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## Globalization and the claims of Post-Coloniality: In Rabindernath Tagore's "The Home and the World"

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### Abstract

This paper aims to address critics of post colonialism that characterise it as an elite discourse, by exploring the role that it might play in Third World resistance movements. In doing so, it complicates the landscape of globalized normative theory, which has traditionally been mapped as a debate between post colonialism and communitarianism. This work explores the political challenges of sustaining such a critique by studying theorists of resistance who perceive themselves as manoeuvring between hostile global and internal environments. It analyzes the representation of Indian nationalism in India in the early twentieth century and the gender issues related to nationalism in the novel written by Rabindranath Tagore, entitled *The Home and the World*. In this novel, Tagore brings about the nationalist topic related to the *swadeshi* movement which was popular in that era. He like Jawaharlal Nehru's view and rejected Gandhi's vision on globalization. Gandhi saw modernity as a threat for the nation and culture, yet Tagore saw it as a provider of the ideological basis for the critique of foreign domination. So, this study aims to analyze the representation of Indian Nationalism by focusing on the ideological conflict and how the resolutions of the conflicts represent the idea of nationalism. It is believed that this novel presents a criticism of the Indian tradition and nationalism. Through the key characters that represent different attitudes, Tagore presents his view through the conflict among the characters. The ideological conflicts among these characters can be seen as an attempt of Tagore in presenting his views upon the tradition and modernism in India. The analysis of this study uses the approach of postcolonial criticism, theories from postcolonial studies, postcolonial globalization and representation of women in literature.

**Keywords:** Tagore, The Home and the World, Nationalism, Globalization, Post-Coloniality

### 1. Introduction

As a public intellectual Tagore was omnivorous in his interests, which encompassed literature, politics, the fine arts, religion, education, social reform and philosophy. Naturally therefore there are explicitly and on his broader reflections on the construction of postcolonial identities in his novel, *The Home and The World* (Ghare Baire). *Ghare Baire* appeared serially in the Bengali journal *Sabuj Patra* from May 1915 to February 1916 and in book form in 1916. It was published in English translation serially as *At Home and Outside* in the *Calcutta monthly Modern Review* over 1918-19 and as a book called *The Home and the World* by Macmillan in 1919. The novel has been critically analysed variedly. A lot of critical focus has been on his writing style (Tagore, 2005).

Tagore's critique of the inside – the call for fundamental social transformation – was not distinct from the critique of the outside: rather, he saw it as a more radical method of eliminating the hostile external (imperial) presence. For Tagore, an obsession with the (external) political without attention to the (internal) social promised to yield only ephemeral results. So, Tagore as a thinker concerned with barriers to freedom and self-determination emanating from both within and outside the community he played a central role in imagining. In other words, he was colonial and postcolonial critic of the hostile domestic as well as world conditions (Dutta and Robinson, 2005).

### Discussion:

The core argument of this paper focuses on changing perceptions of nationalism, especially from the particular to the universal and seeks to understand how this development contains the seeds of a postcolonial vision. I approach this topic through the fiction and prose of Rabindranath Tagore; specifically his critique of nationalism and his advancement of internationalism.

In colonized country such as India, the issue of nationalism rises greatly in relation to the resistance against colonization. Nationalist struggle like *swadeshi* in India was affected by the

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imperialism of European countries that tried to rule the peripheries. However, nationalism in colonized country like India has its own problems which sets the limits to what could or could not be said in that discourse (Sarkar, 1973).

In India, there are two distinctive views upon nationalism. The first view of nationalism is reflected through the advancement of Indian industry. The constructive nationalists tend to build things to make betterment for the country. On the other hand, there were extreme nationalists who tend to do brutal things such as burning foreign goods as they think that using foreign goods is a reflection of support towards British colonizers. The novel *The Home and the World* portrays this issue and reflects it through the conflicts inside the home as a representation of the conflicts of nationalist movement in India in the early twentieth century. Tagore resolved such problems by constructing a dichotomy revolving around *ghar* (home) and *bahir* (the world) which corresponded to the homologous distinction between inner and outer zones of sovereignty (Dutta and Robinson, 2005).

I argue that his concept of internationalism - located in the interactions of colonial and post-colonial, East and West, tradition and modernity - contains the seeds of cosmopolitanism of particular interest is how he perceives colonialism as a two way process. Taking the context of British colonialism in India, he observes that on one hand colonialism steers nationalism into becoming imperialistic. However, on the other hand colonialism presented a chance through which West came to be experienced by India and thereby introduced a channel of learning and exchange. Tagore argues that certain extreme forms of nationalism espoused and used in India's struggle for independence are ultimately self-defeating and he perceived nationalism as a purely western construct and warns against the extreme frenzy of nationalism that merely reproduces the Western mould. For him, independence lay both in denunciation of imperialism and the retention of the channel of learning and exchange. It is in Tagore's double-move that the roots of cosmopolitanism are clearly evident. This aspect of exchange and interaction contained in colonial and post colonial experience, indicate a cosmopolitan pattern inherent to it. A central task of this discussion part is to make this pattern explicit, underscoring the interface between different nations which Tagore terms as internationalism. It is pertinent that we have this difference, not to produce conflict but, in order to have the scope of exchange and learning and a blending and harmony between differences.

The analysis of this study uses the theories from postcolonial feminism and representation of women in literature. The study reveals the representation of India as a female character, named Bimala, and the representation of the ideologies of extreme nationalism and universal truth as the male characters, Sandip and Nikhil.

Gender construction is something inseparable from every aspect of life. The construction of gender also influences the concept of nationalism and social life. National fantasies, be they colonial, anti-colonial or post-colonial, also plays upon and with the connections between women, land or nations. The burden of women as the nation is symbolized in the nationalist struggles in the way they protect the nation as if they protect their mothers. The women, on other hand, are expected to undergo the reproduction processes in which the babies born are expected to serve the nation as martyrs. Anti-colonial or nationalist movements have used the image of the Nation-as-mother to create their own lineage, and also to limit and control the activity of women within the imagined

community. This claim shows the using of feminine subject to define the nation and signifies the nation as a form of family. Later he adds that the identification of nation as national mothers rooted from the wider association of nation with the family. The nation signifies home, its leaders and icons assume parental roles (Sudhir Kakar, 2008).

Under the colonial rule, the image of nation as a woman worked to highlight both female's power and helplessness. The depiction of nation as a mother shows the power of women who could protect her children from outsiders, in this term, the colonial ravages, but also needs her children's protection against the colonists. This framework intersects with feminist theory regarding the representation of women in literature. It can be seen as a model of theory investigating gendered being in specific cultures, especially in colonized countries.

The way women perceived themselves and were perceived was ineluctably shaped by the ways in which images of women were constructed and communicated to the population at large.

Women's identities are shaped by the social, cultural, and religious condition of their surroundings. How society and men perceived women is also shaped by the construction of the culture and social conditions. In the case of Bimala, nationalism intersects with gender in the way she is described as the nation. She is also on the crossroad of her life that she rejects her husband's intention to modernize her views upon everyday life. Her attitude on nationalism is also influenced by the attitudes of the superior males surrounding her, who have different views upon how the nation should be.

There are three distinctive views upon nationalism presented in this novel through the key characters, Nikhil, Bimala and Sandip. Nikhil represents the moderate view on nationalism. He represents the ideology of Rabindranath Tagore. He carries the most perception of the nation in Tagore's point of view. On the other hand, Sandip represents the extreme nationalist view. Between these two distinctive views, Bimala represents the dilemmatic view on nationalism. Tagore also depicts India in the form of a woman, Bimala. Bimala is portrayed as the physiological and psychological resemblance of the nation. This novel reveals several aspects of the conflict of ideologies including the conflict of gender and nationalism (Dutta and Robinson, 2005).

Along the story, Tagore proposes new insights to the readers, yet in the end he metaphorically kills his own ideology. This is shown as the signifier that in the struggle of infusing modernity, Tagore has found hard times to make people understand. Therefore, he exposed the tragic ending to his own ideology in this novel. By giving this ending, indirectly, he also drags the readers into wondering what is going to happen to Bimala and India.

This novel represents Tagore's perspective in seeing the effect of *swadeshi* to India. Furthermore, we can conclude that his novel reveals the ideological conflicts which are happening in the society as the result of modernization and British colonization. This revelation can be seen in the way Tagore contrasts the views of western ideology and eastern ideology through the characters Nikhil, Sandip and Bimala. It signifies that ideological conflicts could happen everywhere, even in the inside of a house (Tagore, 2005).

We viewed the Tagore's portrayals of the human condition are intricately bound up with the complex relations within society, with the state generally as an actor bolstering oppressive relations. In this way, his portrayals are very different from those of the writers of Renaissance Italy or Renaissance

England. His context was, of course, very different. Tagore's view of a sustainable, fully human condition (in the sense of widely available opportunities for all the people for attaining their human potential) is far closer to the perspectives of Marx and Engels than to the perspective of Arendt. Tagore's writings were directed against the de-socialisation of human beings by colonialism, by mindless traditions and their obverse mindless pursuit of money or technological development irrespective of their human costs. A proper exploration of this theme will require further studies.

### Conclusions:

*The Home and the World* is a 1916 novel by Rabindranath Tagore. The book illustrates the battle Tagore had with himself, between the ideas of Western culture and revolution against the Western culture. These two ideas are portrayed in two of the main characters, Nikhil, who is rational and opposes violence, and Sandip, who will let nothing stand in his way from reaching his goals. These two opposing ideals are very important in understanding the history of this region and its contemporary problems. The book shows "the clash between new and old, realism and idealism, the means and the end, good and evil" within India and southern Asia. This may seem a peculiar observation, since India remained a British colony for all of Tagore's life. Yet if we understand postcolonial thought, following Said, as reflection about "what we will do when the last white policeman leaves", then Tagore emerges as one of the earliest and most penetrating postcolonial thinkers in South Asia (Said, 1994). So, Tagore as a thinker concerned with barriers to freedom and self-determination emanating from both within and outside the community he played a central role in imagining. In other words, he was colonial and postcolonial critic of the hostile domestic as well as world conditions. From one perspective, globalization appears to be a sign of the coming into being of a cultural world order that questions the imperial cartography that has defined global relations since the early modern period. Globalization constitutes, in this regard, "a complex overlapping, disjunctive order that cannot any longer be understood in terms of existing." An interesting aspect of this book is the reading of Tagore's narratives as films. Tracing the deviations from the original texts, the authors forcefully argue that these film versions of Tagore's fictional narratives prove Tagore's relevance in post-colonial India and lately in a globalized 21st century India.

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