



THEME OF ALIENATION IN RABINDRANATH TAGORE'S
'THE HOMECOMING'

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ABSTRACT: -

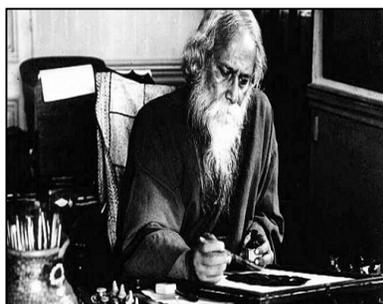
Rabindranth Tagore, a Nobel Prize winner writer, was a multifaceted personality. His writings included Poetry, Short-story and Fiction. In his writings, the main focus was on common people's lives, literary criticism, philosophy, and social issues. The present paper deals with an incident that occurs in a teen- aged boy's life who cannot keep himself apart from his own house. The paper focuses on theme of alienation in the central character of the story, Phatik Chakravorthy. He is described as homesick, disobedient, lazy, wild and a perpetual nuisance. Phatik, a boy of fourteen years old, belongs to a village and is sent to Kolkata to continue his study at his Uncle's house. It proved a futile process there because he could not adjust himself to this new culture and wanted to return his own village in the end of the story.

KEYWORDS: Rabindranth Tagore , criticism, philosophy, and social issues.

INTRODUCTION:

Rabindranath Tagore was a renowned literary writer, poet and humanitarian. He was the first Indian to be awarded Nobel Prize for Literature for his literary work 'Gitanjali'. He played a vital role in the renaissance of modern India. His writings have glimpses of both Indian and Western learning traditions. He stated his literary writing in his mother tongue Bengali but later on translated many of his own writings in English. He was also a philosopher and nation builder. He is widely appreciated for his poetry but he is also known as an accomplished writer of fiction, short stories, plays and articles. He once remarked, "So I repeat we never can have a true view of man unless we have a love for him. Civilization must be judged and prized, not by the amount of power it has developed, but by how much it has evolved and given expression to, by its laws and institutions, the love of humanity." The term 'Alienation' means as per Cambridge English Dictionary, "the feeling that you have no connection with the people around you." Merriam – Webster Dictionary defines it as, "a withstanding or separation of a person or a person's affections from an object or position of former attachment."

The Present paper focuses on the central character in the short story, Phatik Chakravorthy. The story opens up describing Phatik as a ringleader among the boys of a village. He is a boy of fourteen years old. His



father had died when he was very young. He lived in the village with his mother and his younger brother, Makhan Chakravorthy. Phatik is described as lazy, disobedient, arrogant and very mischievous. His mother often gets angry over him for some of the mischievous deeds done by him over Makhan. Once, an idea struck to his mind of having shifting a heavy log lying near the river waiting to be shaped into a mast for a boat. Phatik's friend become very excited by this idea and busy in pulling out the log, at that moment, Makhan arrives and sits over the log. Phatik and his friends convince him for moving out from the log but Makhan stays on it. Phatik becomes very angry by the deed of Makhan

and it becomes a prestigious issue for him to withdraw Makhan from the log. At last, Phatik and his friends pull the log with all the strength and Makhan falls down and being hurt him in the process. After reaching to the home, he tells to his mother all the mischief done by Phatik with him. Phatik's mother gets angry over him and slapped him and Phatik walks out from the house and sat near the riverside. At this juncture, Phatik's school teacher arrives and shows his dissatisfaction over his study in the school.

Phatik's uncle, Bishamber who lived in Kolkata arrived to visit his sister, Phatik's mother. Bishamber asks his sister about the progress of the two boys in education. Phatik's mother shows her discomfort over Phatik's progress in education. She says that Phatik is really a boy who is responsible for causing trouble to her in day today activities. He is disobedient, lazy and quarrelsome. Bishamber listened to the words of his sister carefully and replies that he is ready to take Phatik with him to Kolkata and will continue his study there. Phatik becomes very happy after listening to his uncle's proposal. He feels that there will be no one like his mother often scolding him many a times in the day. Tagore describes about Phatik's eagerness to reach Kolkata when he says: "Phatik, as soon as all was settled, kept asking his uncle every minute when they were to start. He was on pins and needles all day long with excitement, and lay awake most of the night. He bequeathed to Makhan, in perpetuity, his fishing rod, his big kite and his marbles. Indeed, at this time of departure his generosity towards Makhan was unbounded."

When Phatik entered in his Uncle's house, he becomes to see the atmosphere in the house. Bishamber had three sons of his own. Bishamber's wife becomes displeased by the unnecessary addition of this boy in the family. She is already taking care of the three boys in the family. She thinks that Bishamber should think about bringing a village boy to entirely different atmosphere in the city. It is said that a boy of fourteen years old is really a nuisance to the family. He talks in such a way that it becomes very difficult to give the answers to his questions. He interacts with elderly people in unduly forward manner or becomes unduly shy. He is craved for love and recognition. He will become slave of a person who showers love and consideration on him. He is happy at his own house rather than wandering in a strange house with strange people. His aunt always abuses him for each and everything. Phatik becomes very happy when she tells him to perform any household work. Tagore describes, "If she ever asked him to do anything for her, he would be so overjoyed that he would overdo it; and then she would tell him not to be so stupid, but to get on with his lessons."

Tagore incorporated an incident that occurs in Phatik's life which will reveal his aunt's rude behavior to us. Once he has lost his lesson- book, it becomes very difficult for him to complete his school study without this book. His cousins stated teasing him for not studying well in the school. He gathered his courage and told this to his aunt about the loss of a book. His aunt scolded him by saying: "You great clumsy, country lout. How can I afford, with all my family, to buy new books five times a month?" Phatik noticed his aunt's rude behavior to him but had not dared to reveal it before his Uncle. He stays very calm in the school and never speaks with other students in the class. He feels himself alienated from village culture to city culture. He becomes homesick as he remembers those days when he was in the company of his friends in the village. It becomes very tough for him to concentrate on his studies in these circumstances. He remembers his mother, brother, friends and the places he visits regularly in the village. His performance in the school becomes worse. He always asks Bishamber about the holidays when he says: "Uncle, when can I go home?" His Uncle replies him by saying that he will go to the house in the holidays only.

Phatik finds himself in a discomfort position both in the house and at the school. He thinks about his aunt's rude behavior with him. One day he decides to run towards his village without informing about it to his Uncle. He suffers from headache and possible attack of malarial fever because of the rain in the evening. At that time, he does not want to his Uncle's house as he feels that it will cause a nuisance to his Uncle's family. When he has not returned to the house everyone stated searching him but all the efforts of them proved futile. At last, Bishamber decides to take help of the police in finding out Phatik. In the night, a police van stopped at Uncle's house, two constables take Phatik with them and handed him to his Uncle. Bishamber finds him as he is drenched by rain, his eye appears as red and he is shivering because of the fever. Being seen Phatik in this condition, his aunt started shouting over Phatik's Uncle.

Bishamber becomes very worried by the condition of Phatik. He immediately calls a doctor to cure Phatik. A doctor arrived, examined Phatik, Phatik was not responding to the medicines. The doctor noticed that Phatik's condition becomes delirious. Phatik opened his eyes and staring at the ceiling, speaking to no one, asks Bishamber in low voice, "Uncle, have the holidays come yet? May I go home?" This will clearly

reveals the predicament of a teen aged boy who becomes homesick and wants to return to his own village. Bishamber noticed this condition of Phatik and takes his hand in his own, the boy was still murmuring, "Mother," he cried, "don't beat me like that! Mother! I am telling the truth!" Bishamber realizes that Phatik is waiting for the arrival of his mother as his eyes are searching for it everywhere in the room. He sends a man to call his mother at the earliest to his house as Phatik's condition becomes very critical. He replies Phatik that his mother will come soon and take Phatik with her to his house.

Tagore has described a very touching story by citing the example of a teen aged boy. It reveals the plight of a boy who cannot himself away from his own house. When his mother arrived, she is unable to see Phatik in this condition. She flunged herself near his bed side and started crying: "Phatik, my darling, my darling." This shows us that she is unhappy to see her own son in this condition. She has realized her own mistake of sending Phatik away from her to Kolkata. Phatik, after seeing his mother said, "Mother, the holidays have come." In this materialistic world, Parents do not find ample time to understand the problems of their children. It also focuses on the sensitiveness of Indian women to find a proper way to overcome against all odds. This also shows that Indian women are highly sacrificing, lovable, flexible, religious and meek in nature. For a teen aged boy, he always feels that he must be understood by someone and will shower love on him. It is true that parents fail to understand the grief of young hearts. When children feel discomfort, parents soothing words and care will certainly boost the confidence of their children.

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