



## FEMINIST ELEMENTS IN TORU DUTT WRITINGS

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### ABSTRACT

The present paper deals with “Feminist Elements in Toru Dutt Writings” She placed her country, and was among the first to do so, on the international map of letters. She, nevertheless, was not slow to realize that her own oriental background of literature was so precious that she would have to commingle it with her earlier abundant knowledge of French and English. She soon began to educate herself, with her father’s help, in Sanskrit. It is to observe that the first generation of women writers like Toru Dutt were confined to the spiritual themes. Their consciousness and sensibilities are imprisoned in the exploration of spiritual themes.

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Feminism in Indian English literature is a by-product of the western feminist movement but it acquired sustenance from the freedom struggle. The availability of western feminist theory should not lead us to its indiscriminate application because cultural contexts must be considered first. This is inevitable because we have a different history, different ethos, different forms of social stratification and patriarchal domination and if we need a feminism specific to our social situation we also ought to develop, as K. Satchidanandan observes: “a feminist literary theory specific to our own creative and critical situation, by which is not meant an unconsidered abandonment of shared patterns of reading and writing.” (The Laughing Medusa or the Raging Draupadi, Indian Literature, No.157. September-october, 1993.p.5).

The History of the emergence of women writers in Indian writing in English was of great significance during the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As K. S. Ramamurti supports the point by

saying that though the “output was scanty, it was qualitatively superior to those of many others who wrote before and after them”. (K.S. Ramamurti, Rise of the Indian Novel in English. 1987.66).

Toru Dutt was one such prodigy. Though she was always identified with Indian and as a daughter of the “green valley of the Ganges; her mind was unclouded by narrow national or linguistic inhibitions or mental barriers. Happily true to herself, she delved into the treasures of English and French literature, the two forging tongues in which she was educated, and acknowledged without reserve her debt to the countries which inspired her. She placed her country, and was among the first to do so, on the international map of letters. She, nevertheless, was not slow to realize that her own oriental background of literature was so precious that she would have to commingle it with her earlier abundant knowledge of French and English. She soon began to educate herself, with her father’s help, in Sanskrit. Some critics think that Toru’s

poetry is appreciated because it is so closely associated with her sad life: "Beauty and tragedy and fatality crisscrossed in the life of Toru Dutt and it is difficult, when talking about her poetry, to make any nice distinction between poetry and what C.S. Lewis call "Poetolatery".

Toru often felt the restrictions that hampered the freedom she experienced abroad. She therefore fitted into an international world happily and welded the Christian religion into her Hindu background. Here perhaps lay her richest claim. She did not, I think, feel, as Gosse did, that "faith itself in Vishnu and shiva had been cast aside with childish things and been replaced by a purer faith". She felt imbibed a more personally satisfying religion-her serene faith in Christ was what made her face pain and early death with such peace. She never felt that Vishnu and shiva were "childish things". She crooked to Hindu mythology so enthusiastically because she felt a deep respect for Hindu Gods, heroes and heroines as she so frequently reiterated. Toru thus lived in an age of productive and fertile awakening, and proved herself to be a brilliant and constant star which shone not only in her time, but illuminates the literary scene even today, a century after her birth.

Toru was a good crafts man in verse, her feeling for words was spotless, and her eye and ear were a like trained for poetic description or dialogue. But these tales-some of them, at least with supernatural. Toru's shorter lyrics "*The Tree of Life*" describes how an Angel, his face lit up with pity and love divine, once stood by the side of 'a tree with spreading branches" and crowned her head with "a few small sprays":This is the nearest to the recordation of a 'mystic' experience in Toru's poetry. On the other hand, the sonnet 'the Lotus' is 'fancy free' and exemplifies her delicate talent for building up a poem.

It is to observe that the first generation of women writers like Toru Dutt were confined to the spiritual themes. Their consciousness and sensibilities are imprisoned in the exploration of spiritual themes. This particular phenomenon is obviously seen in West Bengal as Bengal was the place that responded to the assimilating tendencies initiated by the Colonial powers. Toru Dutt's sister

Aru Dutt equally shares the credit of exploring and testing her poetic abilities in realm of spiritual frame work.

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