



ADVANCE SOCIAL SCIENCE ARCHIVE JOURNAL

Available Online: <https://assajournal.com>

Vol. 03 No. 02. April-June 2025. Page# 413-419

Print ISSN: [3006-2497](#) Online ISSN: [3006-2500](#)Platform & Workflow by: [Open Journal Systems](#)

Transitions in the Character of Bimala: An Analysis of Tagore's Novel "The Home and the World"

Farhan Ali

M.Phil Applied Linguistics

Iqra University, Karachi

farhanali.rana862@gmail.com

Mehwish Salman Raza

M.Phil English Linguistics

Iqra University Karachi

mehwishsalmanraza005@gmail.com

Samina Akram

M.phil English literature

Lecturer, Khadija Girls College, Karachi

Samina.akram2016@gmail.com

Abstract

The current research article explores the transitional impact occurred in **Bimala's** character from traditionalism to modernism in "**Rabindranath Tagore's**" Bengali novel "**The Home and the World**". The novel examined the socio-political conditions of the inhabitants of the sub-continent during British colonial rule. The Indian Independence Movement was expedited after the Swadeshi movement. The character of Bimala is the core element of the novel for portraying the conventional domestic settings and women's role in the Indian Independence Movement. Specifically, the researcher with the support of evidence elucidates transitions in the character of Bimala.

Keywords: Swadeshi Movement, Indian Independence Movement, Bimala, traditionalism, modernism, transitions

1. Introduction

In the early twentieth century, the writers of the sub-continent focused to select their writing subjects for traditional domestic settings and prevailing socio-political contexts. The sub-continent was under the governance of British rule due to the natives' setback in the war of independence in 1857. A strong resistance was offered to British rule after 1905 due to the partition of Bengal by "Lord Curzon."

"Rabindranath Tagore", a noble laureate, an influential writer, poet, composer and social reformer of the early twentieth century in Bengal. His writings brought immense reforms to Bengali art and culture. Various sensitive issues having their based on social and cultural contexts had been discussed through his influential writing. He was the author of the Bengali novel "Ghore Baire" or "Ghare Baire" published in 1916, as a manuscript of traditional Bengali nuclear domestic settings. "Surendranath Tagore" his nephew published the translated version as "The home and the World" in the English language in 1919 after acquiring close guidance from the writer. "Satyajit Ray" an Indian well-known director and filmmaker, released his movie on the story of aforesaid novel in 1984.

The plot settings and the general environment were under the strong influence of the Swadeshi Movement. The film's main cast consists of "Soumitra Chatterjee", "Victor Banerjee" and "Swatilekha Sengupta" and the movie was shortlisted for Golden Palm Award. In 2014, a London-based daily newspaper enumerated the novel among the 10 all-time best Asian best novels

1.1 Historical background

"Rabindranath Tagore" a conventional Indian writer and polymath produced his novel in the contextual settings of Suksar, Rangpur and Calcutta. The novel offers a deep insight into the Bengali nuclear family settings. The events listed in the novel provides a close glimpse of traditionalism and a network of social bonding. The atmosphere of the novel was under the influence of the Swadeshi movement, which later transform into the Indian Independence Movement. "Rabindranath Tagore's The Home and the World" (1915) is usually read in terms of an allegory, either on the historical event of the partition of Bengal in 1905 by Lord Curzon or on the nationalist worship of Mother India around the turn of the twentieth century" (Pham, 2014).

"Swadeshi Movement" was deeply rooted in the idea of patriotism and love for the motherland. It offers self-sustainability and self-efficacy behaviour and dependence on the domestic product. To curb the import of foreign goods and depend on the local market was the basic aim of this movement. All the prevailing discontentment in the natives of the sun-continent was the result of the partition of Bengal. Swadeshi movement was formally started on 07 August, 1907 from Town Hall, Calcutta.

A fund raising campaign was also launched to uplift the movement on a nationwide platform. Swaraj (self-rule) was a dominating principle. Maharishi Dayanand Saraswati uttered this first time and later congress leaders and influencing leader Mahatma Gandhi declared it as the soul of the Swadeshi Movement.

2. Literature Review

Dey, (2022) explored the conventional settings of the novel from a psychoanalytic lens utilizing "fetishism" as an interpretation tool. In the paper, the author locates the socialistic and nationalistic sort of motivation in Bimala's character and Sandip served as a stimulus for said transition. Furthermore, the transformation in Bimala's character is identified towards the end of the novel.

Mukherjee, (2020) emphasized the rising trend of the Indian-educated woman community in the early twentieth century in Tagore's novel as demonstrated in Bimala's character. With the emerging new concepts of nationhood and nationalism, domestic women overcome patriarchy to some extent. Tagore strongly represented women as an embedded element in the traditional family settings and set deadlines against women's freedom. The loophole in Bimala's character toward transformation represents Tagore's reservation against women's freedom.

Banerjee, (2021) explored in Bimala's character, a struggle for freedom of Bengali women from traditional domestic settings and conventional patriarchal thoughts. Bimala, an educated woman possessed an intellectual mind and conflicting attitude towards life. Bimala reflected a strong understanding of the Swadeshi moment and was well familiar with its future. The transformation in character gradually occurs under the influence of the socio-political context and two male members (Nikhil and Sandip). The Indian mythology of Sita, Ram and Ravan had a strong influence on the domestic environment in addition to newly born concepts of Swadeshi, freedom and the Indian independence movement.

Zubair et al., (2021) examined the developing trends of modernism in Tagore's novel and concentrates on its impacts on social and political life. Moreover, the article explored deep-rooted tension in the Indian society due to traditions, customs and colonial rule. The characters in the novel were under the strong influence of the industrial revolution, colonial mentality, and modern hypocrisy. Furthermore, Tagore expressed his reluctance toward women's freedom and female subversion.

Paudel, (2019) examined the problematic view of women's role in Tagore's novel. Tagore's representation of women's society through the educated and intellectual character of Bimala intensifies his idea of modernity. However, Tagore had reservations about the complete freedom of women and portrays females as inferior, vulnerable and submissive. Furthermore, females were considered as stimuli for destruction and lack the intellectual ability for decisions in pressurized conditions.

Sen, (2016) explored Tagore's view of women as distinguished and fundamental to represent modern Indian women. In the context of colonial rule and domestic Indian settings, Tagore's fictional work provides a modern overview of Indian women neglecting domestic violence, patriarchal attitudes and is considered indicator of the modern period. Tagore strongly believes in women's empowerment for significant change but had reservations against the transitional behaviour of women. His prominent characters Chandara, Binodini, Mrinal, Kalyani, Damini, Bimala, Anila, Nandini, Kumudini, and Ela were portrayed as the stimulus for change and recurrently raised voices for women's rights.

Peacock, (2011) explored the spirit of nationalism and its beginnings in Bengal after its partition utilizing Tagore's novel "The Home and the World". The role of male dominance in the freedom struggle is analyzed along with the female patriotic spirit, especially the Bengali women. The two-fold explanation identifies how the natives strive to get rid of colonizers' rule and women's role in the freedom movement and question their individuality while living in the zenana (the specific area allocated for women's activities). Through a strong narrative, Indian women are often compared to Hindu goddesses such as Sita, Ganga, Gayatri, Lakshmi and Durga Maan. The paper concludes that Tagore's heroine, Bimala was futile to do so.

Wagh, (2020) explored the domestic constraints and socio-political behaviour of Bhadrakalok women when they transgress the conventional boundaries. The character of Bimala in Tagore's novel represents Bhadrakalok females. Further, the paper investigated the role of gender, Bimala's relationship with her husband and in-laws on the theoretical structure of gender studies.

3. Methodology

The research design usually refers to the techniques and strategies selected to perform research work. In this paper qualitative descriptive research design will be utilized for the collection of facts and their representation in chronological order. The purposive sampling technique (maximum variation sampling) will be utilized for the collection of information. The main objective of selecting this sampling technique is to ensure that findings reflect various associated elements of the main area, character or text. This technique is beneficial for the collection of information regarding the same event, character or incident through various lenses and accommodates a variety of information on a single subject.

The data will be collected through reading the novel, related documents and already published research articles. The process of excessive reading provides the prospect for in-depth study to understand plot settings, themes, purpose, potentials, culture, customs, norms, socio-political situation, economic situation and the writing style of the writer. The qualitative technique of content analysis and narrative analysis will be utilized for the following research article. Content analysis is a research method that provides a systematic and objective means to

make valid inferences from verbal, visual, or written data in order to describe and quantify specific phenomena (Downe-Wamboldt, B., 1992).

The process of content analysis provides a systematic and organized study of documents, published material, audio-visual recordings and artefacts. Moreover, it involves written text, oral text, iconic text and hypertext. The ethical consideration for writing a research paper also plays a vital role. Manipulating facts and providing data without evidence must be avoided. Confidentiality of text and person, self-respect, ecclesiastical beliefs, honour of person or community and truthful interpretation of facts should be adopted for producing standard research material.

4. Analysis

Tagore's novel "The Home and the World" provides a glimpse of conventional novel settings in Bengali society. The novel was lubricated with a rich vocabulary from the Hindi language as well as traditions and customs followed by the Bengali people. The novel begins with the discussion on the vermilion mark and sari, both are the jewels of married Indian women. Bimala had a dark look but owns holiness, the inner beauty of the soul and the astrologer gave her a license of a good and ideal wife. She was married to Rajah's house and her husband was also not in possession of good physical looks, the first meeting between husband and wife, incorporated little confidence in her personality. She imagines her childhood memories and the relationship between her parents and considers mutual understanding as a favourite element of happy married life. The conscious process of secretly taking the dust of the husband's feet was an indication of her traditionalism. Nikhilesh, an educated husband who possesses a modern ideology toward the husband-wife relationship, considers it totally illegitimate and an act of cowardice to claim absolute devotion. However, Nikhilesh was a strict follower of old traditions and built a conception of equality between men and women.

Nikhilesh's parents died earlier in his childhood and he was brought up under the guardianship of his grandmother and spiritual teacher Miss Gilby. Bara Rani is tremendously fond and proud of him. Bara Rani and my sister-in-law were famous for their magical enduring beauty. Nikhilesh's education brought awareness for female freedom and gender equality. He strived hard to take Bimala's out of purdah. He strongly invites her to come and meet outside realities. Nikhilesh was the first person for inducing a transition from traditionalism to modernism in her character. In the novel, after his grandmother's death, Nikhilesh wished for a combined living in Calcutta.

In 1905, after Lord Curzon partition of Bengal, British colonized rule had to face strong opposition in the form of the Swadeshi movement. The partition of Bengal was based on religion, with the eastern part with a Muslim majority and the western part Hindu majority. The British collectively face opposition from all parts of the sub-continent. Sandip Babu, Nikhelish employee, a receiver of his charities and a strong activist of the Swadeshi movement had a contrasting mindset toward the role of women in domestic and political scenarios. Miss Gilby, an English woman faced a setback from society all due to the Swadeshi movement. The young generation forgot their daily bath and meal in the eagerness for the Swadeshi movement. Nikhelish, cannot withstand the rising trend of the Swadeshi movement because he cannot absorb the essence of "Bande Mataram". Vande Maataram also pronounced "Bande Maataram", an extremely Sanskritized poem by "Bankim Chandra Chatterjee" in the 1870s and also included in his 1882 Bengali novel "Anandamath". In 1896, Congress session, Tagore sang the poem. The national song of India was based on the first two verses of the poem and it was adopted as national song in 1937.

Bimala's frequent interaction with Sandip brought transitions in her thinking and produced a soft corner for his personality. Her attraction was based on his actions, speeches, a surge of words and spirit to inculcate the Swadeshi moment. She becomes more indulged in his personality unlike to the standards of Bengali womanhood. A new spirit of pride and joy under the influence of modernism germinated in Bimala's character. Furthermore, her invitation to Sandip at dinner appeared as a license for her feelings towards Sandip and wearing a white sari, short sleeves muslin jacket with a golden border shows her interest. Sandip calls her as "Queen Bee" which indirectly attracts Bimala to him. He praised her for her sober dressing sense, beauty, voice and attractive personality. Sandip underestimates the man's thinking ability and declared women as true observers. On another occasion in the novel, Sandip appreciated her suggestion and confessed his mistake. The utterance of all these statements from Sandip indirectly gives birth to the feelings in her mind. All these situations indulge Bimala in a state of an extra-marital affair. Bimala was against Nanku, the guard who insulted Sandip on the orders of Bara Rani and requested his dismissal from Nikhil. The reading of the same book based on sex problems and conversation on modern sex problems also produce elopement between Sandip and Bimala. The transition in the character of Bimala gradually appears with the construction of the plot of the novel. Chandranath Babu, an old man and tutor of her husband also has the power to lift her mind, provide the solution to her problems. However, this is a respectable relationship but against social norms. In the early twentieth century, Bengali traditional settings offered ladies to interact with old female members for the solution to their social problems.

In the novel, Nikhilesh's brother beats his wife in his frenzy and remains drunken from dawn to dusk. Bimala's strong opposition to physical violence, verbal violence, psychological violence, sexual violence, socio-economic violence and domestic violence or in intimate relationships. These transitions appeared dominantly in her character. Nikhilesh also imported local items into the village under the influence of the Swadeshi movement.

Harish Kundu, a rich zamindar in the spirit of the Swadeshi movement had a burning conversation with a poor seller, Panchu. The zamindar ordered the physical punishment of the seller as well as set on burning the foreign cloth. The silent presence of Nikhil on the spot of the incident argues the acceptance of the movement from all aspects. The political movement has different impacts, including patriotism and materialism. Sandip was in favoured of the Swadeshi movement but more likely under the influence of materialism. Nikhil's approach was based on morality and equal rights. However, religious jealousy still exists in his nature. He put forward a ridiculous statement for other communities living in the sub-continent, especially Muslims.

Bimala while having a conversation went friendly and first time call Sandip Babu simply as "Sandip". Here the author also produces a mythological reference to Krishna, a major deity in Hinduism and Arjuna, a character in several ancient Hindu texts. This reference also justifies the universality of themes presented in the novel. Furthermore, Bimala frequently expresses her adorable love feelings for Sandip. Amulya, a poor dear boy when he first met Bimala, considered her like a sister.

Every year Bimala's husband makes a reverence for his sisters by offering six thousand rupees. The demand for the amount (six thousand rupees) from Sandip could be accomplished through this but Bimala considered it as theft. The demand for the requisite amount by Sandip and Bimala's rejection induces a controversy in their friendly relationship.

The conflict and protest by the natives against the colonized rule in the shape of the Swadeshi movement reshaped into a cold war within the sub-continent. The bloodshed, violence and killing of the nobles were executed by the warriors produced under the spirit of patriotism. Nikhil suggested that Bimala must be moved to Calcutta, which later supports her to

have a vision of the outside world. Nikhil also wanted to move but after depositing his sister's money into the treasury till the next morning. Sandip, as a materialistic person had no emotional feelings for Bimala. After getting success in his project, he left Bimala and moved to Calcutta. While going to deposit money in the treasury, Nikhil was shot in the head by robbers or political activists while Amulya is shot dead by a bullet through his heart. Bimala considers herself responsible for all incidents. She considers herself guilty of violating the relationship with her husband and had strong feelings of remorse.

5. Conclusion

The article accommodates the insight of Bimala's character and transitions with the construction of a persuasive and resilient plot by Tagore. This novel had been explored through the various lenses of political science, colonized literature, feminism, the mystery of murder, Swadeshi Movement, partition of Bengal, role of the community leaders, feudalism, Indian Independence Movement and early twentieth-century writings. The approach of analyzing transitions in Bimala's character provides a new glimpse to its readers and provides an in-depth analysis of women's struggle in the Indian Independence Movement. Moreover, the analysis of the female character provides details of domestic issues faced by the women's community of the early twentieth-century. However, the content and narrative analysis suggested that Tagore was reluctant toward women's freedom and had traces of strong patriarchal thinking. In the novel, Tagore concluded that equality and freedom of voice for women's indulged them in non-ethical activities and resultantly families has to suffer devastating damages.

Furthermore, future research can be accomplished by analyzing all female characters in the novel to have an overview of the feminist regime that prevailed in early twentieth-century. Future research can accommodate a brief analysis of occurrences in the novel and will provide inference meaning of the text.

References

1. Banerjee, A. (2021). Bimala in Ghare-Baire: Tagore's New Woman Relocating the "World in Her Home". *Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities*, 13(3).
2. Dey, N. Locating the Nationalistic Fetishism in Rabindranath Tagore's Home and the World.
3. Downe-Wamboldt, B. (1992). Content analysis: method, applications, and issues. *Health care for women international*, 13(3), 313-321
4. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/10630332/10-best-Asian-novels-of-all-time.html>
5. Mukherjee, P. The Woman Question: Politics of Gender and Space in Rabindranath Tagore's Home and the World (Ghare Baire, 1916). *Ghare Baire*, 58.
6. Paudel, S. (2019). Problematic Representation of Woman in Rabindranath Tagore's The Home and The World (Doctoral dissertation, Faculty of English).
7. Peacock, S. (2011). The nationalist question and the Bengali heroine in Rabindranath Tagore's Ghare Baire or The Home and the World. *Pakistan Journal of Women's Studies*= Alam-e-Niswan= Alam-i Nisvan, 18(2), 23.
8. Sen, S. (2016). Tagore's Women Heralding The "New Indian Woman": A Critique of the Women's Question in the Nationalist Discourse. In *Transcultural Negotiations of Gender* (pp. 171-179). Springer, New Delhi.
9. Tasneem, K. Defining Swadeshi Movement.

10. Wagh, S. K. (2020) Representations of Women in Bhadrakalok Community through Tagore's The Home and the World.
11. Zubair, H. B., Saeed, A., & Larik, S. (2021). MODERNITY DRAWS A LINE BETWEEN OWN AND THE OTHERS: EXPLORING SOCIETAL DILEMMAS, HISTORICAL THREADS AND TRADITIONAL PRESSURES IN RABINDRANATH TAGORE'S THE HOME AND THE WORLD. *PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology*, 18(08), 4971-4984.