



Rabindranath Tagore's Novel The Home And The World An Allegory

* Dr. A. Tamilselvi

* Associate Professor Of English, Thiagarajar College Of Engineering, Madurai

ABSTRACT

Rabindranath Tagore mainly celebrated as poet, showered his multi-faceted talent upon different genres of art. As a novelist he wrote novels of social realism, social reform, religious vestiges, patriotism and national liberation. They are full of ideas. It does not mean that his novels are deprived of beautiful images, descriptions and lyrical quality. The world speaks to him in colors, his soul answers in rhythmical patterns. Tagore's novel The Home and the World is an allegory. The title of the novel itself is an indication of this theme. This article aims at analyzing how this novel quite obviously reflects this idea through its plot and character delineation.

Keywords : Allegory, nationalism, Swadeshi movement, Machiavellian.

Introduction

As narrators of imagined or realistic events Indians surpassed all other writers in the world. It is reflected in our ancient classical literary traditions. Rabindranath Tagore, a towering personality of the second millennium world Literature remains unsurpassed to this day by his unique contribution to this large and flourishing tradition. His works are classics renowned for its lyrical beauty and moral thoughts. Though he is mainly celebrated as poet, his multi-faceted talent was showered upon different genres of art. As a novelist, he wrote novels of ideas. Underneath the colorful yet powerful descriptions the pivotal idea is conveyed. He showed that reality can be viewed not only from direct prosaic words but also from the imageries and symbolic languages.

Tagore's novel The Home and the World is an allegory. To read this novel one should bear in ones mind his vision of modern Indian society. He is truly a man of whole earth, a product of the best of both traditional Indian and modern Western cultures.

Title Is An Allegory:

The setting of this novel is the political agitation against the partition of Bengal and the Swadeshi movement. The youth of India have been mesmerized by the term nationalism and nationalistic movement, rendering unthinking sacrifices towards freedom struggle and failing to make a distinction between nationalism and patriotism, liberation and Westernization. Tagore draws a parallel between the social confrontation and the political confrontation. Home, a secured shelter stands for the social confrontation and the world, an open auditorium stands for political confrontation. The East equates with the Home and the West with the World. The main theme of the novel is the treatment of fear of Western domination over the existing tradition and culture. The title quite obviously reflects this idea. It is about the deconstruction of home into pieces and the reformation and re-formation of the very same after undergoing trials and tribulations. Tagore is of the view that the new life could emerge only through a creative fusion of the old and the new, the living past and the adventurous and realistic

present. The Home, an old monument tries to renovate it by the best arrivals adapting to the changing situations of the present. The synthesis of both resulted in the creation of new society suitable to the current period.

Characters Are Allegorical Elements

The story revolves around three sharply contrasting characters: Nikhil, a real patriot, Bimala, his wife, a toddler in political environment and Nikhil's friend Sandip, an aggressive yet materialistic charmer. They are the centre of all activities in the novel

Nikhil a replica of Tagore:

Tagore's vision of new life is voiced forth by Nikhil. He is not a conservative; he is a liberal man with modern bent of mind. He stands for all that is good and vital in the Indian tradition. His approach to patriotism and Swadeshi movement reflect Tagore's nostalgic memory of freedom struggle. The patriotism and traditionalism portrayed in the character of Nikhil reveal the real nature of our nationalism and the expectations of most of the people of our country. Though it is an imaginative character it paints the true picture of present day Indian society since the younger generation rocks between Indian traditional values and western domination. Nikhil symbolizes the model of the kind of person an Indian should be. It is not the expectation of the twentieth century India but it suits well for this third millennium generation also. "I am willing", he said. 'to serve my country; but my worship I reserve for Right which is far greater than my country. To worship my country as a god is to bring a curse upon it.'" (Tagore, The Home and the World, 30) Regarding Mohammedans in the country he further remarks, "If the idea of a united India is a true one, objects Nikhil, 'Mussulmans are a necessary part of it.' (Tagore, The Home and the World, 189).

Nikhil believes that the healthy and harmonious growth and development of a nation would not be possible unless women are brought into the mainstream of the national development. So, he gives Bimala education, culture, sophistication and thus transforms her into self-conscious women. He is probably a projection of an educated, modern Indian husband who is broad-minded enough to give dignity and freedom to his wife with full belief on her.

Bimala an image of India:

Tagore depicts India of his time through Bimala. In the beginning of the novel she is portrayed as a devoted Hindu wife known for her humility and dedication. Her husband longed to see her full-blossomed in all aspects and to know about the world. The opportunity comes in the form of Swadeshi movement. This 'came in like a flood, breaking down the dykes and sweeping all our prudence and fear before it'. (Tagore, *The Home and the World*, 25). In Indian context, woman is worshipped as the centre of power. India in its past glory was celebrated high for its valuable ancient culture and aesthetic tradition. Still India is respected only for indomitable pride for its spiritual heritage and empirical beauty. After the invasion of Britain, an outside element, India's glory adulterated. Bimala's metamorphosis also starts with the entry of Sandip, a friend of Nikhil.

The first phase of Nikhil-Bimala's life has no problem. Woman's prime paradise is home where they can come to know everything without fully comprehending each step of the world. And only when they come out of that paradise, the evil comes.. Sandip poisons Bimala's mind by placing her on the throne of authority outside her home. He creates an impression of raising the ordinary home bound Bimala from ignominious depth of ignorance and obscurity to the heights of enlightenment and glory. This is what happened when India first meet the pompous show of Swadeshi movement and the struggle against the partition of Bengal coupled with violent activities. The outward glamour starts intoxicating the mind and the heart of the youngsters.

As Bimala mistakes Sandip's activity for achievement the movement accelerated by misleading leaders like Sandip too is considered to be the greatest task. Sandip exploits the mind of the people as Britain exploits India. He surrenders nationalism and humanism for the sake of personal benefits. In the beginning "Bimala found herself free in the outer world" (Tagore, *The Home and the World*, 52), "Where our minds are free we find ourselves lost." (Tagore, *The Home and the World*, 53). Bimala's encounter with Sandip sparks off her degeneration. But she gradually perceives the cunning mind of Sandip and makes a deliberate choice to return home. She craves for the past and returns to the tradition bound home. .

Sandip an image of modern democratic politician:

Sandip an energetic, egoistic, wily schemer's aggressive western-type of nationalism is the one which pasteurizes the emerging trend of present democratic India and also the new track that was shaped during the nationalistic movement. He carefully keeps his followers confused by mixing up westernization, nationalism and social behavior. Sandip is sufficiently intelligent to guess the emptiness of his views. He projects himself to be the Machiavellian hero who does not bother about the means. Tagore with prophetic vision issues his warning against the European ethos of materialism and the Indian heritage of spiritualism as a counterpoint through the character portrayal of Nikhil, Bimala and Sandip.

Bimala is mesmerized to see the world through the eyes of

Sandip, felt the realities through Nikhil's modest activities but judged through her heart as woman is an allegorical symbol of the delicate and courageous intuition in the human mind. India, like Bimala, for sometime hypnotized by the violent forces of Sandip but ultimately it resorts to non-violent activities and past glorious serenity of the country advocated by Nikhil.

Flame As Symbolic Image:

The image of flame symbolizes pride, passion and power craving for something either good or bad.

Bimala is an ordinary girl, a traditional home-bound Bengali woman, an epitome of Indian womanhood. Into this comfortable world passion enters in the form of Sandip. On the very first day of their meeting Sandip addressed her in a way that adds fuel to the flame that is already within her. There was already a suppressed side of Bimala's which has not responded to Nikhil's idealistic love. In the opening chapter, there are indications that she had something to worry about her husband's physical beauty. The day Sandip exalted her on the throne of the queen for the patriots, "I can see that you are that beautiful spirit of fire, which burns the home into ashes and lights up the large world with its flame. Give to us the indomitable courage to go to the bottom of ruin itself. Impart grace to all that is baneful." Tagore, *The Home and the World*, 48), her dormant pride was fed and inflamed. She considers herself as the Sakthi of womanhood incarnate possessing the spirit to rule not only the Home but also the World.

Sandip accelerates Bimala's pride by making her feel that she possess divine strength of the deity of the house and flame of the soul. Sandip says, "Today you have given me the message of my country. Such fire I have never beheld in any man. I shall be able to spread the fire of enthusiasm in my country by borrowing it from you". (Tagore, *The Home and the World*, 48) It further intoxicated her mind to the extent of feeling elated at the thought that she could stir passion even in a man like Sandip, who had been admired by many. Bimala allows herself to be carried away by the flattery flame of Sandip. This happen because all along Bimala had thought her husband lacked boldness, at the same time she found in Sandip the daring boldness which has no boundary. The wave of passion strikes her vehemently and she admits. When the upkeep of the home is neglected, the harmony at home is broken with the results which far overweigh the gains.

Conclusion:

It is to be noted that Tagore has used the title of the play, the characters and some symbolic images to reinforce the impression that they are allegorical elements to represent something. It is all exhibited through thoughts, feelings and experiences. The more notable feature of this novel is the skillful play of these images to deal with certain problematic issues, Swadeshi movement, violence, nationalism and relation between husband and wife. The self narrative style adds more impact and evokes correct response what the author expects. Thus it is proved that Rabindranath Tagore's novel *The Home and the World* is an allegory.

REFERENCES

Tagore, Rabindranath, *The Home and the World*, 2002, Rupa publications, New Delhi.