

Dena Paona (Debits and Credits): A Critical Assessment on the Basis of Feminism

*Afrin Akter

State Aided College Teacher, Dept. of Philosophy, Joypur Panchanan Roy College

ABSTRACT

The foundation of dowry has ruined numerous existences of wonderful and young ladies in India. Rabindranath Tagore couldn't stay inactive to such ruthless happenings and he reacted furiously against the dowry organization in his short story "Debits and Credits." In this short story Tagore demonstrate a pictorial introduction of the wickedness of the society. In this paper I will focuses on the troubles of women in India who are abused oppressed and regarded as an object of ridicule and hatred in the family set up and additionally in the society. The issue featured in Tagore's short stories are for the most part joint family structure, the persecution of women, the male centric setup and the expectations and desires of women being broken by the world at large. It has been the issue of Indian history for several years yet still the solution is out of our reach. In "Debits and Credits" Nirupama is the fundamental character in the story and her dad wedded to the son of a terrific Raybahadur. Her husband knows extremely well the cruel feudal attitudes of his parents, but he leaves his defenceless spouse at their kindness. Raybahadur is so cruel and he fails call the doctor at the opportune time and Nirupama's passing is just unimportant in tear eyes. He spends a portion for the burial service as a sort of function. The story is an indication of the pathetic endowment system which is blister of our society.

Keywords: Dowry, Tyranny, Injustice, Right, Feminism

Article Publication

Published Online: 17-Jan-2021

*Author's Correspondence

Afrin Akter

State Aided College Teacher, Dept. of Philosophy, Joypur Panchanan Roy College

✉ [afrinakterasha\[at\]gmail\[dot\]com](mailto:afrinakterasha[at]gmail[dot]com)

© 2021The Authors. Published by *Research Review Journals*

This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license

(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>)

Tagore's role in the freedom of Indian women is an unequivocal one, yet he assumes an imperative part in the liberation of women particularly in Bengal. Through his productive written work of letters, short stories and essays, he uncovered the hopeless situation of women. Accordingly he campaigns for their uniformity and he has featured the situation of women who are subjected to man centric setup in the Bengal society for a few centuries. The violence, both physical and mental released against women is broadly predominant wherever regardless of caste, creed and colour. The delegate states of women nearly demoralize them such that they endure and live with it quietly. Through his stories and novels Tagore needs to sharpen public opinion, individual convictions and society's self-recognition. Women are the objective of mistreatment on numerous fronts like societal, physical, political and economic condition. Mistreatment of women is assumed that men are better than women and therefore manifestations of violence against women on different measures and degrees existed back then and such circumstance is yet prevailing in India. It surfaces as a noteworthy subject in his short stories, the issues of joint-family structures, the patriarchal setup and women's expectations and aspirations being broken by the savage society. William Radice in his Introduction to Tagore's selected short Stories states,

...we find in Tagore's stories ample evidences of his reflections on child marriage and dowry system; bigoted orthodoxy or casteism; changing landlord-tenant relations; the political frustrations of a rising educated class; the growing gulf between town and country; man's intimate relation with nature; ruinous litigation; dehumanizing poverty; cruel and corrupt officialdom. (Dominic, 2009, p-23-24)

During the nineteenth century Tagore focuses the normal individual's life and social change additionally he frequently portrays the female condition, and the the powers that abused women, with the specific affectability. Tagore through his overcome, virtuous heroines has broadcasted to the readers that this rarest inclination and energy is still in our nation despite the fact that 'Suttee' was cancelled a long time back. Tagore tells the world that Indian women are exceedingly loving, sacrificing, obedient,

accommodating, religious and kind; and they love their spouses and love their kids profoundly. The family framework in India is patriarchal and commanded by the male individual's. In early days women were sick-treated and stifled by men as a result of their custom of societal impact. Women were dealt with simply as slaves and kept in darkness and even kept from doing things independently and picking up information through instruction. They didn't have the essential opportunity to make inquiries, to express their thoughts, sentiments and feelings. They were viewed as weaker areas and denied of their rights even in the family obligations. The urgent need, subsequently, is to look for a radical change in the societal mentality towards women and to give a reasonable milieu to quickening the way toward giving equivalent status and to put a conclusion to general debasement of women. Nirmal kumar Sidhanta opines,

...the problems of the wife in a joint family, the conflict of loyalties between what is due to her husband and what she must do for her parent's family. But the conflict becomes more acute when her husband is perhaps a subordinate person, where she may even see jealousy or ill will on all sides. Numerous new relationships grow up and she has to adjust herself to these without forgetting her old ties: the relations between the wife and her husband's younger brother those between the husband's and wife's sisters, between the wives of two brothers, between the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. If she is unfortunate she may have a co-wife; if she loses her husband she may become a little better than a maid servant tolerated by her in-laws. If she has some responsibility to a brother she may find it difficult to reconcile that with what she owes to her husband's family. (Dominic, 2009, p. 31)

Women possess a noteworthy part in the aggregate populace of our nation and they are subjected to untold agonies under the attire of religion, convention and culture. In nineteenth and twentieth century's social change developments drove by great Social Reformers made ready for getting women's legitimate status in India. The societal issues pulled in the consideration of the social reformers, particularly, the conspicuous reformers like in India Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Jyoti Rao Phule of Maharashtra, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar and Periyar have contributed hugely for the liberation of women who represent half of the society. They were the first to assault on the subjugation of women in the society. During Tagore's time, the edified men like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar scrutinised the protest condition of dehumanization to which widows were subjected to the Indian family. The superstitious conviction is that educated women were oppressed to inescapable widowhood, a hindrance for the intellectual liberation of women. Tagore's vision of the feminine is uncovered through his much-debated about reaction to an address by Pandita Ramabai, you may state that the shortcoming of women is represented manly persecution; however that is certifiably not a decent rationale. Since, had people been equally strong from the very beginning, at that point how could manly quality ever enslave women in any case? Tagore considered the roles of the two genders as complimentary to each other. He states in "Woman and Home", an address amid his third visit to America in 1920-21.

If woman's nature were indistinguishable with men, if Eve were a minor redundancy of Adam, it would just offer ascent to a repetitive superfluity. Yet, that she was not all that was demonstrated by the expulsion she secured from an instant Paradise. She had the natural wisdom to understand that it was her central goal to help her mate in making Paradise of their own on earth, whose ideal she was to supply with her life, whose materials were to be delivered and assembled by her companion. From the earliest starting point of our society, women have normally acknowledged the preparation which gives to their life and to their home a soul of agreement. It is their impulse to play out their services in such a way, to the point that these, through magnificence, may be raised from the space of servitude to the domain of grace. Women have endeavoured to demonstrate that in the working up of social life they are the artists and not the artisans.

So in Tagore's works, individuals at the same time encounter the maiden, physically frail yet wealthy in her enthusiastic content and intense women. The short stories give an all encompassing perspective of the assorted variety of women characters. While Tagore has made uprising women stories like Samapti which venture marriage as a sacred bond to which women are finally to affirm, even by embarrassing their pre-marital selves if required. Thus, the convergence of class and sexual orientation are considerably more engaged in Tagore's stories. Through his short stories, Tagore has concentrated on the struggle of women in the male-ruled traditional society and wished to draw out the situation of women in the society. He has confidence in their attitudes that this story holds the mirror in which men would acknowledge themselves to change, for it is important to achieve an adjustment in a normal way. Tagore accentuates through this story that still there exists an uneven social structure and women are oppressed to an entity declining their rights and desires.

Tagore grandstands the content of a short story through its title. "Debits and Credits" includes business- an alternatives sort of business. The business includes people as merchandise. Nirupama is the only girl of Ramsundar Mitra. Nirupama implies unequalled and unmatched. By giving that name to his little girl Ramsundar Mitra makes it clear that his adoration for his little girl is unequalled and unmatched. As long as Nirupama stays with her parents she is pleasant and comfortable. In short story, "Debits and

Credits”, (1891) Tagore uncovered the unfortunate state of women through this story. Dowry is an ulcer of society and one woman passes on consistently because of endowment related issues on average in India. It is a tragic part on the general population who demands dowry and who care for the daughter-in-law well on its value. In 1961, the Dowry Prohibition Act passed by Government of India, making dowry demands in wedding arrangements unlawful. The story also mirrors the psychological desolation of the guardians who can't pay the dowry. The story is important even today since one can still hear about dowry-deaths in India.

Nirupama is the hero of this story. Prior to the marriage she lives joyfully in her home. Her father Ramsundar Mitra searches for an appropriate groom for his daughter. This circumstance is as yet prevailing in our nation in which the father of a girl is subjected to untold tragedies to fulfil the necessities of groom's side. He chooses the only son of great Raybahadur as a groom, yet they demand a gigantic dowry of rupees ten thousand and furthermore numerous extra blessings. Ramsundar knows well that it is difficult to organise the cash however he had guaranteed to pay the cash during marriage. In this short story, Nirupama's father commits the mistake here to accept Raybahadur's demand of dowry because that a large portion of groom's family considers women as money laundering machine and they never regard as human being and sometimes the brides are killed for dowry. These kinds of occurrences occur all through India. The first victim of the dowry system is the father of a girl child. The next victim is the girl herself. The ultimate outcome is the death of the girl.

Raybahadur insists that Ramsundar would pay the money.

Unless you can hand it to me now, The bridegroom will not enter this room. (Radice, 1991, P-48)

Ramsundar falls on Raybahadur's knees to permit the bridegroom into the marriage corridor. Before the marriage started, Raybahadur even undermines Nirupama and he demands the cash to solemnize the marriage function. At last, Ramsundar's ask for his acknowledged and the marriage is finished. Tagore denounces our society through this story. Raybahadur is slightest worried about Nirupama's condition and there are numerous individual like Raybahadur in India. After the marriage, Nirupama's father goes to his daughter's house but Raybahadur does not permit to meet his daughter because of father's pending payment of dowry. Nirupama's father is not treated as human being. In our culture, the relationship between the father and daughter is considered a respectful one. From this incident, Nirupama is completely upset due to Raybahadur's demand of dowry and she exhorts her father that he should come there with money.

From now onwards Nirupama turns into the point of convergence of the story. She is abused in her in-law's home. Her husband is far from home as a judge. Her mother-in-law drives the assault against her consistently. Her father-in-law is a quiet onlooker of the mistreatment. The servants act as the aids of the mistress of the house. Nirupama's change starts from the very first moment onwards. Her father frequently visits her house. But he too is abused. At the point when Ramsundar Mitra requests for Raybahadur to send his daughter alongside him, the consent is denied. The irony is that Nirupama is the daughter of Ramsundar Mitra; he has every moral right and responsibility towards his daughter. In any case, the society makes these rights and obligations unimportant the moment the girl is married. The guardians of the girl act helpless before the in laws. Maybe Tagore needs to decimate the warped structure of mental bastions.

On his each visit Ramsundar Mitra is demanded the 'owing dowry' by the Raybahadur family. At last Ramsundar Mitra decides to pitch his home to pay the balance amount of the dowry at the stage yet his children challenge it due to their duties. Meanwhile, Nirupama comes back to her father's house for a few days to console him. She discloses her father that Raybahadur expects only the money and never regards person that is more than the money. She says,

“Father, take me home for a while” (Radice, 1991, P-50)

She insisted her father that

“if you give a single paisa more to my father-in-law, you will never see me again” (Radice, 1991, P-52)

A servant informs Nirupama's mother-in-law that Ramsundar has accompanied with cash and his girl not ready to accept the balance amount. Meanwhile, “her husband had gone off a few days after their wedding to be a Deputy Magistrate in another part of the country”. Despite the fact that she falls truly sick she thinks that it's hard to have a normal life with regular intake of food. At the point when her ailment deteriorated, at long last Nirupama tells unassumingly,

“Let me see my father and brother just once, Mother”. (Radice, 1991, P-53)

From the following day onwards the abuse takes more serious turn and the outcome is Nirupama dies of hunger and ill-health.

She now fell seriously ill. But this was not wholly her mother-in-law's fault. She herself had neglected her health dreadfully. On chilly autumn nights she lay with her head near the open door, and she wore no extra clothes during the winter. She ate irregularly. The servants would sometimes forget to bring her any food: she would not then say anything to remind them. She was forming a fixed belief that she was herself a servant in the household, dependent on the favours of her master and mistress. Finally Nirupama died of hunger and torture. (Radice, 1991, p.53)

Finally she dies.

The news isn't passed her dad. Finally she is proclaimed dead at night. These kinds of incidents occur all through India. A dowry killing occurs when another spouse is killed by her husband or in-laws if they are troubled with her, as opposed to sending her back to her parents, which would force the in laws to return the dowry to the bride's parents. Insight in India demonstrate that 90% of such killed brides educated, 30% were graduates, and 20% were women who worked outside home and contributed to the family financially. In the story, Nirupama's husband is working outside after marriage. He knows very well about his grandfather's character of demanding dowry but he leaves his wife along with his grandfather and he works outside. Finally, his wife declared dead. Even though she created extreme fever they didn't call the doctor at the correct time for treatment of Nirupama. After death Raybahadur celebrates the function of funeral in a grand manner. The funeral rites are performed with pomp. Those individuals who come to mourn with Raybahadur give long depictions of the eminence of the memorial service. The end of the story, Nirupama's husband sends a letter to grandma that he has made all important course of action for his wife and sends his wife quickly. The grandmother informs him the passing of Nirupama and answer for his letter that: "Dear son, we have secured another girl for you, so please take leave soon and come home." This time the dowry is 20,000 rupees, cash in hand. (Dominic, 2009 p-42)

The grandma discloses to him that she has orchestrated a marriage soon after the destruction of Nirupama and this short story uncovers the situation of women who are truly sold in the market of marriage for which the groom claims the ransom from the bride's parents. Nirupama's husband knows especially well the cruel feudal attitudes of his parents, yet he leaves his vulnerable wife at their kindness. Raybahadur substantiate himself inhuman that he has treated Nirupama in materialistic point of view to spinoff money from her. In this way, the women of Tagore are the delegates of the entire Diasporas of Indian woman of medieval period up to twentieth century. The birth of a girl child is unwelcome, her marriage a load and her widowhood ominous. Endeavour to murder young babies during childbirth were not surprising. Here exceptional say ought to be made about the socio-cultural conditions that have delivered such women like Kadambini and Mahamaya, Anne Beasant of Ireland, born in the nineteenth century and Gurjada Apparao's Buchamma of India are the results of their respective socio-cultural conditions. Thus, here it is pertinent to study the socio-cultural conditions that shaped the lives of the women in Tagore's short stories.

To conclude I would like to say that, as an inventive essayist, the Bengali bard Tagore uncovered the pitiful states of Indian women to the world. In this paper, women are being mistreated because of family issues and dowry system. Tagore demonstrates the world the pitiful states of women through this short story. In short story, "Debits and Credits" Nirupama is mistreated and hates to live in father-in-law's home on account of Raybahadur's affections of money dowry after the marriage. Though Nirupama's father is unable to pay the dowry he tries to pay he takes more efforts to fulfil the demand. Finally Nirupama dies without any care at her father-in-law's home. She is not treated as a human being. Raybahadur's wife arranges another marriage for her grandson with huge amount of dowry. Tagore appears through his stories the quandary of the young brides in the joint families of Bengal. He brings out through his works the struggles of women for their human dignity and identity in an emphatic way.

References

- [1]. Dominic. K.V, "Pathos in the Short Stories of Rabindranath Tagore", New Delhi, Sarup Book Publishers Pvt. Lid, 2009.
- [2]. Rabindranath Tagore: Selected Short Stories, (trans. by William Radice), 1991, Penguin UK.
- [3]. Sidhanta, Nirmalkumar. "Rabindranath's Short Stories." Rabindranath Tagore: 1861-1961: A Centenary Volume. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1961.