

Chimeras In Time-Honored Societies

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Abstract

*A river flows serenely accepting all the miseries and happiness that it comes across its journey. A tree releases oxygen for human beings despite its inner plights. The sun is never tired of its duty and gives sunlight without any interruption. Why are all these elements of nature so tuned to? Education is knowledge. Knowledge comes from learning. Learning happens through experience. Familiarity is the master of life that shapes the individual. Every individual learns from nature. Nature teaches how to sustain, withdraw and advocate the prevailing situations. Some dwell into the deep realities of nature and nurture as ideal human beings. Life is a puzzle. How to solve it is a million dollar question that can never be answered so easily. The perception of life changes from individual to individual making them either physically powerful or feeble. Society is not made of only individuals. Along with individuals it has nature, emotions, spiritual powers and superstitious beliefs which bind them. Among them the most crucial and alarming is the emotions which are interrelated to others. Alone the emotional intelligence is going to guide the life of an individual. For everyone there is an inner self which makes them conscious of their deeds. The guiding force should always force the individual to choose the right path. Writers are the powerful people who have rightly guided the society through their ingenious pen outs. The present article is going to focus on how the major elements bound together are dominating the individual's self through Rabindranath Tagore's *Home and the World* (1916)*

Key Words: Introspection, Political commotion, Religious beliefs and so on

Introduction:

Home and the World (1916) was originally written in Bengali titled *Ghare Baire*. Though it was translated by his nephew, Surendranath Tagore as *Home and World* in 1919 it disappointed the readers as it lacked the novelty in many aspects. May be Surendranath had difficulty in translating the original parts of poetic prose and the poetry written in the form of Vaishnav Padavalis. As some opine his translation could not depict the real essence of the characters which makes the readers ambiguous in identifying the relations between the characters. Sreejata Guha, an MA in Comparative Literature from State University of New York at Stony Brook had translated this Bengali version taking much effort to safeguard the originality of the text. The introductory and notes were translated by Swagato Ganguly, a PhD in Comparative Literature and Literary Theory from the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, who made the readers to have an authentic picture of the great writer's biographical sketch.

The novel is a true replica of Tagore's struggle between the ideas of Western culture and revolt against western culture. The novel is set mainly against the Swadeshi movement and Partition of Bengal. Though Tagore was also the part of the Swadeshi movement, he left as he was worried with the religious conflicts between the Muslims and the Hindus. It's not like the other novels and has its own mark incorporating the twenty six chapters as first

person narratives. Though there are many characters, the entire novel is narrated by three people Nikhilesh, his wife Bimala and his friend Sandip Babu.

Though Tagore doesn't rule out much of his approval on a modern view of a husband in accepting an independent wife in his dark novel, Satyajit Ray filmed it in 1984 making a change from the original version. He wanted Bimala to regret, so he brings back the body of Nikhil. Whatever may be the version of a veteran director and a versatile writer the novel is incorporated with all the essential elements for the smooth functioning of a society. The novel is set in 20th century, where the country was facing political turmoil in the hands of the aliens. Tagore weaves the political furor with the individual's confusion.

An Insight into the Intricacies of Relationships:

The story starts with Bimala, one of the narrators, the only female narrator and centralized figure of the novel who clearly gives an indication of her personality, "I was not beautiful" (1). Though beauty doesn't alone make a woman, there are many things to be considered apart from it. As Beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder, one cannot assess a man or a woman merely basing on their physical charm. A man or woman is not simply a physical stature. More than the physical qualities many psychological issues are more important for a smooth functioning of life. Generally, a man and a woman have different perceptions regarding their opposite sex. Men want women to be docile, beautiful, submissive and capable. Women expect men to be caring, intelligent, courageous and independent.

If everything goes on according to the expectations, there is nothing to worry about. Unfortunately, human beings are puppets in the hands of the destiny. Not everyone has a chance to make his/her dreams true. What happens when the dream shatters? In this context one should say Bimala is very lucky. May be more than the external charisma, the internal charisma was honoured in her case. She was blessed to become the wife of Nikhilesh, a well-educated, disciplined and rich man. What more does a woman need more than this? Bimala was also happy. She was the queen of his heart. He modernized her in academics and attires. If things continue to be the same, human brain becomes passive. Though Bimala was unhappy with her widow sister-in-law's, Nikhilesh always tried to pacify her. He never argued and simply ignored her accusations expressing his pity on their misery. Though Bimala could not give birth to children, she was never blamed by any member of the family.

Political Turmoil Vs Emotional Turmoil:

As it was the time, where the political turmoil was disturbing the entire country, the disturbance also created havoc in Bimala's life. She was attracted to a freedom fighter Sandip Babu, who came to deliver a speech. Bimala was fascinated by his attitude and asked her husband to invite him for lunch. Nikhilesh could not suspect his wife and he allowed Sandip Babu to stay back in their house. Though the other inmates of the house were against Sandip's behaviour, Bimala didn't care about them and had a good time with him discussing the political issues. Sandip was very intelligent; he knew how to attract women. Though he knew Bimala was not physically beautiful, he knew she would be her savior. So, he decided to be in the presence of the 'queen bee', as he was totally aware of her status in the house.

Troubles come on their own way. It is we who should decide on what to do? God has given man the power to think. Our consciousness always guides to do the best, but if we turn a deaf ear, no one can save us. We are blessed to have a good discernment over the situations prevailing around us. Bimala who had a fruitful married life for nine years was at cross-roads to decide her future. She knew in many ways she cannot trust Sandip Babu. Though she had a strong character, she became weak in deciding her own future. She was completely lost between her married and new earned life, “I threw myself on the floor and began to weep. What, oh what will become of me? What is in store for me!” (77).

When Bimala could identify her inner self, was it not easy for her to follow the right path? She was sandwiched between her behavior and social beliefs. How could she forget the astrologer’s words, “This girl has all the signs of good fortune and she will make a virtuous wife’ (1). How could Bimala forget that she was the spitting image of her mother? Nine years of her married life have gained her good experience of how life should be. Amidst the strict traditional practices, her husband made her to be modern in thoughts and deeds. Is it too much of freedom that made her ambiguous?

A Toting Husband:

Nikhilesh who always feels, “All my life I have believed that I have strength to accept whatever God grants” (30) have applied the same formulae to retain peace at home and heart. May be that was where he was misunderstood. Though he was warned by his master Chandranathbabu to keep Sandip away, he was magnanimous that he suffered silently and did not let his friend out because he knew very well that his wife would not allow Sandip to move out. Nikhilesh’s generosity ruins Bimala’s sensitiveness. Bimala becomes a crook and robs money from her own house and along with her jewellery, she gives it to Sandip Babu. In this process, the innocent Amulya, the ardent follower of Sandip departs from the world.

Words are not enough to explain Tagore’s greatness. Nikhilesh forces Bimala to come out into the world, but she comes out of his world. Nikhilesh was not of that type of men who wanted women to be shut within the four walls. So, he wants his wife to observe a great world. He feels “The love I got from her habitually – did it stem from the deep well of her heart or was it driven by social pressures like the fixed ration of municipal water that one receives daily?” (31). How many husbands can think of their wives’ feelings? Is Bimala not so fortunate? May be destiny is cruel. It doesn’t give us all, if at all it gives we will be the masters.

Sandip is firm and strong, he always feels, “Only the powerless claim that whatever has been given to them is all that truly belongs to them, and the feeble ones assent. This world teaches you that only whatever I can snatch and grab is rightfully mine” (37). Who can bear the radical ideas of Sandip? Only at the end of the novel the true colours of Sandip and Nikhil come out. Nikhil shows his true patriotism, whereas Sandip escapes from riots and gives importance to his own safety. Sandip leads a lavish life. A person can be called as Zamindar not when he has rich resources but when he has a rich heart. Nikhil is truly a humanitarian, when he hears about the Muslims, he rushes to save them and injures himself.

Conclusion:

This novel is set up in the backdrop of Partition and Swadeshi movement. When the foreign goods were boycotted, Bimala boycotted Swadeshi culture of accepting the married partner. She was caught up between Nikhil, who was her home and Sandip, who was her world. She forgot the simple thing that home should be protected first because the world is filled with many homes. So, if a home is safe, world is safe. Women alone can destroy or sustain a family. The references of Goddess also show that they protect Samaritans and punish the evil tendencies. Such a woman is respected by man and nature. May be that could be one of the reasons for Nikhil accepting Bimal's attitude.

This novel is termed as a dark novel. The home is everything for any individual. Home gives us protection, assurance, adoration and belongingness. Once we leave the home, forever it is lost. Bimala's inner turmoil was clearly drawn out at the end, "All the time I felt I died, all troubles would cease. As long as I lived, the world would be plagued by my sins. I remembered the pistol that lay nestled in the box. But my feet wouldn't budge from this window, even to go and fetch the pistol ----- you see, I awaited my Fate" (210). What is left for Bimala? Nikhil is brought home with severe injuries. A great writer like Tagore leaves the last impression to his readers. He neither shows that Bimala was accepted nor Nikhil was cured. Should everyone pay for their sins, as Bimala has paid for hers? The penalty was too high, an everlasting lifetime of an average life span on the miraculous earth. May be what Anita Desai says is apt about this love saga. She says, 'there is nothing static, earthbound or lifeless about it.... It has the complexity and tragic dimensions of Tagore's own time and ours'.

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