

THE 'NEW WOMEN' OF THE TAGOREMÉNAGE- BREAKING STEREOTYPES AND A PROLEGOMENA TO HIS LITERATURE ON WOMEN

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Abstract

Kaviguru Rabindranath Tagore, as he is fondly called, was a literary giant and a keen observer, who deeply felt the deepest of emotions which he captured through his words. In the pre-independence movement, it was rather a difficult task to portray issues on women upliftment. Had it not been for pioneering social reformers, such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, the scenario wouldn't have been that it is today. The women of this era, were the ones who actually tried to break through the age-old stereotypes. Rediscovery of texts written by women, challenging the representation of women as the 'other', breaking the stereotypes of the 'wife' and 'mother' and rethinking the canon of the conventional 'norm.' The women of Tagore household were the embodiment of social change in this regard, and thus arises the need to look back to that bygone era and celebrate it. This paper would aim to uphold the lives and works of these women who were path makers for women in years to come. The paper would also touch upon the aspect of how these women in Tagore's family, shaped the author's mind to create characters who fought back patriarchy, broke the 'normative' image of a docile wife and a pious mother, and spoke their mind to defy the 'norm' and break the stereotype. The 'new woman' was thus born.

Keywords: 'new woman', breaking stereotypes, women of Tagore household, social reform

Introduction

Literature reflects life. Life, in all its beauty and reality. Rabindranath Tagore has been a very keen litterateur in observing and capturing life, in all its form. A literary giant of not only India but the world, Tagore, lived through an era of colonial oppression and nationalist uprising. His poetry, dramas, short stories, novels, essays, dance dramas, music, songs and paintings have not only enchanted his readers but has always touched the chord of reality. Particularly, the portrayal of women in Tagore's works, reflect on his ideas of social reformation and vision of a society which upholds freedom of mind. His famous lines, "where the mind is without fear and the head is held high" (Das 9) aptly resonates his vision. With an alarming rate of violence against women of all age groups in today's world, unfortunately, it makes us ponder about the country has still not waking up to that "heaven of

freedom” (Das 9) that Tagore dreamt of. Despite the achievements of women in today’s society, there still persists a misogynistic approach which has resulted in the discrimination of women in both their domestic and professional front. And this misogynistic approach has had a long tradition of social conditioning. However, it goes without saying that, if not for pioneers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, the status of women might have been in a much more intricate situation. Among the other great personas of the then era, Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Iswarchandra Vidyasagar has immensely contributed to the upliftment of women and social reformation. From abolition of *sati* to widow remarriage to educating women, they have made path-breaking social reforms for the amelioration of the status of women. This attempt to reshape, rebuilt and rethink the age-old societal norms that had an impact on Tagore’s mind to create women characters who defied the norm. There was another major impact on Tagore’s creation of women characters which is often overlooked and less talked of; and that is, the women of Tagore Family. Tagore grew up seeing the women of his home defying the conventional and prevalent norms of femininity and made a mark for themselves. In this context, this paper would attempt to explore the stereotyped feminine roles that were expected of women and how the women of Tagore household broke these stereotypes.

Gender and the stereotype conundrum

As we all are aware, the term gender is a social construct, whereas sex is something related to the biological orientation of a human being. This social construct has an underpinning of a certain social ‘conditioning’ that directs the society to think in a specific way and as a result, stereotyping evolves. Moreover, “stereotypes occur when individuals are classified by others as having something in common because they are members of a particular group or category of people.” (Fiske & Stevens) Gender stereotype refers to inequity, discrimination and bigotry based on one’s sexual orientation. It often engages in an unfair treatment upon the rights of people who are the ‘others.’ It bars them to act in their own comfortable comportment. It is wholly and immensely influenced by upbringing and societal pressure. Therefore, ‘gender stereotype’ has many a time compelled men and women to act appropriately according to their gender, which not only subjugates women, but also rules out the queer question absolutely. Stereotyping largely depend upon the behavioural patterns imposed by the society. When we correlate a prototype of behaviour with either men or women, they may fail to notice the individual exceptions and variations. They come to deem that this behaviour is inevitably associated with one gender but not the other. Therefore, defining an unsaid social code of conduct to stereotype masculinity, femininity and the queer. On the whole, these conceptualizations of defining a gender has largely affected our thinking and thus our attitude and approach to the basics of gender. This further symbolize what people believe and how they judge themselves and others. Thereby, the functions of

stereotypes are a very important subject in order to understand the importance of gender, be it in any era.

Coming to the loci of the discussion, in the pre-independence period, women's status in the society can be encapsulated primarily as the 'other.' Toril Moi in her essay, "The Feminist Reader" explicates the term 'female' as "a matter of biology" and 'feminine' as "a set of culturally defined characteristics." (Barry 117) Very aptly, this explains "what constituted acceptable versions of the 'feminine' and legitimate feminine goals and aspirations." (Barry 117) This further indicates that the supreme objective of a woman's life and that determined her happiness. And this happiness encircled marriage and motherhood in the Indian context. Beauvoir, in her eponymous work *The Second Sex*, writes, "one is not born a woman; rather one becomes a woman." (Barry 125) Thus, the argument rightly explains how a woman is raised to be a woman and strikingly points out the social mechanism of gender 'conditioning' that occurs within the framework of our society. In those days, parents somehow played a major role in this 'conditioning' of raising a child as a girl and not just an individual. Parents were actually the socializing agents for shaping their children into daughters by imparting beliefs, values and behaviours ascribed to the feminine gender.

Women: The Prisoner of 'sarovagunasampanna'

Cultural ideas, norms, values and symbols play a very significant role in the construction of image of a woman and the segregation of gender roles. The emphasis of this segment is to understand women as the prisoner of 'sarovagunasampanna' and what these images of femininity in Indian society in the pre-independence period. The women's life encircled in within the premises of 'home.' It is to say that womanhood was largely confined to represent women as only mothers and wives. These are the two images of women still continue to make its presence felt.

- Women as wives – the '*Pativrata*' image which accentuates on the unconditional dedication and devotion shown towards husband, and
- Women as mothers – glorified image of motherhood, as in who sacrifices everything for the well-being of her children and family.

Girls were grown up with deep-rooted sense of some unknown fear and insecurity which psychologically crippled them to even think independently. This has had such an effect that probably it can be seen even in today's society. They were often made to believe that their male counterparts should engage themselves with the outside world, whereas they should keep themselves confined within the walls of home. Very interestingly, the then women, never even thought of introspecting themselves. They were judged by their husbands and the society. The notion that without husband, children and family a woman is incomplete and her life is meaningless was formulated in her very existence. The society then, seemed to

have analysed women on four grounds or virtues which furthermore strengthened their roles as mothers and wives:

- Piety
- Purity
- Submissiveness
- Domesticity

Society viewed women as more naturally pious than men and with this piety, a virtue emerged. Women's natural superiority also appeared in their delicacy, tender sensibilities and refinement. Religious inclination was seen well-matched with femininity and was believed suitable for women. Whereas other means of education such as western learning were thought to detract women from their femininity and piousness. Even reading of romantic novels was to some extent prohibited for the educated women as it might lead women to ignore their religion and become inordinately romantic in nature, leading to the loss of their purity or virtue and thus would bring shame to their families.

Purity was regarded as providence worse than bereavement. A woman was left without value or hope if she lost her purity. Purity was as integral and essential as piety to a woman. Without this, she was regarded as impious and was looked down upon. On the other hand, society had no problem if men were not as religious and as virtuous as their female counterparts. It was also believed that true, pure, pious and virtuous women had a high status.

The third virtue of being submissive was supposed to be a characteristic feature of women. They were expected to be weak, timid, docile and dependent in front of their husbands. On the other hand, men were supposed to be wise, strong, forceful and who can make all the decisions of the house. The husbands were unquestionably superior and their wives would not consider even once of questioning their authority.

The fourth virtue of domesticity can be connected to all the other three virtues of piety, purity and submissiveness. The daily chores of the mothers and wives were concerned mostly with domestic affairs such as homemaking, bearing children and their upbringing. The domestic duties included household works such as cooking, taking care of all the members of the family even if they are unwell. All in all, they were confined within the periphery of the 'home.' The 19th century, however, saw a new sun which illuminated India with social reformation and with that 'the New Woman' emerged.

The New Woman

'The New Woman' emerged in the late Victorian England and had an influence and impact on feminism as a movement. The term came up in a novel *A Woman Hater* by Charles Reade, which gradually initiated the establishment of the idea of equality between the sexes, probably for the first time. It had a great impact in facilitating some sort of social change and also questioning the orthodox societal norms. The New Woman started participating in workforce, art, theatre and literary clubs, and thus overall in the society. However, in India,

the movement rose from a social reformation movement. The intelligentsia of the nineteenth century took it upon themselves to bring about a change. Raja Ram Mohan Roy, as mentioned earlier, was one of pioneering figures who initiated the cause of the upliftment of women. Beside emanating a liberal Hindu revivalism, which resulted in Atmiya Sabha in 1815 and Brahmo Samaj in 1828, Raja Ram Mohan Roy worked for including western education in the then education system, widow remarriage, abolition of *sati*, removal of *pardah* system, and fought for the abolition of child marriage. This social movement had an impact in the sense that there was a promotion of missionary school for girls and needless to say, Christianity. Brahmo Samaj and the liberal elite Hindus of the day also opened schools for girls. In 1906, Sarojini Naidu remarked in the Indian Social Conference,

Therefore, I charge you, restore to your women their ancient rights, for, as I have said, it is we, and not you, who are the real nation builders, and without our active co-operation at all points of progress all your Congresses and Conferences are in vain. Educate your women and the nation will take care of itself, for it is as true today as it was yesterday and will be to the end of human life that the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world. (Kumar 50)

She also emphasised on women actively participating in the society, in the larger light of a wholesome growth of a nation,

Other national questions come and go; they are result of the time changing spirit; but one question that never changed since the beginning of time itself, is the duty of womanhood, the influence of womanhood, the sanctity of womanhood, the influence of womanhood, the simple womanhood as the divinity of God upon earth, the responsibility of womanhood in shaping the divinity into daily life. (Naidu 171)

Rigorous agitation and urge for reformation resulted in reforms in some of the Acts. Most significant of which was the 1872 Marriage Act which declared that the minimum age of females would be 14 and for males, 18. Gradually the issues of women and their movement gained momentum. Some women, a very handful though, of the late 19th century and early 20th century, overcame cultural barriers and societal restrictions of a rather rigid and to an extent suppressive patriarchal society to study abroad. Among them were Anandibai Gopalrao Joshi, Pandita Ramabai Sarasvati, Ramabai Ranade, Cornelia Sorabji, Rukmabai to name a few. They used their awareness and education to bring women's issue in the forefront. In the following decades, women became more conscious and vocal about their rights and issues in public gatherings, wrote in journals and magazines, to propagate the movement and to reach out to the masses. Hereafter, women also participated in the nationalist movement and freedom struggle. Thereby, the New Woman emerged from this social movement which enhanced "the social presence of Indian women and enable them to adapt to a changing external situation." (Thapar 83)

The women of Tagore household

The Tagore family were the rule breakers of the pre-independence period. They were far more advanced than any other family in Bengal and probably in the rest of India at that time. Women of the Tagore household had a rich compendium of education, social service, music and dance, religion and atheism. They were never forced to stay within the narrow confinements of their domestic walls. Instead they came out and had set an example for women in time to come. They rethought the canon and strived to break through the norm. They came as waves and washed the shores which were full of orthodoxy with their unquenching yearning for knowledge. The daughters and as well as the daughters-in-law of this family enjoyed the fresh air of liberation. There was freedom to write, sing and actively take part in the politics of the day. Though societal changes take a lot of time, but it was a big step that they took to bring in reformation.

The saga began with strong and opinionated women, Alakasundari Devi, (Tagore's great-grand mother, and mother of Dwarkanath Tagore) and Digambari Devi, (Tagore's paternal grandmother, and wife of Dwarkanath Tagore). Saudamini Devi was one of the first daughters of the Tagore household who was sent to the Bethune School. When a handful of girls went to school she showed a remarkable interest and performance in academics. She translated Hafez and wrote a tractate on her father Maharishi Debendranath Tagore, named *Pitri-Smriti*. However, it was her sister, Swarnakumari Devi, who had a keen interest in learning. Her brother Hemendranath Tagore was one of the key enthusiasts behind educating the women of the Tagore household. Debendranath Tagore, thus appointed a teacher named Ajodhyanath Pakrashi to educate the women. Swarnakumari Devi was deeply interested in literary ventures. She wrote her first novel, *Deepnirban* in 1876, which is also credited as the first Bengali novel to have been written by a Bengali female novelist. *Deepnirban* had the theme of nationalist uprising. She is also known to have written poems, plays, songs, novels and scientific essays. Her noteworthy works are, *Bidroha*, *Bichitra*, *Chinna Mukul*, *Phuler Mala*, to name a few. Very fascinatingly, she was interested in developing terminology related to science in the Bengali language. She is also ascribed to have written the very first Bengali opera, *Basanta Utsav* in 1879. She is known to have written *Kaha Key (To Whom)* known to be one of the first literature pieces which talked of women's likes, dislikes and desires. It was one of the first attempts of voicing out about their choices. Her works not only received critical acclaim but were also translated into English. The magazine *Bharati* was initially started by her brothers Jyotirindranath Tagore and Dwijendranath Tagore, but it was Swarnakumari Devi who edited it almost twenty years and thrived to work on its enhancement. Since her husband, Janakinath Ghosal was one of the founder figures of the Indian National Congress, she also joined Indian National Congress. Her husband was very vocal about the abolition of *purdah* and was also a driving force behind her success as a writer and editor. She not only participated in the political sessions and meetings but also contributed in the nationalistic activities. Swarnakumari Devi was not only an editor, a gifted

writer, a song-composer but also a social worker. Her organisation Sakhi Samiti (A Group of Friends) worked for the upliftment of widows and orphans. This was something which can be termed as an NGO in today's times, which was a path breaking work in that era.

Though Swarnakumari Devi was ahead of her times, it was Jnanadanandini Devi who stood out as one of the epitomes of breaking stereotypes of her times. She was the sister-in-law of Rabindranath Tagore, and wife of Satyendranath Tagore, the second son of Devendranath Tagore. Hemendranath Tagore, her brother-in-law took charge of enlightening her with the light of education. Dawned with the light of education, she wrote as well as edited a children's magazine named *Balak* in 1885. Rabindranath Tagore also contributed to this magazine. She is also known to have contributed essays for the magazine *Bharati*. She wrote two plays, *Takdumadum* and *Saat Bhai Champa*, which were based on Bengali folktales and were much acclaimed in various literary circles of that time. She wrote an article named *Ingrajninda O Deshanurag* which is translated in English as *Criticism of the British and Patriotism*. Here she proposes an establishment of an organisation which would work towards the freedom struggle and would have its branches working in every nook and corner of the country, roughly four years before the establishment of Indian National Congress, in 1881. She had to travel a lot since her husband was a bureaucrat. While her stay in Bombay, she was deeply influenced by the Parsi way of draping a sari. Thereafter, Jnanadanandini Devi led the way to introduce the modern way of wearing a sari with pleats along with a chemise-jacket. She also improvised it by putting the 'anchal-pallu' in the left, so as to keep the right hand free for courtesies and greeting people. Sharmila Tagore, the actress and the great grand-daughter of Tagore, in an interview given to *The Pioneer* on the women of Tagore household, says about Jnanadanandini Devi that, "she even gave advertisements in newspapers about this new draping style and interested women could approach her to learn it." (Bharadwaj) In this way, she developed a way of wearing a sari which would make it easier for women to travel from the inner courts of the house to the outside world freely without much hassle. Jnanadanandini Devi was pregnant when she boarded the ship along with her three children, a Gujarati and a Muslim servant for England, in 1877. She was extremely brave and sojourned in England for about two and a half years. Her husband joined her later. Before her, no Indian lady had ever dared to cross the *kalapani* without any male company. She accompanied her husband to parties thrown by the then Viceroy. This boldness shocked her father-in-law and she left the Jorasanko household to live by herself in a mansion just adjacent to the family home. She unknowingly ushered the nuclear family concept to the Indian soil. She challenged the patriarchal ways with an independent spirit and indomitable fervour. Though residing outside the family home, she kept a regular contact with Jorasanko. She even encouraged the other women of the Tagore household to participate in literary and cultural activities. She acted in the play *Raja-o-Rani*. The society couldn't take this and she was slandered and backlashed by a popular magazine named *Bangabashi*. This didn't stop her, and she continued with her work. She is also known to have advocated inter-caste

marriage in those days. She aspired to write a travelogue, but probably it didn't materialise. Her daughter Indira Devi Chaudhurani in her book *Puratani* wrote about her mother's travel to England all by herself and of her experiences in *Bilater Katha (About the Foreign Land)*. In the preface of the book she clearly mentioned that this was completely her mother's experience and she is just penning it down.

Indira Devi Chaudhurani was Tagore's niece and apart from being a prolific writer, she is widely known to have composed music for a number of Tagore's songs. She was particularly close to Tagore and was his favourite amongst his nieces and nephews. Tagore's letters to Indira Devi is collected and published as *Chinnapatra*. She was one of the few girls, in the era, who was educated in elite schools of the times and she graduated from University of Calcutta with a first-class Honours in French. She was awarded the Bhuvanmohini Gold Medal by University of Calcutta later in 1944 and conferred D.Litt. by Visva Bharati University in 1957. She had passion for music since she was a child and was well trained in both Indian and Western classical music. She also pursued music at the Trinity College of Music, which earned her a diploma. This was a remarkable achievement in that era. She also authored several essays and edited volumes on music, the most noted one being *Rabindra Sangeet Tribeni Sangam*. From translating works from French Literature to translating some of Rabindranath Tagore's poems to English, Indira Devi was one of the prominent Bengali literary figures of her times. She was a proponent for the rights of women and a strong advocate women's issues of the times. Some of her prominent works are, *Rabindra Smriti*, *Shruti Smriti*, *Narirukti*, *Banglar Stri-Achar*, *Smriti Katha* and *Gitapanchashti*.

Sarala Devi Chaudhurani, Swarnakumari Devi's daughter was one of the first women of the Tagore household, to have graduated with English Honours from University of Calcutta in those times. She also received the Padmavati Gold Medal. She founded Bharat Stree Mahamandal, an organisation for women, and it was undoubtedly one of the first of its kinds. Initially situated only in Allahabad, the organisation gradually started spreading across India, in places like Delhi, Lahore, Karachi, Kanpur, Amritsar, Hyderabad and Hazaribagh, Bankura, Calcutta, Midnapur in the Bengal province. This organisation had its primary objective to promote female education and an upliftment in the condition of women in general. She actively participated in the politics of the day and the freedom struggle. She also wrote her autobiography titled, *Jhara Pata*. She also collected tunes for her uncle, Rabindranath Tagore's songs. Hiranmoyee Devi, Sarala Devi's elder sister also contributed to the magazine *Bharati*. Hemendranath Tagore's daughters, Sudakshina Devi, Pratibha Devi and Pragnasundari Devi were amongst the other gems of the household. Pragnasundari Devi is considered to be one of the first to have written a cook-book in India named *Amish O Niramish Ahar*. She also edited the periodical *Punya*, which is known to have included articles on home science and cookery. Sudakshina Devi regularly contributed to this periodical. Moreover, after her husband's untimely demise, a young Sudakshina took over the maintenance of her *zamindari* all by herself. Pratibha Devi composed music and is known to

have contributed music to many of Tagore's songs. Kadambari Devi, Tagore's sister-in-law, and considered by many as his muse, was a learned woman, who could even ride a horse in those days. She even acted in one of the plays of her husband, Jyotindranath Tagore, in the "Andarmahal" of Jorashanko." (Charulata 185) Mrinalini Devi, Tagore's wife, and Kadambari Devi, both had a great influence on the mind of Tagore. Pratima Devi, Rabindranath Tagore's daughter-in-law has authored the book *Smritichitra*. Sunayani Devi, Tagore's niece, was a prolific artist. She based her artform on *patashilpai*. i.e. folk art.

Therefore, these women were charismatic personalities, who broke down the stereotypical pious and submissive images of women. The women of the Tagore household were obviously somebody's wife and mother but this role or their household duties never became their sole way of leading life. Luckily or let's say incidentally, they weren't under any major impositions in Jorashanko which indeed helped them to break the societal confinements as well. They ushered the wave of change to change the stereotypical images of women playing the role of mothers and wives. Women's emancipation sprang as the Tagore family welcomed "the epoch-making move for the marriage of widows." (Nandakumar) Rabindranath Tagore's eldest son Rathindranath Tagore was married to Pratima Devi, a widow. The progressive outlook of the women of his family helped him to pen down strong women characters in his literature. Therefore, these women inspired people with their self-confidence and ushered a new wave to break stereotypes.

Tagore's portrayal of women

Literature is the replica of society in ways more than one. In literary works we see women being stereotypically represented again and again. An archetypal role of women, such as one who is very pious and soft-spoken deems that she is way inferior to their male counterparts in terms of intellect, are shown time and again. She doesn't have precision and clarity of thoughts. She is an embodiment of instability and passiveness. The idea of piety is a frequent thing to notice in the women characters. Compliancy and confinement are the other noticeable characteristic features. Innocence and seclusion form the key factors to describe the confinement. Women are considered docile if they are submissive daughters, wives and mothers.

The change occurred with the intervention of the Tagore family. Though the conventional image of women prevailed, the stereotypical images of women were broken to some extent. The progressive atmosphere of Jorashanko, helped Tagore to frame his characters from his own home itself. Most of Tagore's works include the ideas revolving around the upliftment of women in the society. His works are concentrated on the following facets:

- Struggle of women in the male-dominated society
- Struggle of an educated young women for freedom and equality in society
- The plight of widows in the families

- Exploitation of women in the society
- Dowry system as an integral part of marriage in Indian context
- Remarriage of widows
- Education of women
- Women participating in women struggle

Tagore created the women characters in his literature with immense sensitivity. Be it a docile woman restricted in familial ties of domesticity or the woman of substance, the inner eye in him probably helped him observe and capture the deepest of emotions through his beautiful expression of words. While most of the women in the Tagore household, were the 'new women' of the era, there were others who weren't as conscious or vocal or for that matter active in the politics of the day or pursued their passion. However, to come to the loci of the discussion, Tagore's travels made, "him aware of the freedom women were enjoying" in the west and this in turn intrigued him to think about the status of women back home. (Charulatha 173) Essentially, this can be seen in the women characters he sketched. The influx of western education system, the abolition of sati, child marriage, widow remarriage and other reformations in the society had actually initiated a discourse. The reformer in him, thus penned women characters to facilitate the change that had already began. And through his literature he reached out to the masses. By this great power of words, he portrayed the patriarchy's crude suppression of women, women with strong sense of individuality who is no longer docile, emancipated women who were educated and vocal about their choices. He also portrayed the dynamics of family with a bit of difference in the yoke of the 20th century,

Rabindranath Tagore's socio-familial concept took a new turn as he began to probe the husband-wife relationship within the joint family set up. Gone is the tyrannical in-law and submissive son syndrome in which subservience to the patriarchal norm is the rigour, as Rabindranath Tagore sets out at the beginning of the 20th century, to apply his mind to the taboo subject of women's emancipation. (Chakrabarti 94)

There are many short stories and novels that depict the plight of women written by Tagore, however worth mentioning short stories are – "Giribala", "Haimanti", "Aparichita", "Tapasvini", "Streer Patra", "The Laboratory" to name a few. Be it Mrinal in "Streer Patra" who does not conform to the norms of patriarchy in her husband's home and finally leaves the home or Giribala, who, similarly, moves out of the home to join the theatre, after her husband cheats on her, strikingly shows how the women broke the shackles and spoke up. Kalyani, in "Aparichita" on the other hand, is the embodiment of the liberated woman who is educated and strives for justice and righteousness. Tagore prominently takes up the issue of dowry both in "Aparichita" and "Dena Paona", and depicts reality in two different ways. Nirupama in "Dena Paona" succumbs to the torture of domestic violence regarding the non-payment of dowry. The short story "The Laboratory" beautifully carves the 'new woman' in the character of Sohini as the manifestation of empowerment. This story also propounds casteless society. The story "Bodnam" is one of the outstanding stories where Soudamini helps a

nationalist freedom fighter. Being the wife of a police-officer of the British India, it was rather a challenging task, but the love for her country's freedom struggle outweighed the love for her husband. The character of Anila, in "Poila Number" just like Mrinal in "Streer Potro" resonates the characterisation of Nora, of Ibsen's *The Doll's House*. Anila breaks free from the shackles of domesticity. The novel *Chaturanga* emphasises on widow remarriage through the character of Damini. Other noteworthy works in this regard are Chokher Bali, Malancha, etc.

Conclusion

To conclude, the paper humbly attempted to show that the women of Tagore household helped him construct and shape the women characters of his literature. The 'new woman' in his literature are almost the reflections of the women of Tagore household and transcends them. Furthermore, the characters depicted by him inspired the society to initiate a discourse of reformation. The characters created by Tagore not only creates the 'new woman' but also, many a time, moves beyond his era. This is probably the reason why Tagore is relevant in every walk of life, even today.

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