

## Scripting of a 'New Woman': Rabindranath Tagore's *Jogajog*

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### Abstract:

There has been a whole range of both male and female writers who have advocated the cause of women and portrayed the diverse shades of their personality in inventive works. Rabindranath Tagore has been the most countless-minded personality of modern India. He was the first writer to give equal or perhaps more place to women in his writings. The wave of new woman ideology was not only limited to the Western world. It affected women around the world and even men who were sensitive to women's issues. Rabindranath Tagore was a personality who clearly dealt with issues like women's will, their rights and freedoms in his novels. The approach adopted in the present study is not a follow-up to Western feminist ideas, but a synthesis of the concepts available within the Indian sociological system. In India, feminism is a debatable concept. Indian feminist researchers or women studies researchers have not been able to define what Indian feminism exactly is? Indian feminists are not very comfortable in creating a strict definition of theories such as writing and Western feminism. He was a personality who dealt with issues such as women's will, their rights and freedoms clearly in his novels. In Tagore's narrative, there is a reflection of courageous women in women. One can call them the 'New Women'.

**Keywords:** New Woman, Feminine, Indian Society, Marriage and Family, Man-Woman Relationship, Sexuality

### Introduction:

Literature reflects the ever-changing reality of life. Society and creative sensibility of the writers come into collective play to present an authentic picture of social, cultural, economic and psychological set-ups of the inhabitants of any place and era. In *'The Image of Woman in Indian Literature'*, Yamuna Raja Raostated, "Literature can have the breadth and throb of life only when it keeps pace with changing image of the women." (09) The social set-up of any society is an important aspect that allows or inhibits participation in the process of creation of the image. Human history is full of events, ideas and movements which have triggered momentary or long-lasting effects on the fate of both dominant as well as subjugated sections.

Rabindranath Tagore is of perennial interest. He had the philosophy which establishes the unity of the best of the East and the West through the inter-mingling of separate cultures, though he was a staunch anti-imperialist. The brilliant, artistic capacity of his conscious mind emerges out of his observations of social, political, ethical, cultural and traditional life of India. The foregrounding of the rites and rituals of Bengali people, social orthodox customs and traditional beliefs of domesticity; intellectual and cultural awakening, political awareness of women, the identity of the nation as a mother figure and almost all vital issues form the prominent themes in the whole corpus of Tagore's writings. We can grasp in his fictions the canons of traditions, fundamentals of history of Indian life as well as moral and psychological conflicts of human beings. It was his colonial experience that incorporates the forte of his essential social thoughts. The gender question regarding women's pains and plight in societies recurrently comes in his short-stories and novels. And at the heart of gender roles lies the problematic patriarchy. Throughout his life he sees patriarchy as a discourse of manipulation, of hegemony and male superiority that holds society in a set of values. Added to his feminist outlook is a repulsion against patriarchal hegemonic culture that for a long time manipulated liberal individual women from raising discordant voice, gained triumphs over women and marked the domestic sphere as the proper place for woman and at the same time convinced the society of female inferiority that inflicted the mind of woman. To this extent, Rabindranath opined that man has a dichotomy within and without, because he expects woman as a wife or mother figure (therefore object of love or worship), while at the same time dominates her to prove his authority. The very exposure of male hegemonic culture, as manifested in Tagore's gender-specific fictions, shows that patriarchy and the identity politics of male-female categories are largely swayed by society's materialistic ends. Tagore ventured towards the truth of 'women's stature in society' that M. K. Naik said "*Tagore's insight into the feminine mind*"— the mind that tends to develop in the face of apprehension and insecurity. Rabindranath portrayed the revolting women's vitality and desires roused from her sex feelings in delineating the widows who dare to step out of domestic confinement. In Tagore's works we see that both home and the outside world are pervaded with the colonial idea of domination which makes the colonized men provocative agents for manipulating female subjects within domestic world. Tagore hinted that this was instrumental in bringing an effacement of women from their very beings, thereby resulting in repulsion and discontent which are necessitated the formation of female identity and individuality — the quality of the New woman. This would shake the conventional norms, codes and conducts of male-dominated limited world of female. The irresistible voice of the spirited, desiring woman became demanding and rebellious, and this fact finds expression in his novels. Filled with the claims for equanimity, equality and sexual freedom, it awakens the marginalized sections of women, who finally discover an epiphany about them. Nevertheless, the feelings of nationhood and political awareness of

women are the inevitable result of female's contact with education, rights as well as other spheres of knowledge.

It is on the gender question that Rabindranath times and again mentions the process of formation of female psyche, the contradictory attitudes of men and woman, conjugal problems and above all lack of balance in society in the context of British colonialism. Though such important issues as Widow-remarriage, banning of *suttee*, and right for female education were implemented during the pre-independent colonial period, the prevalent dominating culture opened the way to the prevailing notion of male knowledge and superiority through the discourse of western superiority. The victims in most of the cases are women who exist with their phallogocentric identity, especially in the domestic world. The advent of the enlightenment period provided women with the scope for knowing the world, realizing their rights and testing their inner rational power through the defiance of conventional codes. It is through this newly awakened group that the new age for the New Woman came. While in *Chokher Bali*, Rabindranath oscillates between traditionality and bold unconventionality, the heroine Binodini internalizes her sex-feelings as a way of individuation, *Ghare Baire* appears as the account of Bimala's psycho-physical needs which enables her to assert her value, transcending the traditional domestic boundary. In this novel the woman in question identifies herself with nationhood, though here patriarchy gains a triumph with the pitfalls of Bimala's 'unsolicited empowerment'. And, finally, *Jogajog* is also a familiar but important story of a married woman Kumudini's struggle for self-actualization against the tortures of her effeminate husband, Madhusudan. Here, Tagore's evolving attitude towards the role of gender in the shaping of public and private history is clearly shown. Santosh Chakrabarti in *The Gender Question in Tagore's Last Novels* opined thus: "*Never before does a Tagore heroine make bold to flee from the institutional bond of home (in-laws) in freedom and being. This representation of a housewife taking a desperate step which drew vehement criticism from the conservative section of society is a bold construct that had more to do with the discovery in the West of the dignity of woman as woman irrespective of her values in deferent roles— mother, daughter, wife.*" (Chakrabarti, 61)

### **Patriarchal Supremacy in Conjugal Life and Kumudini's Femininity:**

Tagore showed a remarkable understanding of women's psyche and advocated for the greater freedom and decision-making power for women in the family and the larger society. Till then men solely occupied the domain of political activity, but in fighting against the British domination in the pre-independent period they got reflected through the 'public mirror'. In the book, *Remembering Rabindranath Tagore*, Radha Chakrabarty in the essay, "*The Inside Story*": *Gender and Modernity in Chokher Bali* opined thus: "*At every stage of Tagore's attempts to redefine the modern, gender forms a crucial constitutive category. To the ruptures already implicit in the conventional view of modernity— between old and new, West and non-West,*

*modernization and modernism— gender adds another vital dimension.... when he speaks of the emergent new social order in 'The Condolence Meeting', he insists: "Especially since women have no place in our outer society, our social life itself is seriously incomplete".* (Radha, 9-10). According to William Radice, Tagore's message in *Jogajog* is that of protest against the commodity-like treatment meted out to married women and of the necessity of wooing their particular sensibilities. '*Jogajog*' tells the story of one average but independent woman, nurtured in a traditional decaying aristocratic family— the Chatterjees, and her intrinsic rebellion against the forces of repression that are the forces of her husband's bourgeois authority. Many elements of her life are juxtaposed in order to create a picture of selfhood and identity of Kumudini. The impetus, which the system of male dominating-culture gives to the institution of patriarchy, is manifested by the go-getter, coarse and materialistic husband Madhusudan, who is swayed by his interests in colonial modernity that is invested with arrogance and pride, not by truth and feelings. As we see at the very first of the novel, Kumudini, brought up within the protective walls of her brother's care and love in a decaying aristocratic family and blindly devoted to her deity, could not imagine the unremarkable space of conjugality beyond her romantic worship to her deity until she got married. She is tender-hearted, inexperienced and tradition-bound. The instincts she possesses are the source of her natural sweetness and inner-will which are to be nurtured in a wholesome atmosphere of mind. The experience in her brother's house provides her with little bitter feeling rather than tenderness, serenity etc. But it was not the littleness of her infamous married-life, but the incarcerated existence of her narrow conjugal life that, within a short time, makes her confront the miserable plight of a married woman weighed down by male-expectations. A conflict of values and patterns of behaviour that ensues in *Relationships* is not the result of the mismatch between Kumudini and her husband Madhusudan, but the mismatch between male domination and female subordination in the domestic world. It is a kind of cold relationship, which Tagore presented in the 'pigeon- hawk' imagery: "As a she-pigeon behaves seeing the shadow of a hawk from the sky, Kumu's heart seemed to shiver in the same manner. Her cold palm was sweating and her face turned colourless." (Tagore, 99).

As it is, in a patriarchal society a man's identity exists with an assumed superiority, for which he can stoop to any level of whims, as manifested in the case of Kumudini's insolent husband, Madhusudan. Surprisingly, the aggressiveness endowed with these occasional whims makes him indulge into lowliness of voice. This lowliness of arrogance is equally harmful for a married woman like Kumudini. And Kumudini refuses to accept the servile status, because her study of Sanskrit classics and epics has taught her the idea of equality. Her strength lies in the fact that she optimistically faces the problematic situations, and it is the secret of her vitality. Indira Chatterjee said about the novel that, "*The focal point of 'Jogajog' is the utter helplessness of woman not only in Hindu social life but also in the family of which she is supposed to be the mistress according to the scriptural text.*" (Chatterjee, 84) Kumudini, the bride of Madhusudan, is not yet grown

conscious of her inner self and womanliness. But the moment she becomes aware of her husband's discordant voice as well as whims and authoritarian tendencies, she tends to erase the long-cherished god-like image of her husband by being responsive, dispassionate and somewhat solipsistic. The novel records such responses of an independent mind whose protests against the indignity of a woman tied to conjugal bed show the rebellion against the frustrations of domesticity. The narrator says: "*Does the call that she accepted as divine consist in this unholiness, this internal unchastity? Has the god enticed the victim because he wants woman sacrifice; will he take an offering of the lump of flesh that is the body which is bereft of the mind? Today the feelings of devotion could not be aroused by any means. So long Kumudini has repeatedly said, You bear with me—today this rebel's mind says, How can I tolerate you?*" (Tagore, 177) It is not her rebellion against her deity; instead it is against the nurturing image of her husband, to whom she is nothing but 'another item in the inventory of his possessions'. Kumudini is the *Borobou* of the Ghosal family, but this high position does not mean anything to her, only because she wants both sexual freedom and economic security. Kumudini's solipsistic attitude is not negative here; rather it becomes necessary for her development under the painful experience of the domestic world. And this consciousness for inner self leads her towards individuation—the quality of a 'New Woman' who will wage war against the practice of female subjugation, psychological and moral defeat as well as the seemingly false value-system beneath patriarchal domination. Thus, she is inculcated with the idea of womanhood with all its claims for virtues, individual freedom and self-determination. The stranglehold of patriarchy inspired by her insensitive husband Madhusudan appears to manipulate her 'hurt pride' in order to confine her sensibilities within domesticity. Kumudini opposes this *zenana* life by accelerating the growth of her conscious mind, because the night of consummation confronts her to some hard truths, which she cannot approve of. Though it is the first ordeal, the way it appears in her life she cannot but stick to essential values of her very being. As for her whimsical husband Madhusudan, he takes her as a symbol of his victory in the marriage market. So he sometimes treats her tenderly and sometimes bitterly, but not sympathetically; the sole purpose is to get psycho-physical needs at the cost of force. All through her life Kumudini struggles for social acceptability and equality of man and woman; it is not that she makes her resolutions only to break them. It is the other way round. She leaves her husband's household and goes to her brother, Bipradas. When he asks her whether she makes her resolution not to return to Madhusudan, she replies stridently, "*I've finished considering, so my mind's completely at rest today. I felt as though I'm here just as I was before—as if everything in between was a dream.*" (Tagore, 246) The call for womanliness is evident here, as she embellishes her psyche with the support of the compassionate Moti's mother (Nistarini) and her husband Nabin. Similarly when Moti's mother, at the moment of Kumudini's leaving, Madhusudan, asks if she has decided not to come back to Madhusudan, Kumudini remarks—"*The world is so vast, I'll find shelter in some corner of it. Life takes so much away*

*from us, but something remains to the end.” (Tagore, 248) By her ultimate return, the outcome of her unwanted pregnancy, her relationship with Madhusudan is renewed but remains an example of her attempt for the betterment of female position in society as opposed to the unremarkable space of conjugality. Towards the end she says to her brother: “What’s the point of this mockery? I’ll suffer alone all the punishment dealt out by society, while they won’t suffer the least strain. But one day, I’ll give them their freedom; I’ll be free as well. I’ll come away, you see. I shan’t live a lie in the midst of lies. I’m their Barobou: does that mean anything, if I’m not Kumu?” (Tagore, 253)*

These are her bold assertions, which occupy the space of her rational mind, body and soul. Mohammed A. Quayum in *Paradisiacal Imagination: Rabindranath Tagore’s Visvovod or Vision of Non-National Neo-Universalism* observed thus: *“For its absence of a moral centre this civilization is, to Tagore, a adharmā, in which as he explains using a quote from Upanishads, ‘man prospers and gains what appear desirable, conquers enemies, but perishes at the root. It both shoots out of and caters to the baser instinct of the individual and has nothing to do with that innate spiritual power that embodies us and brings us together as one large family living in the reality and unity of one ineffable God’.* (Quayum, 3) It is the same condition from which one like Kumudini tries to be free, and she does it not by submission, but by re-appropriation of female dignity and sexual freedom. The man of baser instinct here is her husband, Madhusudan whose notion of women is limited to his feudal-power that is otherwise locked in his interest in profit-making both in business and in the domestic sphere. This materialistic person may claim even his wife to be his property, but the breaths she takes for living cannot be claimed by the irritating Madhusudan as his own property, as he claimed everything in the household, for examples her sapphire ring, her brother’s *esraj* etc., as his. It is because the abstract qualities of life such as love, sympathy, feelings of woman and man are of less value to him. The conception of giving her a forced motherhood that would make her capitulate to his command is not just intended to prevent an estranged wife, but to narrow down her stature with abuses. Tagore here hints that the conception of the maternal identity necessitates Madhusudan’s thinking of a child as an instrument of bringing the unwilling Kumudini to conjugal bondage. There is no denying the fact that she acknowledges a married woman’s compulsive bond to her husband, maintains her wifely devotion; but she refuses to internalise the rules of man’s freedom and woman’s bondage when she is both physically and economically humiliated. There is no sex-love relation among them; there is only hunger for flesh and the opposing binary of the dominant and the victim. As it is, other female characters such as Moti’s mother (Nistarini), the widow Shyamasundari watch over the situation Kumudini faces in her husband’s household and try to protest against the bondage of domesticity in their own ways. In ‘Poems’ Tagore redefines women in these lines: *“Woman, the sin has stripped you naked, the curse has washed you pure.... You are young as the new born flowers and old as the hills.”* (Ray, 143) When the question of scriptures comes and Moti’s mother says that these

are not written for a virgin, Kumudini protests against the scripture saying: *“Today I’ve learnt that in the world love is only a bonus. You have got to set sail in the world’s sea without it, clinging on simply to dharma. If dharma does not blossom in flowers or fruit, may it at least become dry wood to keep us afloat.”* (Tagore,191) Her refusals to accept the painful conjugal relation with her husband and withdrawals from his possessive interests come in the opposite direction of her husband’s autonomy. In her efforts to break the codes of patriarchy, she finds an opportunity for testing her womanliness and realizing her rights.

### **Reading of Power and Knowledge: Kumudini’s Sufferings and Self-Evolution:**

The domestic practice of women’s subordination, which appears as an occasion of their bondage and oppression, is actually rooted in male *will-to-power*. In the novel Kumudini’s husband, Madhusudan becomes an agent of this dominating culture of patriarchy. His exercising of power is many-sided and it is obvious that his understanding of, and interest in, materialistic ends are his will-to-power. He has not only a bourgeois social position that is locked in profit-making tendency, but he seems to have power in knowledge of other familial, traditional matters, his business and education. So, the social knowledge of Madhusudan is the source of his actions that hold a kind of authority, under which the patient woman Kumudini suffers her subjectivity. What is interesting here is that the man goes to the extent of holding his conjugal relationship with her in a set of values, which are otherwise false. It is to keep up the order of woman’s submission to man and man’s expectations from woman, which is manifested in this cold-relationship of Madhusudan and Kumudini. The husband takes his male-identity with all its claims for sex-hunger, mastery etc. The assumption that his identification of the wife as a devoted slave is justified provides him with a notion of power. Clearly, he tends to define the rules of domesticity for her, singles out what is to be accepted as normal and what is to be rejected. And if Kumudini resists the rules, she would be excluded from social relations. This regulation and exclusion are the inevitable outcomes of his will-to-power as well as assumed authority. Moti’s mother Nistarini, thus, questions the binary between what is normal and what is not, when she says in her mind: *“When a date was set for the Phulshajya, that was when it took place, because the Phulshajya held no meaning for us, it was just a game. Now Kumudini’s Phulshajya was only a day away—yet for such a girl, what a torment it would be! The Barthakur was still a stranger to her; it takes a long time to establish intimacy. How would he touch her? How could this girl bear such indignity? It had taken the Barthakur to gain his reaches; couldn’t he wait a little to gain a heart.”* (Tagore, 99)

There is no denying the fact that this manipulation of the female-self of Kumudini by the go-getter Madhusudan is part and parcel of the real effect of the real power. But, basically, the real power is his forceful sex-hunger, whereas the real effect is her pregnancy which would retain his lineage. Therefore, this power or authority associated with his phallogocentric identity is an expression of his knowledge of traditional and

cultural aspects resulting in the birth of his child that would ensure his powerful position in society. Likewise, colonial modernity, of which he is a product, only offers him pride, arrogance by which he dominates in his conjugal and familial relationship. Here, this superior status of colonial education is the source of knowing and regulating people who are less educated or irrational. His autonomy in the Ghosal family is derived from his materialistic knowledge — the result of a colonial project, which is one of the powerful discourses. Added to it, Kumudini's sexual and moral bondage to him in her unguarded married life is in keeping with the existing social culture which expects that a married woman should cultivate the qualities such as extreme loyalty, devotion, subjectivity and lowliness. So the hegemonic practice of society, as manifested in the Madhusudan-Kumudini conjugal relationships, is based on male will-to-power and knowledge. Besides, the dichotomy is very much present in Madhusudan Ghosal whose 'power of thought' is actually his authoritarian coercive interest associated with his male identity. On the other hand, his 'power of imagination' manifests itself in the scheme of possessing his wife and fulfilling his psycho-physical needs. The more he is swayed by his reason and his materialistic bourgeois identity, the more he retreats from true human feelings needed to establish a sympathetic relationship. It is as true of social relationships as of his domestic or conjugal relationship. Lastly, this exertion of power and knowledge by Madhusudan is so dominating a discourse that it cannot escape opposition from its subject i.e. Kumudini on whom it is exercised. Similarly, the strong opposition to this will-to-power discourse is made possible through her growing consciousness of womanhood. The suffering and painful woman, Kumudini, in the face of her husband's forceful regulation of her into the limited space of conjugality, becomes dispassionate as well as disinterested in her conjugal relationship with Madhusudan not only for her abiding aristocratic 'hurt-pride', but also for her disillusionment of the religion of husband-worship. Utterly, Kumudini not only executed to find a new creed of self-individuation through the silent protest against male standardisation of society, but prevails to explore the strength of her inner wills and tries to come to terms with her own desire—the desire of rising above the low status of a confined slave also, refuses to be a subject to her husband's will-to-power policy, questions the position of a married woman in her husband's house with her own idolon, and refuses to fall into the trap of conjugal relationship any more: "*What do you mean by the household, sister? The house, its possessions, its inhabitants? I would be ashamed to say that I have a right to them. I've lost my right to the home; does it suit me now to hanker after those outward things?*" (Tagore, 205) Indeed, she does experience a wistful thinking when she becomes seditious in her effort not to yield to her husband's carnal desire (his power) any longer, because it is not only a woman's indignity, but also her self-effacement from the very being.

The evolutionary progress of a female psyche can be treated as the process of the development of womanhood, not as a different category, but as a homogeneous counterpart of human life. Man and woman

as a whole constitute the narrative of human life as well as the rational foundation of a society. And if one part (the woman) of it lacks social acceptability, the other part (the man) dominates over the former, and then the society suffers imbalances though Kumudini's the self-evolution and her inherent qualities of a desiring woman manifest themselves through her confrontations with several trying situations as Kumudini asserts her femininity and actualizes herself by self-evolution through the test of virtues as well as faults. It is by her observations of the natural surroundings within which she was brought up, the contrast between tenderness and coarseness, various people's attitudes, show of pomp and pretence, and sexual and moral frustrations of domesticity that she evaluates her 'self'. The concept of a wife being the goddess Lakshmi as a stereotypical code of social, domestic life has been continuing for a long time. This image of a wife (not of a woman as individual being) as the source of beauty, fortune and pure love becomes inconsistent with the treatment meted out to her in a narrow domesticity. Similarly, Kumudini is conceived of by her husband as the object of his fortune. But it is at odds with the state of her confinement, which is abandonment for her. As soon as she enters into married life, the dystopian world of her conjugal unremarkable space claims total submission from her, leaving no room for nurturing her sweetness as well as likes and dislikes. They are the very opposites; and though Kumudini at first remains silent, gradually becomes disinterested in her husband's interests and passively waits for the moment of freedom to come. Her stand-off is determined by his harsh treatment of her, when she tells Moti's mother: "*See, sister, I came to give myself up to him, but he did not allow me in any way. Let me remain with the maid-servant. He will not get me.*" (Tagore, 182) A married woman's compulsion to accept the social, domestic conventions or to surrender to the demands of her peremptory husband is not an impediment to her individualism which is the marker of femininity. Instead, it is through such conditions that she emerges victorious in a psychological journey. Kumudini does so. "*Her silent revolt against the authoritarian hegemony of her husband and the subversion of her independent identity and rightful status of equality takes the form of self-ostracism.*" (Chakrabarti, 22). In what follows she experiences that she is not mentally prepared and she needs some time; but she is not given a chance, and she has to bear the indignity of all-consuming, harmful hunger of her husband. Yet, this is the night of consummation after marriage; the rest of the ignominy comes through the loss of self-esteem in the household of Madhusudan. Then, she is convinced of her inner nature that not only seeks its hiding place within her but also forms 'magical rays' in order to guide her. Kumudini's womanliness calls for fruitful actions. It appears as a violation of the violence represented by patriarchal domination over women. But it is not only the outward domination but also inward oppression under which she succumbs and necessitates the creation of the individual self. The individuality is the result of her self-consciousness which gives her a psychical space and seems to alleviate the abuses inflicted on her. At this very moment, all conformity to traditions as well as moral bondage becomes as absurd as indulgence into silence because she is pitched to every defeating

situation; and it requires participation in the formation of a sort of rebellious voice and finally manages to start her self-evolution which results into restructuring of her womanhood. Besides, the quest for emancipation for a seditious, rational woman is a religious quest with womanhood or selfhood being the altar of worship and there she needs no God in order to express herself. This is true to Kumudini's psychical development. Her loyalty to her husband Madhusudan is not unquestionable, but what are more questionable are his boundless expectations from her, which she cannot fulfill. This is similar to Mira Bai's attempts to get rid of all fears and tortures of her in-laws through her songs devoted to Lord Krishna. But Mira was a silent sufferer, who protested, through her songs, against the injustices and imbalances, whereas Kumudini embraced various forms of protest against the injustices, in spite of being a mere housewife. This is where her vitality lies. The wifely devotion she has for her husband is not false; instead there is no scope for her to nurture this quality in her heart, because there is no love in her domestic relationship. As she grows repulsive with the bitter memories of conjugality, she realises how her husband forced her to take on a maternal identity immediately after his marriage with her. And obviously she finds that this idea of motherhood is non-existent for a non-entity like her; and if existent it is equally unguarded and insecure. It is not surprising that the birth of her son, Abinash Ghosal, the scion of the family is the externalisation of her sexual bondage to her husband. But this is the unwanted tragedy against which she moulds her personality even from the distant periphery of her existence. Kumudini is predominantly entangled in a conflict between her image of her husband as a godly figure and her later discovery of him as a crude, coarse and irritating man. She even goes to the extent of considering her inability to submit herself to her husband as a wifely sin; then came to ask forgiveness of him. This is also true when she vehemently says to herself, "*It's not true that I don't love my husband because he is old — shame, shame! This is to talk like vulgar women*". (Tagore, 97) So, we see that every occasional thought makes her ponder over the reality of life. All through these events, she ventures toward self-determination which is necessary to deal with extreme contrasts of life such as violence and tenderness, sophistication and simplicity, hunger and love. There is no denying the fact that the moments she is more silent, she is more critical of the littleness of female social position and determined to the assertion of fundamental value of womanhood.

### **Postcolonial Reading of *Self and Other*: Tagore's recreation of a 'New Woman':**

In *Jogajog*, Kumudini, the prototype of marginalised section of women of society, is like Edward Said *Orientalists*, always on the verge of being categorised as inferior (hence irrational) by her husband who is not only an agent of dominating culture, but also a representative of British colonial project, himself being a bourgeois materialistic man. It is not the heroine with heroic qualities but a woman that always lurks in her; and being a woman of simple interests, perhaps, she is placed in a category named 'female'. Thus, the way

of representing the woman, not as an individual being with specific human feelings, is not only political manipulation but also the typology of male as *self* and female as *other*. It can be said, here, that in so far as the male regards himself as superior to the female in rational political and cultural knowledge, he assumes the notion that he has access to all fundamental moral values from which society can benefit. The sole purpose is to level him as *self*, therefore enlightened and knowledgeable, and her as the subject of his domination as well as representation, therefore *other*. But this very otherness is associated with female not because she is prone to bodily desires, but because she can demand her narrative to be heard, as exemplified in the case of Kumudini. Kumudini's husband, Madhusudan tends to present himself as her lord and master, thereby reducing her to his subjectivity without keeping the voices of her alive. This (mis)representation of women with binary oppositions of superiority and inferiority is part and parcel of the project of this manipulator of patriarchal society: *"I've suddenly realized that I am not what I'd thought myself to be all these years. I'd arranged everything tidily in my mind and come here quite confidently. When my brother hesitated, it was I who pushed ahead on a new path. But I can't find that person, the one who set out so confidently, anywhere today."* (Tagore, 186) On account of her painful experience in domestic, conjugal relationship with her husband, she generalises the fact that man exercises his domination woman with the instrument of dominating culture, and in general with a sense of knowing women as a disempowered group. Thus, Kumudini is mostly a stereotype whether seeing as the Hindu goddess *Lakshmi* or as a being of *andarmahal* created by Madhusudan's male fantasy and desire. The sense of his own imperfections only enables him to make use of his male identity in so far as he claims rational, scientific knowledge. When in the episode of cardamom sweets given to her by Nistarini's son Hablu, he asks her from where the packet comes and she refuses to tell by saying, 'that's my secret'; he grows harsh and retorts by saying, "These are your Nurnagar airs, learned at your brother's school". Henceforth her words - "I was certain that whatever one's husband is, good or bad, he's just the occasion for proving the glory of the wife's chaste devotion" indicate a woman or wife's subjectivity under the husband's colonial project.

Tagore's emerging 'new woman' is purely contemplative about her predicament and chooses to protest and fight against the accepted traditional norms being a rebellious woman who possesses within her soul *life-force*. Individuality is associated with personality as well as selfhood, and this is a kind of inner development towards individuation. What is fundamental here is a resistant theory—the process of denying conformity to dominating culture. And this resistance also works in a woman's psyche whose self-actualization has already begun, as in the case of Kumudini. The rhetoric of male 'superiority' and female 'inferiority' was shaken to the core as soon as a type of enlightenment came in the form of woman breaking the domestic boundaries and participating in politics. Kumudini's individualism is rooted in her silent revolt rather than a physical one; the medium of this revolt is, perhaps, self expression in various moments of sufferings. Rebellion is in

her blood and it goes to the extent of shattering all her beliefs. So Kumudini checks herself as she grows to maturity from the position of a mere housewife. Towards the end talking to her brother that when her child will be born, she will hand it to her husband, she clarifies her stand thus: “*When a person wants to be free, nothing can stop her. I’m your sister, Dada, I want freedom. One day when the bond snaps, Ma will bless me: I can assure you of that.*” (Tagore, 252).

### Conclusion:

To sum up, we can undoubtedly assert that Tagore’s woman is not passive character; she stands for justice and truth and if she makes a mistake she feels and tries to rectify it. Bina Biswas remarks in this regard, “*Tagore’s heroines and his feminism stance did not bring forth any cultural and social revolution in the society but it successfully stirred the thought process of the elitist society*” (188). Tagore’s heroine can outdo his hero even in the declaration of love. The women of Tagore’s narrative fall prey to situations and suffers a lot but once they realise their mistake, she takes no time to fix it. The unique imaginative power of Tagore’s New Woman, Kumudini, is a touchstone of sorts to humanity. The women of Tagore’s narrative are not ready to accept any fear or bondage. They are courageous like rebellious like Kumudini in *Jogajog* who has the reasoning mind and want to keep her heads held high in dignity. She is more educated and even more rebellious but the woman herself is wary of shedding off the traditional values which form part of her inherited consciousness. Likewise, through Kumudini-Madhusudan’s conjugal relationship, we see that human relationships are based at bottom on mutual understanding, equality of living and a simple faith in humanity. No binary oppositions, no dominating culture and no imaginary moral right can do well to human relationships, and they must not be safeguarded, as a sound relationship in a good society exists beyond such things. True Relationships are real *Jogajog* from heart to heart, and when applied to man and wife, its success depends upon the efficacy of equality as well as the fundamental value of empowerment of women. It involves a real effort for assessing the feelings and impulses of every individual with equal importance. Though Tagore decodes Kumudini’s feelings and emotional traumas in different ways and from various perspectives, but his recreation of Kumudini as a ‘New Woman’ demonstrates that a woman can have knowledge, rational power if she is allowed to grow in a wholesome atmosphere filled with love and care. It justifies as much of any woman as of Kumudini who learns how to reason out in the face of vehement impediments. Though Kumudini-Madhusudan conjugality finally reaches Kumudini’s ultimate surrender owing to her pregnancy, it cannot be termed as bondage. With her experience this passionate woman actualizes her ‘self’ with a new promise leading to emancipation.

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