

Resistance and/as Humanism: Birth of Agency in Rabindranath Tagore's *Mukta Dhara*

Komal Prasad Phuyal, PhD*

Abstract

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) celebrates resistance against the logic of the machine as an act of public welfare in Mukta Dhara (1922) in quest of human capability to bring about change in the existing order. The play places the natural flow of the waterfall as the central question in a tussle between two states: Uttarakut and Shiv-terai. The river, Mukta Dhara, flows from the northern mountains to the lower plains, sustaining the life in the plains. The technically advanced northern state, Uttarakut turns arrogant as it succeeds in erecting a dam across the waterfall, whereby imprisoning the flow and denying water to the people of the lower land. The central conflict results into the awakening of agency in Uttarakut in the struggle for justice for the weak. Despite the unending appreciation from the ruling elite for the machine above Bhairav temple in Uttarakut, the Prince Abhijit sees the embedded injustice of his own state upon the people of the plains. He consciously sacrifices himself setting the flow free. Abhijit's resistance realizes Tagore's deep conviction for humanity. By using close reading and textual analysis, this paper seeks to examine in the text two concepts: resistance and humanism. Primarily, the analysis presents the act of resistance as humanistic traits. Besides, it seeks to uncover the interconnectedness between the two concepts in order to see how each of them can independently stand as unique concept on their own. This paper examines the relationship between resistance and humanism in the backdrop of birth of agency to bring about deeds for public welfare and further interrogates resistance as an act of humanism.

Key Words: Resistance; Agency; Humanism; Hero; Public Welfare.

1. Introduction

As the social milieu grows full of erroneous attributes in the underlying structure, the goal of shared living and the assumption of organicity of polity are sufficiently challenged in that the expected output of organized living fails to reward everyone on equal terms. The blocks in the organic advancement of

*Komal Prasad Phuyal, PhD

Assistant Professor

Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal

Email: ephuyal@gmail.com

society generate necessity to address them through human will that can transform the problematic social reality into a favorable state of socio-political arrangement. Despite the initial vision of public welfare as the promise of polity, the ruling elite put every effort of the power hierarchy at their own service. In such circumstances, society gives way to the birth of agency that can penetrate deep into the living structure of the underlying core of society and reconfigure the ways of the world for the benefit of all the members of the society. Tagore's *Mukta Dhara* (1922) presents Prince Abhijit as the ultimate realization of human potential, ready for self-sacrifice for public welfare. This paper argues that agency emerges out of human choice to resist the ills of social reality prevalent in a specific context and serves humanity at large. The paper is structured through three sections: the first section seeks to identify the theoretical connections between resistance and humanism; the second part textually analyzes the birth of agency in Tagore's seminal play *Mukta Dhara*; and, the final section presents resistance as humanism as manifest in the play under examination.

2. Resistance and Humanism

Social structures produce a power hierarchy with the objective of organizing the society in a format that functions to reward everyone with the benefits of shared ways of life, culture, and larger goals of the people. However, the sharpness envisioned at the start of such collective project begins to fade out its effect as the society advances towards fulfilling the original promise of collective welfare. Every social organization turns its own scrutinizing lenses upon itself to seek out the factors affecting the distribution of the gains of collective living. As an organic entity, society develops its own soul to do away with the dictations of the power bloc. The oppressive hierarchy of power does not respect equality and mummifies the people whom it is ideally meant to serve and work for. The birth of sensitivity regarding the issues and challenges faced by the mass assumes the struggle between two blocs: the powerful and the powerless. Resistance results from such struggle and tension between the two opposing poles of society.

Resistance assumes the power in human agency to bring about the desired transformation in society, penetrating into the underlying structure. In other words, it emerges as part of humanism in that it celebrates human capability to comprehend their issues at stake, challenges the existing spirit of the time, and aspires to transform the circumstances prevailing in it. Furthermore, such act of

resistance develops as a location for agency to assert its preferences over the existing reality. Finally, resistance enables one to see that human rationality can challenge and change every human assumption. Resistance appeared first of all as a critical vocabulary in British Cultural Studies in the 1960s and 1970s so as to “investigate the cultural exercise of power and oppositional practices from the perspective of ‘the people’ with the intention of facilitating their empowerment” (Masse, 2017, p. 45). Specifically, the birth of agency surfaces as the central question in resistance in that cultural landscape demands its interpretation. In this sense, resistance assumes both agency and interpretations of social reality (Tamen, 2012, p. 217), for the content soul does not initiate actions towards change in any situation. The revolting, dissatisfied ones reread the prevailing reality, identify the lapses, and intervene in the situation for a new set of rules to regulate the social structures. Both the actor and the act are tuned to the necessity of struggle in existing social order so as to bring about a desired state of social being through human quest and rationality.

Human being has lost the position of being who can assert choice, preferences in a social context in the larger context of development of critical theories in the West as implied in the poststructuralist and postmodernist ways of viewing the self. Such theories primarily emphasize the role of discourses forming further discourses that later determine the both the truth value and the possibility of other discourses. In other words, self is replaced with discourse as the foundation of novel ways of doing, viewing, and being in relation to self. A host of theories that have appeared after the Enlightenment assume that human comes into being as an effect of all the socio-political structures; human beings carry no power to penetrate into the social structures; and human choices have no significance in the larger context of social landscape. Surveying the Western theories from the Enlightenment onwards, Margaret S. Archer (2015) finds the position of human choices dissolved in general by placing the historical, linguistic, and other determining factors in the prime role of making things happen and generating meaning in specific. As she counters,

People are indeed perfectly uninteresting if they possess no personal powers which can make a difference. Of course, if this is the case then it is hard to see how they can offer any resistance, for even if it is ineffectual it has to stem from someone who at least amounts to the proportions of an irritant (and must thus be credited minimally with the personal power to challenge). (2004, p. 19)

The contradiction surfaces in such ways of viewing the reality as the drama of human life assume organicity in itself. The social actors require respect and credits since they ever aspire to prepare a ground for everyone to get equal benefits from the social life. The mechanical regulation of society which is devoid of social understanding cannot represent the soul of life. On the other hand, it does not value human actors as makers of change in their respective society.

Such development in critical theory celebrates the deterministic view of humanity and social reality. The structures larger than human beings resurface as the fundamental subject of study in order to see their impact on formation of self and polity in such discourses. The cogent power of understanding, framing, and intervening into social reality was completely robbed away from human subject. Hence, Archer has argued that the discourses after the Enlightenment effaced the possibility of knowing and acting human being. Rereading major development in Western critical theories, she concludes: "Because neither our humanity, which anchors ourselves, nor practical reality through which our human potentials are developed, can be dispensed with, our task is necessarily to examine the interplay between these two irreducible components" (2004, p. 49). As humanist practice, resistance seeks to interrogate the interaction between human choices as both cause and effect of social reality, and social reality as both cause and effect of human choices. The assertion of choice resists the innate, nonhuman deterministic facts, whereby valorizing the human subject as maker of new reality. As an act of liberation, resistance awakens the sensitivity of the agent to intervene into the situations gone awry. As Miguel Tamen has stated, "Resistance often provokes redescrptions and tempts you to participate in an ongoing discussion, if for nothing else than to correct what you regard as a series of mistakes" (2012, p. 213). Both Archer and Tamen have accepted that human agency awakens amid problematic social reality in order to see though the challenges of time rationally interact with the questions to enforce transformation in the existing order.

As theory and practice, resistance and humanism get deeply united as each of them arouses the critical sense of social reality in human subjects and inspires them to explore the solutions on their own. At the core of both resistance and humanism reside human choices to decipher the contemporary ethos that harbors the concerns of people and time. The existing set of power relations actually forgets the main purpose of polity which is ideally envisioned as public

welfare. The changes emerging in values, attitude, perceptions, and aspirations of the people in a society lead to questioning the old order: resistance aims at shifting the focus of power by challenging the hierarchical order of everyday (Masse, 2017, p. 53). The human agency begins to redescribe and redefine the socio-political relations to meet up the expectations of the people. Margaret S. Archer argues that human choices play the primary role in shaping the course of action in life and society. She writes:

...it is precisely because of our interaction with the natural, practical and transcendental orders that humanity has prior, autonomous and efficacious powers which it brings to society itself –and which intertwine with those properties of society which make us social beings, without which, it is true, we would certainly not be recognized as human. (2004, p. 17-18)

Like Masse, Archer emphasizes the socio-political reality as both cause and consequences of human interaction with the existing order in which human choices can always impose new orders by breaking, modifying and/or revising the old set of hierarchy. The organicity of collective life gets rooted itself in human power to function as agency that can redescribe and redefine the existing social reality in new light. The human agency catches the spark in such process of awakening the inner in human.

Theoretically, the act of resistance displays significant tension among actors in society in their quest for human ability to transform their existing circumstance for greater common good. When such concepts are applied in *Tagore's Mukta Dhara* (1922), a fresh insight into hitherto unexplored domain of humanistic reading emerges to inform us the playwright's vision of the human world. To Tagore, human beings bring happiness to themselves and inflict misery upon their own soul. The will of an individual cannot prevail as the final truth in general. The master playwright weaves narratives of powerful actors transforming social realities, negotiating among themselves, and finally giving birth to both agency and tension in society. From the perspective of resistance as a critical concept, human quest becomes a battlefield that requires the birth of human agents, aspiring to implement their visions for collective welfare of human beings in general.

3. Birth of Agency

Tagore presents the awakening of agency in his symbolic play *Mukta Dhara* (1922) through the portrayal of resistance as the act of humanism. He

dramatizes the tension between two states, Uttarakut and Shiv-tarai when Uttarakut constructs a dam across the waterfall, Mukta Dhara. The nation celebrates the almost impossible scientific feat of the Royal engineer, Bibhuti. Very symbolically, Tagore places the machine just above Bhairav temple at the stream to picture the trouble that the crude reason of science brings about in society where the traditional, cultural factors are completely ignored for the excitement of the machine. Even though King Ranjit comes to realize the ugliness of the machine above the Bhairav temple, he follows the national spirit which gets carried away along the emotional vibes for mechanical achievement in the form of the dam and appeasement of their wrath for the people of Shiva-terai. The blockade of water implies the pressure dumped on the people in the low land, for the river is the main supply of water for Shiva-terai. Amid these circumstances, Abhijit realizes the tunes of the waterfall where he was found in his childhood.

Critical scholarship on Tagore shows that he has been basically approached through two lenses: firstly, he is interpreted as both inheritor of the tradition and inventor of new spirit in his age in the larger Indian context; and secondly, he is viewed as creator of political identity by those who view Bengal as a politico-cultural entity. When Tagore is read at the backdrop larger Indian socio-political context, the issues of tradition and modernity are taken as key issues in his creative practice. For instance, Kristine M. Rogers (1989) reviews the development of artist in Tagore seeking out the sources of his creative vision. She sees that Tagore was internally informed of the tradition by observing the intellectual life of Bhadraklok, while he was acquainted with the mass through his supervisory job of *zamindar* to support his father's administration. She further asserts: "Tagore's genius continued to alienate him from his audience throughout his eighty-year life. The innovations he made early in his poetic career became the norms for Bengali poetry later in his life" (1929, p. 38). Tagore continued the tradition while inventing his own by setting standard for creative works as well.

In the most turbulent time of the first half of the twentieth century, Tagore attempted to address the problems of his time and society as well. When his works are viewed in the historical context, new themes about the lacks of time appear in them. Partha Mitter (1989) analyzes Tagore's creative practices in this line of analysis and notes that Tagore "...believed in and campaigned passionately for universal brotherhood, in an age which still had confidence in

universal values, only to be shattered in the First World War, which appeared to have made a mockery of words like humanity, love, harmony and understanding” (1989, p. 104). Very significantly, the master Bengali poet invented his own practice while preserving the tradition as the soul of his society. However, he transcends above the specificities of quotidian life to explore the universal generalities of life, for he aims at reaching at in his critical works. Also, Mandakranta Bose (2008) critically examines the artistic forms of Tagore’s vision of dance while rereading his creative practices as well. She argues that Tagore’s dance did not only attempt at valorizing the tradition; rather, he projected his vision of cultural modernity through dance in specific and creative practice in general. She writes:

Politically as well as culturally, the revival of dance in India was one of many signs of the modernizing of India. Not only did this search for reviving a debilitated tradition reflect the urgency of modern India to assert its cultural and political selfhood, it also signaled the widening of the public sphere and the growing complexity of public life. (2008, p. 1086)

Bose’s argument significantly implies the latent equilibrium between tradition and modernity in Tagore’s creative practice. Also, she reads Tagore as a political and cultural expression who could swiftly blend together the past and the future, giving a unique voice to his creative practice.

The scholarship that examines the role of tradition and modernity in Tagore’s works also seeks for the spiritual dimensions of the Oriental life there. The connection of life with nature forms one of the major themes in such readings of Tagore’s texts. Swati Samataray and Sahadeb Patro (2018) explore the eco-mystical features in Tagore as they study the relationship of life and nature in *Mukta Dhara*. In this secular reading of the text, they find the world of culture and nature in a state of tension since the machine obstructs the natural flow of the river. They argue: “Tagore’s disapproval of the negative aspect of scientific achievement is emphasized here. The rivalry between Uttarkut and Shiv-terai people for the exclusive possession of water teaches humanity that water is life – it is for everyone” (2018, p. 320). They read promotion of web of life on earth in the play by debunking the hierarchy that King Ranjit’s polity promotes in quest for greater amount of power to dominate Shiva-terai. Such reading reveals that the political struggle of Shiv-terai and the domination of Uttarakut also parallel the colonial power struggle in Tagore’s time in which Indian people

and the British Raj continuously confronted each other on the question of national independence. The postcolonial lens of reading produces completely distinct interpretation of the play.

The first type of reading also explores archetypal themes which perpetually govern human life and writings alike. Tagore's dramas consist of a unified structure where multiple issues along with nation at the heart of the play appear as the governing factors. *Mukta Dhara* employs both archetypes and symbols in its design. As Utpal K. Banerjee (2010) writes, "...the archetypal theme draws upon multiple layers: human salvation through human sacrifice; voice of the royalty and the commoner –the oppressor and the oppressed – commingling in the unified dramatic design" (p. 133). The eternal flow of water must continue the way it has maintained its course southward for thousands and thousands of years. The arrest of the stream refers to curtailment of freedom in the worlds of humans and nature. Also Tagore deeply holds it true that only the communion between human and nature can help perceive real love between the beholder and the beheld. Kalyan Sen Gupta concludes: "Tagore's conviction is that a sense of beauty and worthiness in nature ... can free us from slavery to our circumscribed present and lead us from necessity to freedom, from narrowness to expanse" (2005, p. 62). In this sense, Samataray and Patro, and Gupta implicitly argue that nature functions as the prime factor in shaping the internal logic present in his texts. Actually, this conviction shapes the master artist's attitude to both modernity and tradition as well.

The second line of argument is derived from readings of the scholars like Fakrul Alam (2015), Anissuzzaman (2008), and Mahmud Shah Qureshi (2008) who critically examine the political significance of Tagore in formation of Bangla self and polity. The issues of self and nation appear as the prominent themes in their scholarship. Alam raises the issue of linguistic nationalism in shaping the course of formation of Bangla identity. On February 21, 1952, the government of Pakistan decided to impose Urdu as the only state language in the country. Alam sees the significance of Tagore heightens after this decision; hence, he states, "Since more than any other person, Rabindranath is the architect of modern Bengali, he would inevitably become a key rallying point for the activist of the movement" (2015, p. 25). The linguistic contribution of Tagore turns into a source for fighting for the independence of Bangladesh. Drawing on the historical development of Bangladesh as a nation, Anissuzzaman reviews the nexus between political and poetic significance of Tagore in East

Pakistan and Bangladesh. He critically evaluates Tagore's position in inspiring a generation of creative writers and intellectuals culturally as he critically remarks, "The younger generation was less concerned with his spirituality and sought to realize how he came to terms with life in this world and how through his works he dealt with the complexities of human relationships" (2008, p. 1064). As a political and cultural icon, Tagore remains in the core of Bengali cultural identity. Unlike major Indian scholarship on Tagore that focuses on the balance of tradition and modernity in Tagore's creativity, secular readings of Tagore emphasize on the issues beyond politico-cultural expressions. For instance, J. Edward Moses and Suresh Federick (2015) examine the issues of land rights in *Mukta Dhara* when they argue that land and people are deeply connected to each other, and the play centers its attention on the right of Shiva-terains to their land (p. 79). Similarly, Mahmud Shah Qureshi (2008) concludes that Tagore has drawn keen interest from the intellectual section all the time in Bengal to comprehend his philosophy, music, aesthetics and painting, education, and rural development (p. 1148). Tagore's presence is intensely felt in critical debate and scholarship of South Asian literature in that he carries political, cultural, and social significance in the formation of self and polity in the Subcontinent.

The critical scholarship misses the study of agency in Tagore's creative works even though modernity is vigorously discussed as one of the key dimensions in his writings and creative practice. The portrayal of strong subjects who emerge as awakened soul draws almost no critical attention in Tagore's writings. This paper examines Tagore's *Mukta Dhara* (1922) as the symbolic play that maintains the balance in society through awakening of agency and practice of resistance at the hand of such agency. The critical scrutiny of the play reveals that the master playwright develops five attributes for full realization of agency: critical reasoning, skepticism, resistance, self-sacrifice, and public welfare. Though Tagore presents multiple characters as a possibility of realizing themselves as agent in the play, only Abhijit passes through all the stages of the realization of agency in him. The hero understands the impact of intervention of the machine in the social life of the people even though the people excitedly welcome the mechanical advancement of erecting dam across the free flow of the stream and prepares to take up the challenge to break the stream free from the imprisonment of the state

Mukta Dhara successively presents a list of possible agents who are assigned with the responsibility to rewrite the dictation of the power center. Tagore

peoples the play with Amba, Batuk, Visvajit and Prince Sanjaya, Dhanajaya Bairagi, and finally Prince Abhijit as the possible agents in an order that ranges from the minimal attributes of agency as in Amba or Batuk to the full realization in Prince Abhijit. On the other side, the Royal Engineer Bibhuti stands as the antagonist force that helps Abhijit concretely realize his agency. Bibhuti has worked for twenty-five years to complete the construction of dam across Mukta Dhara and succeeds in arresting the free flow of water. His scientific achievement grows big into a matter of national pride: the King Ranjit himself prepares to go to Bhairav temple to offer solemn worship to the god. There appear the agents in the making to counter the forces that are devoid of self-sacrifice and public welfare in this backdrop in the text.

The initial, faint traces of agency emerge in characters like Amba and Batuk in the play. Both the characters appear in the first scene in search of their family members. As a national endeavor of Uttarakut to imprison the waters of the Mukta Dhara, many lives were lost to complete Bibhuti's construction of the dam. Amba has almost lost her rationality in search of her son, Suman: she keeps crying, "Suman! My Suman! [To the Citizens] All the rest have come back, baba, but my Suman hasn't come back yet" (Tagore, 1922, p. 11). Like Amba, Batuk has lost two grandsons in the same project. The nation does not respond to their search for the lost members. Unlike Amba who believes that her Suman will return one day, Batuk shows higher level of awareness of the politics of the society when he sees human sacrifice at the altar. He further narrates: "The blood of my two grandsons was poured out when the altar was built. I thought such a shrine of sin would break itself. But it has not broken yet; Bhairava has not awakened" (p. 29). Batuk displays an advanced state of consciousness and that of agency than that present in Amba: both of them have personal reasons to fight against the oppressive polity. However, Batuk uses both his critical rationality and skepticism as the prime guiding attributes in his vision.

The maturity in critical reasoning and skepticism result in a form of resistance in agents. Critical sensibility penetrates deep into the social structures to examine the loopholes into which to anchor one's will to transform the underlying core of the social setup. In other words, the agents begin to doubt the whole system and then decide on the harsh measure to intervene into it. Tagore's Visvajit and Sanjaya lack the power to act without consent of the Prince Abhijit. Undoubtedly, they possess critical attitude to Bibhuti's scientific feat.

As member of Royalty, Visvajit holds a very influential position in the court; still, he takes up all the risk to steal away the imprisoned prince to Mohangarh. Tagore writes:

ABHIJIT. Nothing can imprison me today –neither anger nor affection. You think it was you who set the tent on fire? No, it would have caught fire in any case, somehow or the other. I have no leisure for captivity today.

VISVAJIT. Why, brother, what have you to do?

ABHIJIT. I must pay my debt, the debt of my birth. Mukta-dhara was my nurse. I must set her free. (p. 53)

On the surface, Visvajit does not directly challenge the authority of the state. However, he resists in subtle ways as he awakens in the prince that he is the foster child to Ranjit. Prince Sanjaya cannot fully realize himself as the agent; rather, he acts as confidante to Abhijit. On the contrary, he waits for Abhijit's command and consent to carry out certain action. Abhijit says: "No, the same work is not for all. What has fallen to me is mine alone" (p. 54). He refuses to take Sanjaya with him. In fact, agents require both novelty and will to assert their choice over the social structure that forgets to exercise justice for everybody.

The antagonist functions as force in the play as the whole design of the action assumes the heightened clash between the good and evil. Tagore builds on the idea of excellence on the part of the antagonist so as to clarify the contrast of two opposing ends. The Royal engineer Bibhuti has worked for two and a half decades to construct the dam in which many people have lost their lives. People like Amba and Batuk significantly voice against the loss of their family members. As Utpal K. Banerjee writes,

Mukta Dhara dramatizes the sacrifice-fulfillment myth. The dramatic idea is intensified at every step by the interaction of the forces implicit in the three symbols of the machine, the temple and the stream. The whole world of the play is symbolic of the complex of the values that subvert ethical politics; displaces the divinity as the highest morality; and undermines the free current of the stream as the state of natural order. (2010, p. 134)

Since the goal of the dam is centered on teaching lesson about the superior position of the state of Uttarakut to the people of Shiv-terai and asserting the superior position of Uttarakut, Bibhuti turns into mere force which is devoid of

collective welfare. He loses himself a humane position in the state for two reasons: for one thing, his success moves against Indian spirituality; for the other, he employs the machine to assert the power of Uttarakut on the lower plains.

Even the most perfect of the systems possess certain cracks through which the agents make their way into the core and revise the inner configuration as part of resistance. The readiness to sacrifice their own life for the collective welfare inspires them to take up any challenge. Bibhuti turns into a soulless scientist when he reveals his intention behind the invention: "The purpose of my dam was that human intelligence should win through to its goal, though sand and stone and water all conspire to block its path. I had no time to think of whether some farmer's paltry maize crop would die" (p. 12). As force, Bibhuti wants to transform his position through his scientific feat and benefit in the existing political order. He accepts the limitations of his engineering structure across Mukta Dhara where there are weak spots. As Bibhuti says, "Death himself is on guard there. No, there is no fear for the dam" (p. 65) because the gush of the water washes away everyone meddling with the giant structure that has arrested huge body of water in it. So too, Bibhuti finds himself in a superior position to that of the prince: he turns down the Prince's request to break the dam on his own by saying, "Now that the monument is finished it is no longer mine. It belongs to all Uttarakut; I have no authority to destroy it" (p. 13). He blurs the line between the personal quest and public achievement and generalizes his success as that of the nation so as to protect it from the opponents.

Tagore adequately provides space for the suppressed to voice themselves in the play by introducing Bairagi Dhananjaya who carries the spirit of early Gandhi. The Bairagi represents the lower plain, Shiv-terai. As a mouthpiece of the weak, he becomes the voice of revolt and challenges the authority thus:

DHANANJAYA. [Sings]

Your chains will not put me to confusion,
Nor will my spirit die beneath your blows.
Here in my heart do I hold
The charter of freedom given by His own hand,
And your captivity will not hold me captive. (p. 47)

As he is an embodiment of inner strength for both Uttarakut and Shiv-terai, he helps awaken the inner spirit of revolt against the irrational practice of power. As R. Sandhya rightly sums up, “He urges these people to develop to their inner strength and become self -reliant instead of always looking to him for guidance or leadership. He is also a great believer in god and in the ultimate triumph of good over evil” (2016, p. 3). He follows the spirit of nonviolent struggle to arrive at victory by arousing the inner agency in the people of both the states.

The deliverer of the suffering people, Abhijit realizes true agency developing in himself all five attributes. He fights towards maintaining the organicity of both the social and natural order by enforcing in the social and natural structure an order. The imprisonment of waters at Mukta Dhara gnaws him from inside in that he perceives it as curtailment of freedom. Tagore presents his state of mind after the construction of the dam across the river in the following words:

ABHIJIT. Somewhere or other in the external world, God writes for us the secret mystery of each man’s spirit. Mukta-dhara is His word to me, bearing the secret of my inner being. When her feet were bound in the iron fetters, I was startled out of a dream. I realized the truth –the throne of Uttarakut is the dam which binds my spirit. I have taken the road in order to set it free. (p. 27)

In a very saintly state of mind, he calmly utters these words to his confidante Sanjaya who fails to reach the depth of the meaning lying therein. In fact, he renounces the joy of the Royalty for the sake of his people in Shiv-terai. As the in-charge of the lower plain, he had won the people’s heart by opening the Nandi Pass.

The court at Uttarakut never understands the ways of the Prince who follows the natural course of freedom. He feels connected to the stream as he was found there. When everybody waits patiently for Bhairav to awake in the temple, genuine agency grows in its full bloom in Abhijit. Like Amba and Batuk, he realizes the tortures of the machine in his inner being. He does not differentiate himself distinctly from the suffering mass; rather, he gets himself dissolved in them –the suffering of Uttarakut, the destitute from Shiv-terai, and the weak and angry from Dhananjaya’s poems. Bhairav assumes human form in him as he says, “Where the call has sounded, the light will be given too” (p. 54). He commits himself to break the fetters of the dam, preparing himself for any cost for the collective well being of the people of Uttarakut and the people of

Shiv-terai. Batuk and Dhanajaya wait at the shrine for the final awakening of the agency:

DHANANJAYA. When Bhairava's dance begins, it begins unseen. We see only as it draws to its close.

BATUK. O Master, give us confidence, for we are much afraid. O Bhairava, awake! The light is quenched, the path is lost, no answer meets our cry. O Bhairava, awake! O Mritunjaya, Conqueror of Death, lay low our terrors by thy terror. (p. 55)

The expectation of the world gets materialized in Abhijit who understands the nature of challenge and prepares himself to meddle with the construction across the river. In fact, Bhairava awakes in Abhijit in full form by clearing realizing critical reasoning, skepticism, resistance, self-sacrifice, and public welfare. Since human agency is also viewed "as a temporally embedded process of social engagement, informed by the past (in its habitual aspect), but also oriented toward the future (as a capacity to imagine alternative possibilities) and toward the present (as a capacity to contextualize past habits and future projects within the contingencies of the moment)" (Emirbbayer & Miche, 1998, p. 963), Abhijit stands tall with his commitment to the service of the humanity. He prepares himself to engage in the social circumstances leading to formation of the soul concerned with general welfare of the human beings in general.

Mukta Dhara addresses the spirit of his time through a variety of possible agents in Amba, Batuk, Visvajit and Sanjaya, Dhanajaya, and Abhijit. As a matter of fact, Tagore presents Amba, Batuk, Visvajit and Sanjaya, and Dhanajaya as variants of Abhijit in making, for each of them gradually displays one or two virtues necessary for concrete realization of agency. The structural flows appear before an agent through critical reasoning and skeptic attitude to the overall functioning of social structure. In addition to this, when the inner strength grows in the subject to challenge the political position in existing order, resistance shows its first spark that gradually advances towards awakening of Bhairav, the angry form of Shiv—the lord of destruction. Most significantly, agency prepares the questioning subject to accept the challenge of putting oneself at stake for the larger good of the society. Abhijit realizes himself as the true agent who culminates all the attributes from the unrealized agents in *Mukta Dhara*.

4. Resistance as Humanism

As awakened consciousness, agents make sense of themselves as critiquing, doubting, and resisting beings oriented towards collective welfare even at the cost of their own lives. Similarly, agents make the sense of the world as insufficient, inadequate entity which fails to provide everyone with the rewards of collective living. The awakening of agency paves road for both critique and doubt towards the existing order which requires correction through intervention in nonfunctional and/or dysfunctional domains. Agency gets ready to enter the core of the underlying structure whereby causing disturbances in the comfort zone of the existing order. This tension further intensifies commitment of the agents to concretely implement their vision for change; consequently, the tension between the old and the new leads to resistance as the act whose goal centers itself assertion of human choices to correct the flaws of human assumptions in social configuration.

Agency gives birth to resistance as much as society leads to the formation of agency after realizing the necessity of its intervention in the prevailing order. Questions and doubts form meanings out of the challenges of the social reality, thereby resulting in moral responsibility to address the root cause of the erroneous issue. Archer sees the necessity of human self to realize responsibility to bring about change in existing reality by comprehending the spirit of time and expectations of the people. She states: "The implication for society is that nothing is done, for without selves, who sense that responsibilities are their own and who also own expectations, then the latter have all the force of the complaint that 'someone ought to do something about it'" (2004, p. 257). Resistance develops into a human point of departure to view past, present, and future, for the agency seeks to explore the historical roots of the contemporary concerns that require proper and timely address to bring about complete transformation for everyone in future. As a human tool to make intervention possible in socio-political arena of life, resistance serves agency as an altar of worship of human beings.

Agency brings resistance to surface as human act to assert human choices in social configuration that has stopped serving collective wellbeing in general. The birth of agency assumes abyss in the social imagination which gets healed through human rationality. As human agency implies that it is embedded in the social engagement in both time and space, resistance appears as agency's tool to fight for larger goals of human life. The continuous flow of human creativity

and consciousness employs agency to serve humanity in general. Implicitly, agency grows itself as a function of resistance in the course of exploring rational course of the society, thereby serving the cause of humanism.

References

- Alam, F. (2015). *Tagore and National Identity Formation in Bangladesh*. Bangla Academy.
- Anissuzzaman (2008). Claiming and disclaiming a cultural icon: Tagore in East Pakistan and Bangladesh. *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 77.4, 1058-1069.
- Archer, M. S. (2004). Agents: Active and passive. *Being human: The problem of agency*, Cambridge, 253-282.
- Archer, M. S. (2004). Resisting the dissolution of humanity. *Being human: The problem of agency*, Cambridge, 17-50.
- Banerjee, U. K. (2010). Symbols and metaphors in Tagore's drama. *Indian Literature*, 54.5 (259), 124-140.
- Bose, M. (2008). Indian modernity and Tagore's dance. *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 77. 4, 1085-1094.
- Emirbbayer, M., & Miche, A. (1998). What is agency? *American Journal of Sociology*, 103.4, 962-1023.
- Gupta, K. S. (2005). *The philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore*. Ashgate.
- Masse, K. (2017). Popular culture, 'resistance,' 'cultural radicalism,' and 'self-formation'. In Butler, M. et al (Eds.), *Resistance: Subjects, representations, contexts* (pp. 45-70). Transcript Verlag.
- Mitter, P. (1989). Rabindranath Tagore as artist: A legend in his own time?" In Lago M. & Warwick R. (Eds.), *Rabindranth Tagore: Perspectives in time* (pp. 103-121). Mcmillan.
- Moses, J. E., & Fedrick S. (2015). Land rights: A study of Tagore's *Mukta Dhara*. *LangLit*, 2.2, 78-84.
- Qureshi, M. S. (2008). Literary assessment of Tagore by Bengali Muslim writers. *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 77.4, 1133-1152.
- Rogers, K. M. (1989). Rabindranath Tagore: Inheritor and creator of traditions. In Lago M. & Warwick R. (Eds.), *Rabindranth Tagore: Perspectives in time* (pp. 26-49). Mcmillan.
- Samantaray, S., & Patro S. (2018). The code of ecomysticism in Rabindranath Tagore's works: A critical appraisal. *Trames*, 22.72/67, 311-326.
- Sandhya, R. (2016). Coup of humanitarian over science in Tagore's *Mukta-Dhara*. *Pune Research: An international journal in English*, 2.6, 1-3.
- Tagore, R. (1922). *Mukta Dhara*. In Sykes, M. (Trans.), *Three Plays: Mukta Dhara-NatirPuja-Chandalika* (pp. 9-72). Oxford.
- Tamen, M. (2012). Resistance and interpretation. *Common knowledge*, 18.2, 208-219.