

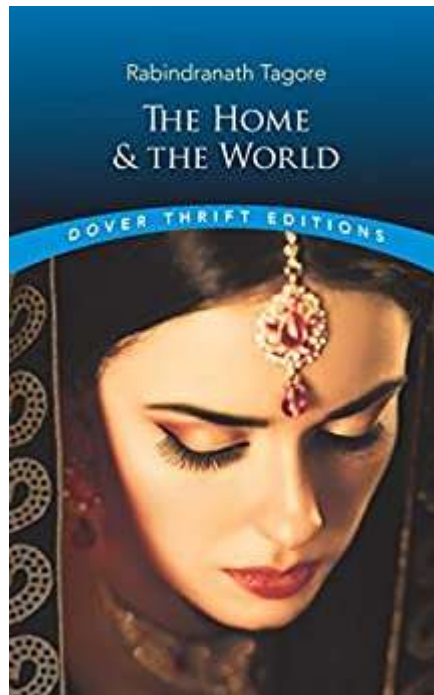
Exemplification of the Theme of Identity in Tagore's *The Home and the World*

Sandeep Kharvi

Dept. of Humanities
NMAM Institute of Technology-Nitte
Karkala-574110 Karnataka, India
sandeepkharvi@nitte.edu.in

Surakshitha

Lecturer in English
Dr. NSAM PU College, Nitte
Karkala-574110 Karnataka, India



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Abstract

Nation and Nationalism had been enchanting terminologies for historians, politicians, religious leaders, and common people. They are usually fused in the blood and veins of society. Being beguiling and enigmatic, the concept of nation and nationalism admittedly have both negative and positive consequences. The thought of Nation has the observable outcome that is supplemented strongly with the nation's people. Could it be, collectively, or individually

Nationalism can be grasped as one's love for the country? It is evident that individuals relate themselves with the piece of land that they live and revere putting on pedestal. Nationalism can also be acknowledged with patriotism. Both signify the love for one's nation. Nationalism can be Individual, collective, political, or cultural. Tagore, a renowned Indian writer, acknowledges the destructive effects of the idea of nation and nationalism, particularly in India. The association of culture, religion, gender discrimination and other social set up like caste, with nationalism and its deleterious effects on individual and society are common themes of his writings.

Keywords: Tagore, *The Home and the World*, Identity, Culture.

European model of nationalism is contrary to the oriental model of nationalism that comprises language and culture. This sense of identity ushered in beginning of the nineteenth century vitalized the Indian writers of literature to imagine cultural state through prevalent contemporary nationalist fervor in their fictional and poetic works. In the writings of Tagore an attempt to connect nation, nationalism, culture and humanity is reverberated. By connecting the different ideas like culture, religion and nation, Tagore displays the intricacies existing among social group that has resulted in the man-made institutions like religion, caste, nation and culture.

Identity and Culture

Gradually with the evolution of human civilization in different parts of world, the term came to be understood as concomitant of human life, where different races, communities, cultures created a niche to identify themselves sometimes by clubbing or by condescending attitude towards each other. Culture has been used to define the element of identity. This process of shaping different recognition generated several hostile and disagreeable actions, ideas, thoughts and attitudes in society. Discussion on cultural forms, a wealth of material from a variety of sources and societies explores the ways in which cultural forms of knowledge and expression shape and are shaped by human practices and experiences. Throughout the world we have history recording innumerable pages of treacherous contents, all striving to seek supremacy of some cultural content. It is evident that individuals relate themselves with the piece of land that they live and revere the same tangible proposition by putting it on the high pedestal. Europe has been the best example of such attitude. Nazi's attack on Jews, Whites ill-treatment over the Black, West's superior attitude over east and also much religious sectarianism across the world are the sweltering samples of how culture has held a predominant sway in way of commoner's life. Explore different models for understanding culture can be initiated through literary writings from across the world.

Indian nationalism manifested the search for identity, the admiration of the past, the cultural and reformative zeal, the nationalistic passion and the political view of the struggle for freedom. Nationalism is one of those key issues that Tagore has aptly portrayed in his writing indulging in culture within the strata of national context.

The Home and The World and Identity

Tagore writings illustrate the realistic portions of ordinary life meticulously and exhaustively. His *The Home and The World (Ghare Bhaire)* is an exemplary work that showcases the transformation of a woman, Bimala, who was content to confine herself to a family to get along as a propagator of patriotism. This characterization is a wonderful illustration of the element on nationalism through her portrayal in the novel. In his other work, *Gora*, believed to be an influential novel on nationalism, presents the female characters as a mature and poised person. Even if Sucharita and Lolita, the major women characters of the novel, are socialized in the same set up where *Gora* was, they become the synonyms for maturity drawing in the high opinion on nationalism and showing extraordinary thoughts within the established social institutions like nationalism.

Tagore strongly held an opinion that India's half of the social problems, could it be sectarianism, violence, hatred, religious issues, is resulted from lack of education. The impact of hegemony of nationalism and nationalistic ideology was widespread and overpowering in contemporary period when Tagore evolved as a writer. The established practice of nationalism affected Tagore intensely in span of time. The prevailing tendency compelled him to pen down his thoughts and spread out the message of humanity over any other man made social-political institutions. The mercurial nature of Tagore visiting the several places and meeting people shaped his outlook of nationalism.

Tagore and Identity

His writings are reflective and forceful. Treatment of literature to empower the marginalized sections of the society is an evident characteristic of his writings. Tagore traveled numerous places across the world and his thoughts are fascinated by the world he explored. His works majorly advocate the sense of humanity and explores and empowers the ostracized sections and their rights in family and society. Being brought up in an affluent educated family, Tagore was socialized with the elite lifestyle. His early education and ambiances fundamentally stimulated him.

His education was highly accomplished by traveling, acquaintances, and private tutors. His exposures to the different cultures, religions and classes had been immense. His recurrent visit to the different places, inside or outside India, broadened his views and made him a world citizen. He preached and practiced humanity. Though he associated himself with different cultures, it did not cease him from loving and embracing 'others' ideas and ideologies. Amartya Sen, a notable Nobel Prize awardee in Economics, emphasizing acceptance of Tagore by people of other region and religion, writes

“Muslim citizens of Bangladesh (had) a deep sense of identity with Tagore and his ideas. Nor from choosing one of Tagore's songs ... Tagore's own description of his Bengali family as the product of "a confluence of three cultures: Hindu, Mohammedan, and British". (Tagore and His India 2001.)

Tagore relates the identity even with the mental state of a person. Thinking and memory according to him could also be related to the identity. In an interview with Einstein, Tagore relates human emotions and science. He while relating the human tendency of dominating others and the same phenomenon in science, he states

“Our passions and desires are unruly...And is there a principle in the physical world which dominates them and puts them into an orderly organization?”
(Tagore, *The Religion of Man*, Appendix II 222-225)

Though he denounced nationalism, he believed in the strength of the country. Just like any other common citizen of a country, he too coveted the progress and prosperity of a country. He, while on a visit to Iran in 1932, wrote

“... Asia will solve its own historical problems...but the lamp they will each carry on their path to progress will [become] converge to illuminate the common ray of knowledge.” (Tagore, *Selected Letters of Rabindranath Tagore* 1932)

Tagore had firm belief in freedom. His thoughts and his ideas wherewith were based on proper reasoning. Gitanjali is the best known work for demonstrating Tagore’s idea on how freedom brings light to life and empowers life, he also urges nation to be heaven for freedom. His reserved views on patriotism and cultures also stemmed out from the same belief. Tagore’s propagation of same view is clearly expressed in Gitanjali’s verse,

“Where the mind is without fear
and the head is held high....;
.....Into that heaven of freedom,
my Father, let my country awake.” (Tagore, *Gitanjali* 2013)

Due to his steadfast view on freedom, Tagore disallowed all types of violence that would mortify civilization. He resented any of the fanatic view or irrational thinking that could deliberately bring mutilation to fellow citizen. Nationalism too was not an exception. His stances against nationalism or sectarian violence in the name of religion were crystal clear.

Tagore’s contribution to define the universal citizenship is commendable. He propagated the idea of oneness irrespective of differences on the basis of caste, race, creed and sex. He championed human rights for the sake of humanity. Being a traveler and exposed to the various cultures, he was against any identities based on religion. Amartya Sen writes in his *Poetry and Reason: Why Tagore Still Matters*

“...Tagore also worked hard to break out of the religious and communal thinking that was beginning to be championed in India during his lifetime—it would peak in the years following his death in 1941, when the Hindu-Muslim

riots erupted in the subcontinent, making the partitioning of the country hard to avoid. Tagore was extremely shocked by the violence that was provoked by the championing of a singular identity of people as members of one religion or another, and he felt convinced that this disaffection was being foisted on common people by determined extremists: “interested groups led by ambition and outside instigation are today using the communal motive for destructive political ends...” (Amartya Sen.2019)

Tagore and Universal Citizenship

It is proven that Tagore was a universal citizen. His countrymen rather live in a constrained wall of narrow-mindedness, he desired them to explore the different ways of life. Familiarization of different cultures, according to Tagore, not just benefits people to bridge a gap but also admit varied cultures and celebrate it. In Tagore’s letter to his son-in-law Nagendranath Gangulee, who went to the U.S for further studies in 1907, he stresses the blending cultures and tradition,

“...you must know America too..., one begins to lose one's identity and falls into the trap of becoming an Americanised person contemptuous of everything Indian.” (Tagore, *Selected Letters of Rabindranath Tagore* 1932)

Conclusion

As it has already been noted the proliferation of Tagore’s freedom of Mind through his deeds and words, it is evident that Tagore allied the same freedom with education in India. The narrow constrained thoughts due to the lack of education might lead to sectarian and other form of intolerance in society. Tagore even was disappointed to see a large number of people especially women in India failed to attain education. The laxity of British Raj, and societal obligations in the name of tradition destined women to domestic purposes. This also had led to the cultural separatism in India. It was witnessed that fundamentalists are not just seen only in India, but in many countries across the world. He believed India as a nest for different cultures and religion.

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