walcott deviates considerably from the traditional matrix which is, however, quite unexpected yet moving. An insightful, well-researched analysis of *Omeros* will reveal that Walcott's women are real human beings who are good and evil, seductive and motherly at the same time. This magnificent unpredictability is perhaps what true literature is all about and from that perspective, Walcott's crowning achievement, *Omeros*, by defying definite theoretical boundaries, unquestionably establishes itself to be a real masterpiece.

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Rabindranath Tagore on Education and Women Emancipation

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Abstract: Education is the only tool for overall human development irrespective of gender. But education was denied for ages to women which have hindered their freedom from accessing knowledge. Rabindranath Tagore through his numerous novels and short stories emphasized women education which has paved the way of women emancipation. He portrayed such bold characters in his stories, which was rare and even inconceivable at that time he wrote them because they have questioned the traditional role of women, defying the customs in their own way in search of freedom to live a normal life which was denied and ultimately in pursuit of greater freedom of inner self.

Keywords: Education. Emancipation, ignorance, gender, freedom, development, inner self

Introduction: Education, in the larger sense, is an act or experience that has a formative effect on the mind, character and physical ability of an individual or a group of people. It is a process by which a society as a whole formally or informally transmits its accumulated experience, knowledge, wisdom, skills and values from one generation to another. Modern English dictionaries also define the term Education as bringing forth what is within. Education is the way to enlightenment. It wipes out the darkness of ignorance, bringing the freedom from bondage and captivity of ignorance. It helps a human being to develop mentally as well as physically thus moulding a character of man and woman for the battle of life. Education is always sought as the means of confidence, self respect, self-realization, self fulfillment and Emancipation. Denial of acquiring knowledge to women was a common phenomenon in Indian culture. It is true that the advent of education especially western education has paved the way to women emancipation in India. Education has made women financially independent which is the major reason of feminist movement throughout the world also. Education has given women the courage, confidence to question the age old ruthless and dogmatic tradition which has been imposed on them through ages to throttle their freedom. The first Modern thinker and the first noble prize winner of Asia Rabindranath Tagore in one of his writing on women education known as "Streetiksha" (August, 1915) – "Women's Education" wrote "Whatever is worth knowing is Knowledge. It should be known equally by men and women, not for the sake of practical utility, but for the sake of knowing". (Tagore, 1351 B.S., p. 138). Later in the article, dwelt on this point with clarity he said "Knowledge has two departments: one, pure knowledge; the other, utilitarian knowledge. In the field of pure knowledge, there is no distinction between men and women; distinction exists in the sphere of practical utility; women should

acquire pure knowledge for becoming a mature human being, and utilitarian knowledge for becoming true women" (Tagore, 1351 B.S., p. 139). The ideology about education and especially about women education stated in *Streetsiksha* was undoubtedly radical in nature. It is this extra ordinary liberated and progressive spirit regarding women emancipation and education that this paper proposes to explore through his writings. Through Tagore's numerous writings series of women blossomed as an educated, intelligent, cultured yet traditional in nature. 19th century colonial Bengal saw the rise of Bengali New Women struggling for their own identity who could easily interrogate, reject the stereotypical societal role that has been entrusted on them for ages.

In one of his letter from Europe, Rabindranath wonderfully drew the differences between European women and Indian women. He wrote "they are not confined to the inner chambers of the house. They meet friends. They listen and voice their opinions if there is a discussion among their relations on an elevated subject. They can grasp how intelligent people view a thing from many different angles and many different points of view. So if a topic comes up they don't ask childish questions, nor do they stare in bewilderment. They can hold relaxed conversation with their friends, they are not grim or engulfed in shame at gatherings, they don't get improperly close with their acquaintances, nor are they unsociably distant. They are cheerful and content in society." ('Letters from an Expatriate in Europe, 2014. 7th letter'). Tagore was highly influenced by the liberated condition of European women and the education of women in England and entire continent. Though, Ishwar Chandra Vidya Sagar initiated the women education movement but it is to be remembered that women education had not gain social acceptance at that time when Rabindranath started raising his views about women education and emancipation. Tagore practiced in his life what he believed and preached about women education and emancipation. In his numerous writings "Tagore has made an attempt to expose his female protagonists from the kitchen to the vaster world." (Feminism and Rabindranath – A brief discussion through *The Wife's Letter*, 2014: 63.) "Influenced by the women emancipation; he always tried to uplift the social condition of women which he has focused in his writings." (Feminism and Rabindranath – A brief discussion through *The Wife's Letter*. 2014: 64) Throughout his life, Tagore in his writings, always raised voiced against the existing social evils which are the greatest obstacles in the way of women emancipation and education. Himself breaking the boundaries he had built girls hostel to give equal space to women which had been a rare phenomenon in the Indian society.

The Legacy: The reason behind Tagore's progressive spirit and cross cultural perspectives has been wonderfully pointed out by Chidananda Dasgupta in his book *The Cinema of Satyajit Ray*.

"The formidable Tagore clan had a strong international awareness...Despite the restrictions of foreign rule and the slowness of late nineteenth and early twentieth century communications, the

Tagores treated the world as their very own oyster. Little happened in international culture that they were not aware of, and not in contact with. To this was added all- India awareness. Rabindranath attracted number of painters, musicians and writers from various parts of the country; for his own songs, he freely borrowed melodies and stylistic elements from Carnatic music. Jyotirindranath translated from Marathi as much as he did from French". (Dasgupta 2001:12).

The same has been echoed by Subrata Dasgupta. Dasgupta in his book *The Bengal Renaissance* wrote "BY BIRTH AND CIRCUMSTANCE, RABINDRANATH TAGORE (1861-1941) could hardly avoid a cross – cultural heritage. It came from being Tagore." (Dasgupta. 2010: 201) Being a 'Tagore' he was destined to born and brought up amidst rare talents of Tagore household, where women got the opportunity of education which was absolutely unimaginable at that time. It was his destiny to become the grandson of Prince Dwarkanath Tagore and son of Maharshi Debendranath Tagore, both of them were the path finder of cross cultural heritage of Tagores'. Prince Dwarkanath Tagore, Rabindranath's grandfather was a landowner and was a successful businessman. He went to England at that time, fortunate enough to meet with Prime Minister and Queen Victoria. Apart from his business interest he was also a philanthropist and a lover of art and literature. He was also an ardent supporter of Rammohan Roy's ideology of Bhrammo Samaj. Maharshi Debendranath Tagore, father of Rabindranath Tagore, son of Prince Dwarkanath Tagore was a major figure of Brahmo Samaj, founded by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, which was also supported by his father Prince Dwarkanath Tagore. He was influenced by Upanishads and spent his life in seeking spiritualism. Maharshi Debendranath Tagore and Sarada Devi had fourteen offspring and Rabindranath was the youngest of all. His elder brother Dwijendranath Tagore was a lover of Indian philosophy and mathematics. He was the inventor of first Bengali shorthand and musical notation. (Dutta and Robinson 1995:21.) Rabindranath's second oldest brother Satyendranath Tagore was the first to get civil service. He was the one who broke the social custom and take his wife Jnananandini to England, creating a revolution. Later, with Satyendranath Rabindranath went to England. Among all the siblings, the most gifted was Jyotirindranath. He was the mentor of young Rabindranath also. Another gifted child was Rabindranath's sister Swarnakumari Devi. Almost all the Tagore's siblings were intellectually and creatively gifted. Undoubtedly they all were prodigy. Among these rare talents Tagore was born and brought up which plays an important role in shaping the young mind of Rabindranath.

Emancipated Women of Tagore's Household: Female education was given priority from the time of Dwarkanath Tagore. His elder sister Rasibilasi could read Hari Kusum Stabha. Dwarkanath's wife Digambari Devi showed the courage to cross the threshold of Andar Mahal by attending parties conducted by her husband in the garden house at Belgachia. Tagore's wife Mrinalini Devi went to Loreto School to improve

her English and Kadambari Devi wife of Rabindranath Tagore's older brother Jyotirindranath was the first women in the clan to ride a horse in the *maidan*. The progressive Jnanadanandini wife of Satyandranath Tagore showed courage and dare to go to England in the 19th century. She was the one who went to Bombay with her husband and left the ancestral house and move to a separate residence with her husband, son and daughter giving birth to the concept of nuclear family. Chitra Deb in her book 'Women of the Tagore household' says that 'the modern way of draping the sari with the 'pallu' (end of the drape) thrown around the left shoulder in neat pleats was the result of Jnanadanandini's efforts'. Jnanadanandini's daughter Indira Devi was the first women graduate (1892) of Tagore household. It is obvious that the tremendous cultural richness and progressive cross cultural mentality had been absorbed by Rabindranath, growing within, thus forcing him to go beyond the existing tradition and social condition prevailed in the colonial Bengal. Growing in a family where female education was given priority; provide him with the insight that education is necessity for inner development as well as for the development of the social environment.

In Fiction: Giving equal place to women in his Viswabharati, Rabindranath proved to be a true advocator of Women emancipation as dreamt by Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Ishwar Chandra Vidya Sagar. Viswa Bharati has gifted us so many emancipated women for example our only women Prime Minister Late Mrs Indira Gandhi, Maharani Gayatri Devi to name a few. Being the champion of women emancipation he purposefully makes women the protagonists of his novels. The analysis of Tagore's stories, written specifically in the 20th century, confirms that in question of women emancipation and education, he was always with the enlighteners and was never influenced by the patriarchal views. As the advancement of women education begins one can notice that the age of marriage of the girls and education qualification increased with the passage of time in Tagore's story. Education had also given women protagonist the courage and become much stronger to question the established norms of the society. Not only education increased but along with the education Tagore's women characters matured with the time, seeking self identity. The heroines of the Tagore's novel which were written in the 1st part of 20th century had their education at home. For example Tagore's first novel EyeSore or A Grain of Sand (Chokher Bali) heroine Binodini did not have any formal education but her father appointed a European Governess for his daughter's up gradation and grooming. Similarly Suchorita and Lolita of Gora did not have any college education. But Tagore made Suchorita the representative of modern age women who refuse to sit idly at home but to serve the country and the people. Suchorita was the precursor who shows that women too can have political awareness and interest. She surpasses other heroines of Tagore in her keen perception, critical judgment, and liberal outlook. It was Suchorita who made Gora realized that women too have a role in the