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Problematic Representation of Woman in Rabindranath Tagore's

The Home and the World

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Letter of Recommendation

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Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled "Problematic Representation of Woman in Rabindranath Tagore's *The Home and the World*", submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuwan University, by Krishna Prasad Chalise, has been approved by the undersigned members of the research committee.

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Abstract

The research has analyzed Tagore's problematic representation of woman in his novel *The Home and the World*. At one level Tagore seems empowering women by subverting the female stereotypes in the context of Hindu patriarchal society. Raising the voice of equality and freedom through the novel he rejects the traditional values and expectation associated with women in the patriarchal society. Bimala, the protagonist of the novel, comes out of the traditional domestic world into the outside world where she involves in social and political activities as a man does. On another level, Tagore is not totally free from patriarchal norms and values while representing women characters in his novel. The novel also reinforces the beliefs and values of traditional patriarchal society by showing women characters as inherently inferior and vulnerable as if a woman tries to cross the boundaries of home, welcomes disasters. Similarly, if she tries to defy the assigned role, she will be destroyed at last. Woman can not survive in the outer world. It is the home which safeguards women. Thus, the failure of female character like Bimala in the novel shows the deep rooted concept of female inferiority in masculine writing particular and society in general.

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I. Tagore's Representation of Women in *The Home and the World*

This research paper has examined the novel, *The Home and the World* by Tagore, through feminist perspectives by observing how the writer's representation of female characters is problematic in the novel. On the one hand, it has focused on how the writer speaks for women equality and freedom by subverting the female stereotypes. On the other hand the research has also observed the writer's affirmation to patriarchal norms and values.

Rabindranath Tagore is one of the prominent Bengali writers who received Nobel prize for his spiritual work *Geetangali* in 1913. He tries to empower women characters in most of his works. He tried to uplift the minorities because he wanted to revolt against the caste system that was deep-rooted in the Indian society. He primarily wrote in Bengali language. Some of the popular books written by Tagore are *Gora*, *The Home and the World*, *The Wreck*, *Char Adhay*, *Chaturanga*, *The Two Sisters*, *The Garden*, *Geetanjali* etc.

In *The Home and the World*, there are three main characters: Bimala, Nikhil and Sandip. This novel is written in an autobiographical form. Nikhil is an idealistic husband, Bimala is his wife and Sandip is his friend. Bimala, a typical Hindu wife, suddenly hears a call from the outside world. She is caught between the whirlpool of outside world and inner home. Among the main characters neither Nikhil nor Sandip changes much in the novel; it is Bimala alone who changes under the stress of trial, error and failure.

Bimal, Nikhil's wife, seemed conservative at the beginning who was happy in serving her family and her husband as god. She considered the narrow boundaries of her household duties as her whole world. But Nikhil does not let her to spoil her life being entrapped in the boundaries of home and encourages her to come out to the outer world. She comes out to the open world and starts involving in social and political activities. But towards the end of the novel, she is presented as a failure character in the outer world. Thus, the whole story moves around the female protagonist, Bimala.

The purpose of this research is to analyze the dual mentality of Tagore in his representation of female character. Looking through the lens of feminism it can be said that Tagore, on the one hand, is a strong supporter of female's freedom and equality. He tries to subvert the female stereotypes by allowing Bimala to enter into the outer world and by equating her with male character. On the other hand, Tagore has portrayed Bimala as a failure character in the outer world. At last, she returns to the previous world. It signifies that the outer world is purely a male domain; if a woman tries to enter into it, she will be destroyed there. The home is the proper place for a woman. Such a concept is deep rooted in patriarchal society. Thus, Tagore is not totally free from patriarchal values.

The Home and the World is one of Tagore's famous novels which was written in 1916. He wrote this novel when India was under British rule and was very conservative. Females were facing many difficulties in every field of life. It was very difficult for them to get education. Females were considered as inferior and worthless things whose only duty was to serve and worship their husband as god. Caste system was also highly practiced at that time. Females did not have their individual identity. They used to be known by their husband's status. Thus

the women were dragging themselves through the Hindu patriarchal norms and values. They were facing difficulties in almost all fields of life. Education was out of their access. The following words spoken by Bimala clearly show the position of women in the society. She says, "At that time prince of the fairy tale had faded like the moon in the morning light? Had the prince of my real world enthroned in my heart. I was his queen. I had my seat by his side. But my real joy was, that my true place was at his feet" (12).

Tagore wants Bimala to portray as a modern and an independent character by allowing her to enter into the outside world. Traditionally, the outside world has been considered as male domain. Women have been supposed to be confined only in domestic sphere. But Tagore has given the voice of equality for women by subverting the stereotypical role of women. Nikhil, who speaks for women's empowerment in the novel, says:

I would have you come into the heart of the outer world and meet reality. Merely going on with your household duties, living all your life in the world of household conventions and the drudgery of household tasks, - you were not made for that! If we meet, and recognize each other, in the real world, then only will our love be true. (18)

On the contrary, Tagore is somehow haunted by the long rooted patriarchal norms and values. He has presented Bimala as a failure woman in the outside world. There, she is unable to exist so that she returns to her previous domestic world. It suggests that the home is only suitable place for women. If they try to cross the boundaries of domesticities, their fate will be that of Bimala. The given lines clearly show Bimala's failure in the outside world. She says:

When I came to my room, I saw only furniture—only the bedsheat, only the looking-glass, only the clothes-rack,—not the all-pervading heart which used to be there, over all. Instead of it there was freedom, only freedom, mere emptiness! A dried-up watercourse wills all its rocks and pebbles laid bare. No feeling, only furniture! (184)

The problematic representation of women is primarily analyzed in this research paper being based on the *third world* feminists' perspectives. Jyodsana Chatterji in *Religions and Status of Women* says, "The people's notion about the proper role of women in the society and the social restrictions on women are all rooted in religious conceptions regarding women" (45). Still the attitude towards women has remained unchanged. In the same book Ranjana Kumari says:

A woman's husband is her lord and it is her religious duty to see that he is happy and comfortable by yielding to every wish. The woman is defined primarily in relation to her husband and her household, and her interest and active participation in domestic matters is expected to her. The role of wife and mother is the optimal, singular and essential role through which a woman fulfills herself. (9)

Thus, we find the status of the contemporary Indian women dependent, traditional and very weak. The protagonist of the novel, Bimala, had also leading the life of a typical Hindu wife. But, Tagore empowers her by allowing her to enter into the outer world which was considered as male domain. S.N. Mukharjee in *Women in India and in Nepal* says:

In their separate private space women enjoy a degree of autonomy which was not possible in contemporary European and American middle class households. In Bengal, while men manage public affairs and provide finance, women ruled in the inner houses. They manage all domestic affairs including the arrangement of marriage. Being segregated from men women spend most of their time in the company of other women. (289)

Most of the reviews and researches of this novel have been directed towards post colonialism, feminism, marriage and eventually rebel against the demand of being a good and obedient wife of Indian culture. The novel depicts the Indian women and the patriarchal societal mechanism. Subramanian and Ray in *Rabindranath Tagore and the Challenges of Today* say:

To the conventional Hindu woman the husband was not just a person, he was an ideal living god on earth whom the scriptures enjoyed her to serve and worship for her own spiritual fulfillment the subservience inherent in the relationship need not necessarily impair her personality. For, as Tagore pointed out, she submitted not to coercion but to a moral and religious idea. But for man the arrangement was disastrous. (245)

According to Gregory Castle, a postcolonial critic, "Tagore's *The Home and the World* cultivates the national sentiments of irrational prejudice and hatred in people" (154).

There also two types of worlds—inner world and outer world. The inner world is the world of females where they can find their identity. The external

world is the world of male; it is a material world where the identity of female is lost. Partha Chatterji in *Postcolonial Discourse: An Anthology* says:

Now applying the inner/ outer disjunction to the matter of concrete day to day living and you get a separation of the social space into *ghar* and *bahir*, the home and the world. The world is the external, the domain of the material: the home represents our inner spiritual self, our true identity. The world is treacherous terrain of the pursuit of material interest, where practical considerations reign supreme. It is also typically the domain of the male. The home in its essence must remain unaffected by the profane activities of the material world- and a woman is its representation. And so we get an identification of social roles by gender to correspond with the separation of the social space into *ghar* and *bahir*. (156)

Likewise, Jyotsna Chatterji in *Religion and the Status of Women* says, "The people's notion about the proper role of women in the home and society and the social restrictions on women are all rooted in religious conceptions regarding women" (45).

So the earlier reviews and researches on this novel have been directed towards religion, tradition, gender discrimination, post colonialism and revolt against patriarchal societal mechanism. But the present research paper has analyzed the representation of women as problematic in the novel. The representation is neither totally in favor of women nor totally against them. In this sense, the research paper is hoped to be worthwhile.

This thesis is divided in to four sections. The first section includes the introduction of the whole research paper. For instance, the issue of the research,

theoretical modality, literature review and the standpoint of the researcher are simply introduced in this section. The second section includes the introduction of feminism and the issues raised by it which can support the hypothesis of the research. Likewise, the analysis of the text, with the help of theoretical tools and the textual evidences, is presented in the third section. The last section includes the conclusion of the paper being based on the textual analysis of the third section.

In short, Tagore speaks for women's liberation and empowerment by subverting the long rooted stereotypes of women especially in Hindu patriarchal society. But he fails to do so because of his deep rooted patriarchal ideology. For instance, he allows his female protagonist to enter into the outside world where she can enjoy her freedom. But, at the last part of the novel, she is presented as a failure character in the outside world. For a feminist, traditionally assigned roles for a woman are male biased. Liberation, education and equality must equally be given for their empowerment and authentic existence. Tagore has tried to do so in the novel but his hegemonic patriarchal concept does not allow him to do. Such dual mentality of the novelist has been explored In this research paper by dividing it into the four sections.

II. Feminism and an Issue of Women's Representation

Feminism, a socio-cultural and literary movement, especially focuses on the equal status of women and tries to subvert the stereotypes constructed by patriarchal society from the very beginning of human civilization. In other words, feminism is the struggle for equality and freedom of women. Feminism includes socio-political and economic equality of women with men. In almost every patriarchal society, women are regarded as inferior, weak, emotional, docile and subordinate beings. So, they are suppressed and oppressed in every aspect of their life. In such a condition, they are unable to develop their potentialities. So, feminists have been speaking for the equality and freedom of women from time to time. As a movement, it has brought gender awareness exploring women's position in society, culture and even in literature.

Feminist critics also engage with how power imbalances result due to gender bias in a given culture and are reflected in literary representations. Most feminists believe that our culture is the patriarchal one which is organized in accordance to the interest of men. Feminist critics attempt to expose the patriarchal premises and resulting prejudices, examine social, cultural and psychosexual contexts of literature and literary criticism. Furthermore, these critics attempt to point out the patriarchal domination and commodification of female body and emotion. So the feminism is directly associated with social, cultural and political movements of the world. Women without any significant rights and roles have been confined within unproductive domestic activities. As a result they have been financially dependent on other male members of the family. From the very beginning women have been treated as valueless beings.

Patriarchal society is the main cause of women's subordination, suppression and oppression. From the very beginning of human civilization men have been dominating and oppressing women. The society has kept women in the state of ignorance and inferior position. In every aspect of social life women have been kept in the secondary position. It is because men exercise power in male dominated society. Sheila Ruth in *Issues in Feminism* writes:

Women are expected to serve men; physically, taking care of their homes, property, clothing or persons; economically, doing countless jobs for which women are ill paid or not paid at all; sexually age wives, mistress or prostitutes; and reproductively, assuring mean of paternity through female chastity. (86)

Thus we find the exploitation of women in each and every aspect of their life. They have been assigned for the activities which are considered as unproductive ones. Women have to invest their whole life in domestic activities like child caring, washing clothes, preparing food, serving to the male members of the family etc. Such activities have never been considered as worthy ones. As a result they can never be strong in the financial sectors too. That is why, they have always to be dependent on the male members of the family who work out of the house. The financial activities are controlled by men only. The financial system in a patriarchal society has been designed in order to exploit the women.

Women in a patriarchal society have been exploited sexually too. A wife is considered as a sex object. She has to satisfy her husband according to his interest. A wife's interest is neglected. Similarly a wife has to maintain her chastity though her husband can enjoy extra marital relationship. A widow is

not allowed to marry; a widower can marry immediately after the death of his wife. A man can keep more than one wife whereas a woman has to remain as widow throughout her life if her first husband dies.

Thus the women in patriarchal system have no self identity; they are supposed to serve men by all means. They have been exploited physically, socially, economically and sexually as well.

Moreover, the society has created male hegemony against women to maintain the status quo of men. To strengthen the network of domination men have been formulating certain stereotypical images against women. These images have shaped the identity of women in the society. Man made norms and values determine the status of women in the society. Plato, Aristotle, Milton, Pope and Lawrence can be taken as some of the examples of men who have created negative images of women.

Such gender discrimination has centuries long root. For instance, Plato's philosophical theories have glorified women for their physical beauty only but not for their adventurous works. He relates man with 'form' and women with 'substance'. Similarly the disciple of Plato, Aristotle considered women as second class citizens. For him a woman is an "unfinished man" (Gaarder 16). Such devastating idea of Aristotle has long lasting negative effects on human civilization.

Similarly the literary discourses written by different male writers have institutionalized and helped to continue the conventional patriarchal stereotypes against women. For example, according to Mary Wollstonecraft, John Milton, Alexander Pope, Jonathan Swift and other male writers have presented negative images of women. John Milton has considered women as

submissive and docile. For Alexander Pope, "every woman is at heart a rake" (396). In the same essay, Wollstonecraft has quoted Jonathan Swift's view on woman as "a passion for a scarlet coat" (396). Similarly D.H. Lawrence believes that a woman should have demure quality rather than dauntless quality. In his essay "Cocksure Woman and Hensure Man", he says:

The tragedy of cocksure women is that they are cockier, in their assurance, than the cock himself. They never realize that when the cock gives his loud crow in the morning, he listens acutely afterwards to hear if someone other wretch of a cock dare crow defiance, challenge. To the cock that it allows defiance, danger and death on the clear air, or the possibility there of. (12)

It means hen can never be cock; women can never be equal with man. The patriarchal society believes that cocksure woman is dangerous and devastating. So a woman in a society should not cross the boundary of home. If she does, it creates disaster. In short, it shows how the society creates ideology and prevents women to go beyond it.

So, the male writers have been creating the binaries between men and women. They have charged women as passive, emotional, sensual, irrational and helpless creatures. Such types of binaries and stereotypes have been circulated in the society from the very beginning. So, the first duty of a feminist is to blur such stereotypes for the sake of women's emancipation.

Women are equally intellectual but their intellectuality is suppressed by patriarchy. They are not less intellectual. If they are so, it is not because of their fault but because of the bias attitude of patriarchal society, which intentionally makes them weak, frail and inferior. According to Mary

Wollstonecraft the society has limited women only in the private sphere. They have no access in the public sphere which ultimately shaped women as sentimental, emotional, irrational, weak, docile and subordinate.

One of the most dominant causes of women's backwardness is the lack of education. If they are educated, they can improve their situation themselves. It helps them to be conscious about their pitiable situation in the society. It helps them to maintain proper relationship with the male members of the society. Wollstonecraft has highlighted the importance of education for women as:

Were women more rationally educated, could they take a more comprehensive view of things, they would be contented to love but once in their lives; and after marriage calmly let passion subside into friendship- into that tender intimacy, which is the best refuge from care; yet is built on such pure, still affections, that idle jealousies would not be allowed to disturb the discharge of the sober duties of life, or to engross the thoughts that ought to be otherwise employed. This is a state in which many men live; but few, very few women. (1792)

She further argues that mind does not know sex. So she locates all the stereotypes created by masculine society under cultural construct. So such images about women are groundless and false.

The images of women in masculine society are bifurcated. Women are attributed either by divine qualities like that of goddess or by evil qualities like that of witch. But they are never represented as they are. According to Sheila Ruth, "Woman is represented as a being at once a manifestation of the

divine and an incarnation of evil” (87). So, the representation of women has been made according to men's interests. On the one hand, they are worshiped as goddess; on the other hand they are badly treated as witch, evil and ogress. That is why they are never represented as human beings. In reality they are neither the manifestation of the divine nor the incarnation of evil. These images are based on binaries. Through the system of binary males have reserved privileged term for them and all the negative terms are given to female. For instance, males are considered as rational, brave, strong, superior etc. whereas woman are considered as irrational, coward, weak inferior and so on. In *Issues in Feminism* Sheila Ruth points out the stereotypical images created against women as "Misogyny includes the belief that women are stupid, petty, manipulative, dishonest, silly, gossipy, irrational, incompetent, dependable, narcissistic, castrating, dirty, overemotional, unable to make altruistic or moral judgments, oversexed, undersexed and a host of other rather ugly things” (89).

But all these images serve to maintain the status quo of patriarchy. In reality man and woman are equal except in some biological aspects. These images are based on social, political, economical and cultural factors which are all man made. Through the circulation of such stereotypes patriarchy has shaped the women's mind in such a way that the stereotypes have been taken as truth by them.

There is imbalance of power between man and woman in our society. Patriarchy has hindered or prevented women from realizing their productive and creative potentialities. Woman has no access to social, educational and financial aspects in the society. As the result they seem to be dependent,

weak, sentimental and subordinate. If the society provides equal status to women they can perform the equal role as men do. According to Virginia Woolf, men have power to restrict women to do what they want (87). So, a woman can not develop her potentialities in such restrictions and dominations. Such situation only damages one's creativity and potentiality. That is why, women have been lagging back in the society.

It is obvious that women's activities and behaviors are restricted and regulated through patriarchal ideology. Patriarchal society has hindered or prevented women from realizing their productive and creative potentialities. Woolf hoped to achieve a balance between a 'male self realization' and female 'self-annihilation'. Her ultimate belief was that women could freely develop their artistic talents if they achieved social and economic equality with men. She says:

It was a thousand pities that the woman, who could write like that whose mind was turned to nature and reflection, should have been forced to anger and bitterness. But how could she have helped herself? I asked, imagining the sheers and the laughter, the adulation of the toadies, the skepticism of the professional poet. She must have shut herself up in a room in the country to write, and been torn asunder by bitterness and scruples perhaps, though her husband was of the kindest, and their married life perfection. (818)

In the above mentioned lines we find women being cheated even in artistic realm too. They could not write freely. On the one hand, they had no time and proper place to write. All the time had to be spent in household activities.

They could not get a separate and peaceful room for their creations. In spite of all these obstacles if they were able to create something, their creations would be discouraged by the mainstream writers. The male writers had created the image that woman could not create any worthwhile text because they were inferior in terms of intellectuality. In fact, such images are no more than the narrow patriarchal concepts. Women could not be great writers not because of their inferiority but because of the social constructions.

The inferiority in women is not inborn but the construction of patriarchal ideology that treats women as secondary. Patriarchy presents women as naturally inferior; and considers its ideology as a truth. Simone de Beauvoir in 'The Second Sex' has portrayed the condition of women in male dominated society as:

For **motherland** transcendence is a situation: he is the transcendent, he soars in the sky of heroes; women crouches on earth, beneath his feet; it amuse him to measure the distance that separates him from her; from time to time he raises her up to him takes her and then through her back; never does he lower himself down to her realm of slimy shadows. (994)

From the very beginning patriarchy has been treating women as second class human being. Accordingly, it has constructed the privileged position for men. Men have falsely considered themselves as transcendent, free, powerful and rational whereas women have never been equal with them. For them, women are only the sex object; whenever they want to enjoy with women they can do. That is why, in such societies women are used according to men's interests. When men fulfill their interests they neglect women as an object.

Such relation is nothing but inhuman and irrational practice against women for the sake of male ideology.

Thus, the patriarchy presets the cultural identification of women as other and negative object. Beauvoir subverts the myths of such negative images created by patriarchy arguing that mind does not know sex. The images of women are the results of cultural construction. All the myths have been created to dominate and to exploit women.

However, the issues and resistance that "Feminism" has raised can not address the women's diverse problems along the line of class, region, culture, ethnicity, politics, sexuality, education etc. As the Feminism as such homogenizes the women's problems, multicultural feminisms emerged as the alternative to address such heterogeneities of women's problems. For examples, Marxist feminism deals with the problems of women along the line of their class differences while Third World Feminism deals with the problems of third world women with their different cultural, economic, geographical and political setting.

Third World Feminism as an Attempt to Address Diversity in Women's Problems

Third world feminism can be defined as a group of feminist theories developed by feminists who acquired their views and took part in feminist politics in so-called third world countries. Since the speech of Sojourner Truth (1851) non-western women have proposed alternative feminism -third world feminism. This trend accelerated in 1960s with the Civil Right Movement in United States, and with the collapse of European colonialism. Since that time women in former European colonies and in the third world have proposed third world feminism.

These third world feminists argue to avoid universalists' claims about women and situate feminism in a specific social, economic, cultural and political context for analysis. Third world feminism is strongly related with both African feminism and postcolonial feminism. All these trends strongly protest against ethnocentrism, racism, and homophobia and universalism of western feminism.

So, the third world feminism can be analyzed in the context of Hindu patriarchal society of colonial India too. Third world societies are mostly post-colonial and developing countries. They are situated at the juncture where legacies of old traditions and influences of western ways of life create fusion that continually shapes the structure of the societies. Each third world society is distinct and is shaped by its cultural tradition, religion and social norms. Moreover there is the difference among the women from different socio-economic backgrounds even within a country or a region. Women from different class, culture, race and religion face very different challenges and can experience even contrasting outcomes of the same social phenomena.

The third world countries are known as underdeveloped, developing countries, least developed countries. On the contrary, the first world countries consider themselves as developed, civilized, modern and advanced. They have created stereotypes about the third world countries. People in the first world often describe third world countries as underdeveloped, overpopulated, backward, uncivilized, helpless and with other derogatory terms. So, third world feminism challenges the hegemony of the western canon. According to it, feminism developed in the west claims to be universal, biasless or objective but in fact it is hegemonic and biased.

"Western intellectuals, as Ketu H. Katrak in "Decolonizing Culture: Toward a Theory for Postcolonial Women's Text" says, are unconsciously complicit in an endeavor that ironically ends up validating the dominant power structure, even when they ideologically, oppose such hegemonic power" (256) . Thus the third world feminism opposes the hegemonic concept of universalism claimed by the western feminism.

Moreover, women in formerly colonized societies were doubly exploited or oppressed by both imperial and patriarchal ideologies. Postcolonial women challenge such double colonization. Katrak, in the same essay, further adds:

Their texts deal with, and often challenge, their double oppressions – patriarchy that preceded and continuous after colonialism and that inscribes the concept of womanhood, motherhood, traditions such as dowry, bride-price, polygamy and worsened predicament within a capitalist economic system introduced by the colonizers. Women writers deal with the burdens of female roles in urban environment (instituted by colonialism), the rise of prostitution in cities, women's marginalization in actual political participation. (256)

In formerly colonized countries like India, women suffered from double exploitation. From the very beginning of patriarchal system women have been exploited in the name of this and that. The concept of womanhood, motherhood, chastity, dowry, bride-price and widow are some of the dominant terms through which women have been suppressed and oppressed in the society. Later, in the period of colonization the women were suffered by the capitalistic economic system highly practiced by the colonizers. They used women as cheap labor.

Moreover the women especially working in the factories were sexually exploited by the colonizers. On the other hand, even the women from the first world countries treated them as other. Thus, the colonization added more pain for the third world women.

In this way, the third world women have been exploited economically, socially, politically and culturally from the very beginning of practical system. The patriarchy has been using women for its interests. The society has placed women in the position of subordination. Later, in the period of colonization women of third world were forced to be exploited economically politically and sexually as well in this context, the third world feminism challenges such kinds of exploitations over third world women. The women of third world have to live within the framework of the society designed by patriarchy. Their voices and ideas are neglected and silenced in the society. The equality and freedom are far beyond from their access. No woman can flourish her talency, creativity and authenticity in such traditional patriarchal society. In *Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism* Trinh T. Minh-HA says:

In trying to tell something, a women is told, shredding herself into opaque words while her voice dissolute on the walls of silence. She has been worked of the risk and incurs by letting words ruin of the rails, time and again tempted by the desire to gear herself to the accepted norms. But where had obedience led her? At best, to the satisfaction of a made-women, capable of achieving as high a mastery of discourse as that of the male establishment in power.

(264)

The above mentioned quote shows the condition of the women very pathetic, miserable and powerless. They have willingly or unwillingly to perform the role assigned by the society. They are the puppet in the nexus of patriarchy. Though man and woman are considered as the two sides of a same coin, patriarchy does not care all about this. The society has tamed women only to be obedient to men. But the obedience of women led them nowhere except to the affirmation of patriarchy. In other words, the male dominated society treats women as if they are born to serve men.

Similarly, the repressive colonial and patriarchal ideologies considered women as sexuated beings in colonial India. The colonizers used to consider the third world women as impetuous, emotional and oversexed. The notion of "the sexuated body" (Price and Shildrick 288) of Indian women was a necessary ground for the imposition of colonial state power. In order to circulate power nexus in colonial India the colonizers had also created and reinforced the stereotypical images of the women. In "Mapping the Colonial Body: Sexual Economics and the States in Colonial India" Price and Shildrick further say:

Further, the construction of meaning through which we 'know;' the body consistently privilege the male for his supposed capacity to transcend his embodiment, to become the subject in rather than of, discourse. Men then give both in and out of their bodies, which women simply are their bodies to be subjected, used transformed and improved. (389)

Thus, we find the women as the subject of men. They have passive and subordinate role in the society. The bitter reality is that women have been

comodified in the society. That is why they have never lived a dignified human life.

On the other hand, in the name of women emancipation, British colonizers were strengthening their colonial interest. The women were never emancipated in reality. The women were manipulated for the colonizers' interest only. On the surface the colonizers were working for the women's betterment. In reality, the women were manipulated according to their interest. They were never emancipated in real sense. Janet Price and Margrit Shildrick says:

The manipulation of cultural code, the remapping of British concern into the Indian body, could in any case hardly result in any authentic freedoms for women. Rather women remained throughout simply the ground on which the colonial discourses were imposed. They were the currency of the discursive exchanges but never the subjects. And whether they were involved in *purdha* practices or not, women's space was, as always, confined and manipulated by others. (394)

Similarly, the patriarchal society has taught women to be devoted and submissive towards her husband blindly in the name of god and religion. They are expected to serve their husbands as god so that they can secure their position in another world. But such type of devotion is only one-sided. The women, in return, get nothing except domination and exploitation from their husbands. Subramaian and Ray present their opinions regarding the relationship between a husband and wife as:

To the conventional Hindu woman, the husband was not just a person, he was an ideal a living god on earth whom the scriptures

enjoined her to serve and worship for her own spiritual fulfillment. The subservience inherent in the relationship need not necessarily impair her personality. For, as Tagore pointed out, she submitted not to coercion but to a moral and religious idea. But for a man the arrangement was disastrous. (245)

So, structurally the Hindu family was patrilineal in descent, partilocal in residence and patriarchal in authority. In such society, sons, in the exclusion of daughter, were supposed to carry on the family name and tradition. In another words, sons were supposed to be liable to get inheritance whereas, the daughters were given away in marriage to their husbands. As Bharati Ray describes, marriage was an indissoluble sacrament for the women whereas a man could marry as many women as he wanted and could desert his wife. A girl was married by her parents as a part of their religious obligations along with a dowry. Arranged marriage and pre-puberty marriage for girls were obligatory (4). A women's position was always subordinate to her husband. Her hierarchy was determined in the family or in the society by the status of her husband. A married woman had absolute right only over the gifts received at marriage. She was not permitted to earn her living by working outside the home. Partha Chatterjee in *Postcolonial Discourse: An Anthology* says:

Now apply the inter/ outer distinction to the matter of concrete day to day living. You got a separation of the social space into *ghar* and *bahir*, *the home and the world*. The world is the external, the domain of the material; the home represents our inner spiritual self, our true identity. The world is a treacherous terrain of the pursuit of

material interests. Where practical consider action region supreme.

It is also typically the domain of the male. (156)

In this way, the society had prescribed the women's role model. They were confined only in domestic activities. Chastity obedience, politeness etc. were the essential qualities of a woman. The denial of the right of education, *purdha*, and an extremely rigid dichotomization between private and public sphere assured the continuance of their prescribed role. It ultimately removed the possibility of any challenges from them. In the contemporary Indian society, the birth of a daughter was very miserable. The society used to consider the birth of a girl as a burden. Since childhood, girls were induced to internalize an ascribed inferiority and were prepared only for their life after marriage. The girls had no choice since they were given only elementary education at a primary level before they were married off between the age of eight and twelve. The process of providing some education to the daughters of the middle class families had been initiated in nineteenth century. The primary motivation of most parents was to make their daughters more eligible as prospective bride. Anyway the child marriage restraint act was passed in 1929 which fixed the minimum age of marriage for a boy at eighteen and for a girl at fifteen.

In nineteenth century socio-religious reform movement started as the result of the confrontation of British colonial and with Indian culture. This brought a considerable attention to the improvement of the position of women. Consequently *Sati* was forbidden in 1828. Similarly, widow marriage was legalized in 1856 and intercourse with wives below twelve years of age was prohibited in 1891. Alongside the movement for female education was started with the Christian missionaries. Though it has been argued that the English-

educated professional class wanted not to make women independent or equal of men in the family or in public life so that it would support in the colonial setting. Anyway, the Indian women were benefited from the missionary activities for some extent. A number of women when educated began to argue for themselves and articulate their view against the patriarchy (Ray 1-23).

In 1904 an Indian women's conference was organized in India. Indian women boycotted foreign goods in 1905. Moreover, Women Indian Association (1917), The National Council of women (1928) and The All Indian Women Conference (1927) discussed women's issues and social problems concerning to them. The first franchise delegation of Indian women which met the Montague Chelmsford Committee on constitutional, reform in 1917, was organized by the Women's Indian Association. It had included representatives of several women organizations. The women's delegation demanded that they should have been included under the expanded franchise in the new constitution which, instead of discriminating on account of sex, should ensure equal opportunities to women. As the result, the congress classified "women, as quoted by Maitrayee Chaudhary in *Feminism in India*, posing the same qualifications as are laid down for men in any part of the scheme (of reform) shall not be disqualified on account of sex" (125). But, all Indian Women Conference spoke against the limited and biased franchise right provided by The Franchise Committee of the Round Table Conference during 1930s. The franchise right of women was directly or indirectly related with patriarchal interest. A wife of a man who had property and was over twenty five years of age was qualified to vote. Thus, the society did not guarantee women the franchise in their individual capacity, but only as wives and widows. The society did not recognized women's independent right to suffrage. Anyway, the formation of

women's groups had challenged people's views about male and female roles.

Geraldine Forbes in *Women in Modern India* cites:

This women's movement continued to focus on traditional practices, beliefs, and institutions as the source of oppression. It also attends to violence against women, the institutional framework for the maintenance of gender differences, and the impact of the economic situation on the day to day lives of women. (244)

By the late nineteenth century Indian women participated actively in public spheres. Women became more involved in politics during the early twentieth century. During this period women actively joined the agitation, boycotted foreign goods, and donated money and jewelers to the nationalist movement. In the contemporary society the women had limited options to extend their role outside the domestic domain. They were often subjected to pressure from high cast ideology and male domination.

The social reformers have done a lot in the field of women's rights. They worked by organizing different movements such as the abolition of *Sati*, widow remarriage, anti-polygamy and female education which were concerned with the position of women. Though Gandhi was not totally radical thinker of women's liberation, he powerfully advocated for social justice to women. He believed that women are the companion to men, who are given equal mental capacities. But instead of realizing this truth males consider themselves as lord, or master of women rather than considering them as their friends. The participation of women in Gandhi's non-violent struggle removed the stigma of their inferiority and imparted to them a new confidence. The women's coming out of the cocoon of the home to take part in extra-familial activities was an assault of the domestic/ public

demarcation and directly influenced women's thinking and behaviors. Similarly, Kumari Jayawardena in *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World* says "Gandhi believed that every man and women had a duty to perform in the interest of self-realization and social well-being [. . .] even the most ignorant and worthless men have been enjoying a superiority over women which they do not observe and act out to have" (95).

Later, Indian women followed this Gandhian Ideology. Gandhi brought women in public life and gave them the tools to solve their own problems. Jawaharlal Nehru also talks about women's empowerment . He believed that women should go outside the home to be independent. He says that a freedom always depends on economic condition; if a woman is not economically free, she should have to depend on her husband and she will never be free.

In short, feminism speaks against the unjust practices of men over women. It tries to establish equality, freedom and welfare of the women in a society. Patriarchal society has been exploiting women from centuries in the name of this and that. Women have been treated unjustly in social, political, cultural, financial and even in artistic sectors of the society. Certain binaries have been created and circulated in the society in which women are always placed in the secondary position. That is why feminism tries to blur all the boundaries and the binaries to establish justice and equality in the society in general. Moreover the problems of women that can not be addressed by the general feminism are addressed by the multicultural feminism. Third world feminism deals with the problems of third world women with their different cultural, economical, geographical and other typical experiences. So the issues raised by feminism are used as the methodological tools to justify the problematic representation of women in the novel.

III. Problematic Representation of Women in *The Home and the World*

In the text *The Home and the World*, the representation of woman is problematic. Tagore as a male writer has tried to speak for equality, freedom and welfare of women in the novel. But at the same time he has presented his patriarchal mentality while representing woman. In other words, he is not totally free from the patriarchal norms and values which had been rooted within him since he was the product of the same patriarchal society. The protagonist of the novel, Bimala, has been portrayed as bold, active and revolutionary character for some extent in the novel. On the contrary, she can not affirm what she has done; she is presented as a failure character in the outside world at the last of the novel. Outside world is traditionally the male domain where Bimala can not survive. All these things show the confused mentality of Tagore.

So the analysis of the text intends to show how the representation of the female character is problematic in the eyes of feminism. In the beginning the female protagonist is presented as an ideal Hindu wife. Gradually she is supported to be a modern woman by her husband. She crosses the traditional boundaries exposed by Hindu patriarchal society. Tagore tries to subvert the female stereotypes initiated from the beginning of Hindu civilization through his protagonist Bimala. Though Tagore has tried to subvert the stereotypes of women and to liberate them from the traditional boundaries, he is not totally free from patriarchal hegemony.

Tagore allows his female protagonist, Bimala, to enter into the outer world but at the same time she is presented as a failure character in outer world. It suggests that the domestic domain is naturally suitable for women. Similarly, the protagonist is not given the active role in the novel. She is liberated, taught,

guided and supported by the male character _ Nikhil. The awareness of the outer world does not emerge within the protagonist. So, she is unable to handle the outer world and became the prey of Sandip. If Tagore was totally in favors of woman's true liberation and emancipation, his protagonist would affirm the outcomes of her actions. Instead affirming the outcomes of the outer world, she regrets to what she has done. In the last part of the novel, she returns back to the previous world. Thus, Tagore seems problematic in the representation of female character in the novel *The Home and the World*.

Subordinate Position of Women in the Contemporary Indian Society

The condition of women of the then society was very weak, pitiable and traditionally bounded. It was guided by Hindu patriarchal norms and values. Women were limited within the walls of domestic domain. Public life was beyond their access. They were used to serve their husband as god. Speaking against husband's will was unthinkable. The condition of the women can be illustrated through some of the textual evidences. Though Tagore favors Indian culture, he seems to be modern in his concepts. So, in the novel, he also wants to take Bimala out of *Purdah*. To emancipate Bimala he sets a male character—Nikhil—to support her emancipation. Bimala says, "My husband was very eager to take me out of *purdha*. One day I said to him: What do I want with the outside world? 'The outside world may want you' he replies" (17). Taking a woman out of the domestic domain was a real challenge to the contemporary patriarchal society of India. Home was the proper place for women in such societies

The society has given social role on the basis of sex. The outside world, *bahir*, is considered as male's domain where men can enjoy their freedom. It has been supposed that men are capable to work in the outside world. But women

have been confined within the walls of domestic domain where they have to spend their precious time for day to day petty things. So they have been deprived from political, social and financial activities. As the result, they become dependent, weak and passive throughout their life. Tagore's attempt to take Bimala out of *purdha* or out of *ghar* is a strong protest against patriarchy. He wants to emancipate women from their traditional roles.

In the beginning Bimala's devotion to her husband is not different from any ideal Hindu wives. She looks very traditional type of women. In a male dominated society a wife is not given the equal position as her husband possesses. Bimala says, "I had the prince of my real world enthroned in my heart. I was his queen. I had my seat by his side. But my real joy was that my true place was at his feet" (12). Darshan Trivedi in *Shakti* says, "The place of woman is inferior and subordinary to man in Indian society" (250). Though Hindu philosophy considers a wife as *ardhangini* or the half part of husband, the society always put women in subordinate position.

Bimala tries to come out and mix up in the outer world which is the world of freedom and liberation. Her husband insists her to enter into the outer world. When she enters in to the public sphere, she involves in nationalistic movement; develops her relation with Sandeep; and adopts modern ways of life. A women's involvement in politics, adopting modern way of life, getting modern education and keeping extra-marital relationship were all against Hindu patriarchal traditional society. But Tagore allows Bimala all these activities to subvert the female stereotypes; and to empower women in the society. It was the great challenge to the contemporary society.

In Hindu patriarchal society women get their identity through their husbands. Red color dress, vermilion mark on head and other ornaments are supposed to wear by married women. A widow is not allowed to wear such things. These wearing symbolize the devotion and subordination of a wife towards her husband. Bimala in the first chapter says, "Mother, today there comes back to my mind the vermilion mark at the parting of your hair, the *Sari* which you used to wear, with its wide red border, and those wonderful eyes of yours, full of depth and peace" (9). All these traditional dresses, make-up and the ornaments signify a woman as the object of decoration; and as a fragile, subordinate and helpless creature.

Similarly, the patriarchal society has taught women to be devoted towards her husband blindly. They are expected to serve their husband as god. The patriarchal ideology tries to hide its exploitation and inhumane behavior in the name of religion and god. Women are supposed to serve their husbands as god so that they can secure their position in heaven. For a woman her husband is an ideal living god in the earth. These ideologies have been preserved and circulated in the society with the help of scriptures and their authorities. Accordingly Bimala used to serve her husband, Nikhil, as a living god. She says, "I would cautiously and silently get up and take the dust of my husband's feet without waking him, how at such movements I could feel the vermilion mark upon my forehead shining out like the morning star" (10-11).

The above lines clearly suggest the subordinate position of the women in traditional patriarchal society. The society has been hegemonized the mentality of the women so strongly that they have been unable to question their position in the society. The line, "It was my woman's heart, which must worship in order to

love", said by Bimala, shows the slave mentality of the women of the contemporary society. They supposed themselves weak and helpless. Bimala says, "We women are weak. So I supposed we must join in the conspiracy of the weak" (67). On the contrary, men themselves suppose to be superior in the society. Sandip says, "We are men, we are kings, and we must have our tribute" (152).

Husband and wife should share their happiness and sorrow if they have authentic relationship. Generally, we cannot find genuine relationship between husband and wife in the traditional patriarchal society. Instead of being equal partners, sharing ideas and problems, a wife in such society cannot be open with her husband. Such kind of problem is there between Bimala and Nikhil. Nikhil in his autobiography says:

I did not realize all this while that it must have been this unconscious tyranny of mine which made us gradually drift apart. Bimala's life, not finding its true lived by reason of my pressure from above, has had to find an outlet by undermining its banks at the bottom. She has had to steal these six thousand rupees because she could not be open with me, because she felt that, in certain things, I despotically different from her. (272)

The nexus of patriarchy is so strong that it does not let women unite themselves. A woman having superior position in a family tries to suppress the other female members of the family. Bara Rani tries to suppress the junior female members of the family. As she came to know about Nikhil's departure, she expresses her outburst of anger against Bimala as: "Oh, you witch, you aggress, you could not die yourself, but needs must send him to his death!"(278).Through these words

she creates the image of women as witch. The conflict among themselves ultimately strengthens the ideology of patriarchy. It has set women in such a way that they can never unite against the injustice of the society. Sandip pretends to pray Bimala as goddess. But Bimala's real image is neither witch nor goddess. Similarly, as Amulya asks Sandip Babu to return extra two thousand five hundred rupees to Bimala, she rejects to touch that stolen money again. She leaves that amount to them to do whatever they like. In such situation Sandip feels a kind of happiness and says, "Can man ever gives as woman can" and Amalya replies, "They are goddess" (199).

In such traditional patriarchal society, women are given different images according to the interest of patriarchy. The same woman is regarded as a goddess and a devil at the same time. But the images themselves are male projection. Men creat such types of images according to their interests.

Before marriage a girl's palms are consulted with an astrologer to know whether she has good signs to be an ideal wife. When the proposal was brought for Bimala's marriage, an astrologer was consulted to read her palm. He said, "This girl has good signs, she will become an ideal wife" (10). Such types of traditional beliefs determine a girl's future. A boy does not need any good signs before marriage. It is believed that he is already prefect but a girl is searched for good signs.

The contemporary situation of Hindu women in India was totally controlled by patriarchal norms and values. Women were confined inside domestic sphere where they were leading a subordinate, passive, miserable and worthless life. Bimala's previous life is a typical example of the contemporary Hindu women.

Empowerment of Female Character in the Novel

Tagore holds modern views and rejects traditional and unscientific patriarchal notions to some extent. He has presented a female character, Bimala, as a protagonist, and has tried to take her out of the traditional world. Providing the role of male for a female character or questioning the patriarchy at that time was not a joke. Tagore challenged the contemporary patriarchy through his female protagonist—Bimala. That is why he can be taken as a modern and revolutionary personality of the time.

Tagore has set a male character-Nikhil - against patriarchy. A male character speaking for women's empowerment and awareness is definitely a great challenge to the deep rooted patriarchy of Indian society. It is Nikhil who takes Bimala out of the domestic domain to the fresh air of outer world. Bimala says, "My husband was very eager to take me out of *purdah*. One day I said to him: what do I want with the outside world. The outside world may want you, he replies" (17). Here Tagore is suggesting men to empower women by educating and liberating them. In another words, men should also be responsible for the emancipation of women.

Nikhil is influenced by western education. He wishes Bimala to be independent and educated woman. An English teacher called Miss Gilby is appointed to educate Bimala. Giving education for women was against the tradition. But Tagore speaks for woman education so that they can be free and independent. Through Bimala Tagore wants to give the message that women should understand themselves, and they should come out crossing the boundaries of patriarchy to lead an authentic life. Nikhil's attitude towards Bimala 'can

further be illustrated through the following dialogue. Nikhil says, "I longed to find Bimala blossoming fully in all her truth and power" (43).

Patriarchy never let women to know the reality by confining them inside the home. It falsely believes that if women are aware of their position, they will protest against the patriarchal societal system. So, the society always wants to keep women in ignorance. But Tagore wants to empower Bimala by giving the experience of both worlds— the domestic world and the public world. The following philosophical lines spoken by Nikhil break the wall created by patriarchy against women. He says:

I would have you come into the heart of the outer world and meet reality. Merely going on with your household duties, living all your life in the world of household conventions and the drudgery of household tasks - you were not made for that! If we meet and recognize each other in the real world, then only will our love be true. (18)

Thus, Nikhil keep on inspiring Bimala to come to the outside world. He makes her realize that she is not only for household duties, she is also needed in the outside world. Her life will be fruitful only when she comes in the outside world and maintain balance between the outside and inside world. Slowly Bimala starts understanding the outside world and tries to establish her own identity. She steps out of home to better acquaint herself with the world and find a new identity for the Indian women. But patriarchy always supposes a wife as subordinate part of her husband. She has no independent identity or existence. There is no existence of a wife in the absence of husband. Such image of women is subverted through Bimala in the novel.

The primary duty of a wife in Hindu patriarchal society is to keep her husband always happy and comfortable. A wife's wishes and interests are buried for the sake of her husband's happiness and prosperity. A wife is expected to be lost in her husband's services; through the service of the husband a wife can fulfill her wishes too.

One's get up shows his/ her identity. Dress is closely related with custom and tradition of a society. Red dress is traditionally related with a married woman in Hindu patriarchal society. If a woman's husband is dead, she is not allowed to wear red color dresses. But Tagore allows Bimala to have modern get-up. Bimala says:

That morning I scented my flowing hair and tied it in a loose knot, bound by cunningly intertwined red silk ribbon. Dinner, you see, was to be served at midday, and there was no time to dry my hair after my bath and to do it up plaited in the ordinary way. I put on a gold bordered white *Sari*, and my short sleeve Muslim jacket was also gold-bordered. (31)

Here, gold bordered white *sari* short sleeve Muslim jacket, loosely tied and scented hair are all against the traditional get-up of a Hindu wife. It is the great challenge to the society. So, Bimala's sister-in-law who represents traditional women comments satirically. Bimala reports the comments as, "But my sister in law, who happens to be passing by, stopped dead before me, surveyed me from head to foot and with compressed lips smiled a meaningful smile. When I asked her the reason, 'I am admiring your get up!, She said" (31).

Thus, Tagore has tried to attribute Bimala as a modern woman. He blurs the traditional image of a woman even through her get up. This shows her emerging awareness about her position and her role in the society.

The relation between Sandip and Bimala is also considerable for the analysis of subversion of the female stereotypes. Hindu society has placed married women as *pativrata*. Husband is like god for her. Thinking about another man except her husband is considered as a sinful act. Character is very important for a woman in a patriarchal society. In case a woman loses her character, the society rejects her. But Tagore allows Bimala to have unusual relation with the energetic and influential person- Sandip. She considers Sandip superior to her husband. Bimala presents her attitudes as:

My husband had no place in our counsels. Sandip Babu treated him as a younger brother, of whom personally one may be very fond and yet have no use for his business advice. He would tenderly and similarly talk about my husband's childlike innocence, saying that his curious doctrine and perversities of mind had a flavor of humor which made them all the more lovable. (58)

Though Nikhil is aware of the infatuation of Bimala toward Sandip, he acts as if he knows nothing about it. He does so because he wants Bimala to be acquainted with the outer world. He wants only her true love, not the traditional one.

According to him, "I longed to find Bimala blossoming fully in her truth and power. But the thing I forget to calculate was one must give up all claims based on conventional rights, if one would find a person freely revealed in truth (43-44).

That is why, Tagore characterizes Bimala as a modern woman who challenges the traditional relation between husband and wife by developing extra

affair with Sandip. Love should come from the deep spring of own's heart. It should not be routined by tradition. So not only men but also women should have the situation to mature their love in outer world. Similarly, the passive role of Nikhil and active role of Bimala regarding the Bimala-Sandip relationship shows the empowerment of women. It blurs the traditional stereotypical role of a wife.

Women have been serving men in different ways. They serve physically by caring home, property, and children. Economically they have to perform countless domestic works which are considered worthless. As a wife, mistress or prostitute they are serving men sexually too. But their countless services are not counted worthful in patriarchal system.

Bimala involves even in politics when she comes in contact with Sandip. Politics was purely male domain of that time. But she participates actively in The National Movement and supports it financially too. She does not hesitate to steal money of her husband in order to support the movement. Stealing the money can also be taken as the revolt against women's financial status. Though she is cheated by Sandip, she realizes the complexity of outer world. The relation with Sandip develops maturity in her life. She gets a more mature understanding of both the home or self and the world. She says, "Only a few minutes ago I had thought that Sandip, whom I had once taken to be a hero, was only the stage hero of melodrama" (242).

Nikhil always gives equal space to Bimala. He never lets Bimala to feel inferior. Bimala's every decision has great importance in his life. In each and every decision he consults with his wife. He always inspires her to understand the importance of her life. He respects her as much as he does for himself. Bimala says, "My husband would not give me any opportunity for worship. That was his

greatness. They are coward who claim absolute devotion from their wife as the right that is a humiliation for both"(13).

Giving equal rights to woman was very great and challenging thing for the contemporary Indian society. To have much respect and power for a woman in the house was beyond one's imagination.

Similarly, Nikhil sacrifices his happiness and pleasure of his life for the sake of his wife. Traditionally, women are not allowed to behave openly as Sandip and Bimala do. The society will raise the question if a woman speak openly with another man except her husband. This is the matter of morality and chastity for a woman. But Nikhil does not care Bimala regarding her relation with Sandip. He does so to have maturity in Bimala. Instead of speaking against the unusual relationship between Sandip and Bimala, he becomes silent sufferer. He says:

Suffering there must be; but I must save myself, by any means in my power, from one form of self torture: I must never think that my life loses its value because of any neglect it may suffer. The full value of my life does not all go to buy my narrow domestic world; its great commerce does not stand or face with some petty success or failure in the bartering of my personal joys and sorrows. (78-79)

Thus, Nikhil and Bimala's relationship turns the patriarchal traditional values upside down. Women are supposed to sacrifice their life for their husband's sake in such society. Their place is at the feet of their husband. On the contrary Tagore presents Nikhil as the ideal husband who sacrifices his life for the sake of his wife.

In this way, Tagore portrays Bimala as a strong female character in the context of Indian patriarchal society. Through the novel, Tagore speaks for equality, freedom and empowerment of women. He has subverted the female stereotypes, and has presented an image of modern woman for some extent. But he is not totally free from traditional mentality of patriarchy. So the representation of female character is problematic in the novel. In the following part his traditional and patriarchal concepts are explored.

Tagore's Patriarchal Mentality in the Novel

Tagore has implicitly supported the traditional values and expectations of the Indian male made culture. The development and design of the plot reinforces the traditional norms and values of Indian patriarchal society. Patriarchy confines a woman inside the four walls of a house. For male dominated society, a woman is unfit in the public sphere. To live harmonious life women should not involve in the outer activities of the world. Rather than having dauntless quality they should possess demur quality. On the contrary, Bimala tries to behave in masculine way going out of the home and engaging herself in politics. But she fails at last and returns to her previous way of her life. She finally comes to realize that there is no place for her in the outside world.

She in her autobiography says:

But women live on the trust of their surroundings, it is their whole world. If once it is out that this trust has been secretly betrayed, their place in their world is lost. They have then to stand upon the fragments of the things they have broken and its jagged edges keep on wounding them at every turn. (247)

Through these lines, women have been suggested not to cross the given boundaries in the society. Women are not allowed to be exposed in the outer world. They must be satisfied with what they are assigned. If a woman like Bimala tries to cross the boundary, she will be destroyed in the outside world. Such types of patriarchal mentality of Tagore can easily be explored through the above lines said by Bimala. She finds no place for her in the outside world. There, she loses everything but gets only frustration and regret instead of happiness and prosperity in her life.

If Bimala was portrayed as a strong female character; and if Tagore was really against the patriarchal tradition, he would not let Bimala return to the previous world. Bimala should have affirmed what she had done. But she regretted her action. She says:

I threw myself prone on the ground and sobbed aloud. It was for mercy that I prayed—some little mercy from somewhere, some shelter, some sin of foreignness, some hope that might bring about the end. ‘Lord’ I vowed to myself, ‘I will lie here, waiting and waiting, touching neither food nor drink, so long as your blessing does not reach me. (254)

The above mentioned heart touching words of Bimala clearly suggest that the outer world is made not for women. Proper place of a woman is home. If a woman steps out of the home she will carefully meet the tragedy as Bimala does. This can be taken as the warning of Tagore to all the women not to cross the boundaries. Public sphere is naturally belongs to men. So that women are unfit in the outside world. In this sense, Tagore fails to understand the politics behind the patriarchal ideology. In fact, the demarcation of male and female role in a society

is only the patriarchal construction which has been blurred by the women of twenty-first century. But Tagore fails to understand the potentialities of women. So the design of the plot consciously or unconsciously supports the male values of the society. In the book *Religions and the Status of Woman*, Jyotsana Chatterji has mentioned, "The people's notion about the proper role of woman are all rooted in religious conceptions regarding women" (45). That is why Tagore's mind is also influenced by the deep rooted patriarchal concepts.

Similarly, Tagore's deep rooted patriarchal values can be found in the characterization of Bimala. Patriarchal society has created binaries between male and female. All the privileged terms are attributed only to male. While men are strong, rational, brave, superior, complete, independent whereas women are considered as weak, irrational, emotional, coward, inferior, incomplete and so on. Bimala is characterized as passive, irrational, emotional and coward character. In both worlds she is played by the male characters. She was in home, she is encouraged by her husband to enter into the outside world. It is Nikhil who takes her out of the traditional world. Even in the outside world she is manipulated by Sandip. Moreover, her cowardiceness can be found when she returns back to her previous traditional world. She can not struggle in the outside world.

Traditional patriarchal society somehow favors misogynistic concepts. Women are considered as stupid, manipulative, dishonest, silly, irrational, incomplete, emotional, weak, over sexed and so on. The privileged terms are given only to men. So, patriarchy treats women as naturally inferior. But it is nothing more than the man made ideology created to dominate women. The negative terms attributed for women clearly show the binaries created by male dominated society to practice its power over women. Tagore is the product of the

same male dominated society. Though he has tried to be liberal and biasness towards women, we find patriarchal ideology running in his blood.

The stereotypical images present women as irrational, dociles and emotional. According to them women care only for physical appearance; and neglect for intellectual aspects. Here Bimala also lost herself in the flattering words of Sandip. Sandip praises her as, “you are far above all modesty and diffidence. You are the Queen Bee of our hive, and we the workers shall rally around you. You shall be our centre, our inspiration” (48). When she heard such praise, she becomes spellbound. She could not understand the motives beyond the praise. Sandip says after observing Bimala, “Bimala flushed all over with bashful pride and her hand shook as she went on pouring out the tea” (48). Thus Bimala is presented as a foolish woman who does not use her common sense so that she is easily deceived by the sweet words of Sandip. B.C. Chakraworty in *Rabindranath Tagore: His mind and Art* writes:

When Bimala meets Sandip for the first time, she is fascinated by the dynamic personality of Sandip. Sandip is absolutely selfish and crafty. He flatters Bimala as the incarnation of Shakti, who is the source of inspiration to all the sons of Bengals. They come too close to each other as comrades in the service of the country till Sandip’s homage to the ‘goddess’ is reforms into his love for Bimala. Bimala is hypnotized by the dynamic personality of Sandip and she almost surrenders herself to him. (207)

Nikhil inspires Bimala to enter into the outer world by giving education and by allowing freedom for her. But she cannot handle her life in the open world. She is easily infatuated towards Sandip because of his oratory and physicality. She

forgets her duties towards her family. In the name of Swadeshi Movement she starts spending more and more time with Sandip. It shows her inability to utilize the freedom. Nikhil says,

I had hoped that when Bimala found herself free in the outer world she would be rescued from her infatuation for tyranny. But now I feel sure that this infatuation is deep down in her nature. Her love is for the boisterous. From the tip of her tongue to the pit of her stomach, she must tingle with red pepper in order to enjoy the simple fare of life. (212)

In this way, Tagore has reinforced the stereotypical images of women in the above line: The phrases 'infatuation is deep down in her nature' and 'love for the boisterous' does not show the deep down nature of women but the deeprooted nature of Tagore and patriarchal society. These lines create the image of women as emotional, oversexed and irrational.

In a patriarchal society if a woman tries to defy the social order, she will be destroyed at last. Being based on this norm of patriarchy, Tagore has designed the woman character-Bimala. Male writers present woman figure as emotional, irrational, and with other negative images in their texts. In the *Home and the world* Bimala is also designed according to the stereotypical images of patriarchy. She is not able to differentiate right or wrong. She is attracted towards the ill-natured and boisterous person—Sandip. Similarly, if a woman keeps extramarital affair, she will be considered immoral, and will be punished in patriarchal society. Bimala is also punished at the end of the novel. She loses her husband and her position in both the home and the world.

Bimala is not given actual freedom. She herself is not satisfied with the freedom given by Nikhil. With the world of freedom one cannot get freedom. One can not get freedom. Actually, Tagore himself hesitates to provide real freedom for Bimala. On the surface, he has provided liberation to Bimala. But the liberation is very limited so that she cannot exist in the new world. There is no one to support her in the outside world. The given lines said by Bimala clearly shows the false freedom given to her. She remarks the freedom provided her as:

And then, the other day in the garden, how easy my husband found it to tell me that he sent me free! But can freedom—empty freedom—be given and taken as easily as all as that? It is like setting a fish free in the sky,-for how can I move or live outside the atmosphere of loving care which has always sustained me? (183)

Bimala seems enjoying freedom on the surface but the freedom takes her nowhere. The concept of giving actual freedom for woman is not internalized by Tagore. Perhaps, his patriarchal upbringing has stopped him doing so. That's why he provides only limited freedom for his female character—Bimala. Absolute freedom for women is beyond the imagination of patriarchay. If Bimala had been given actual freedom she could have survived easily in the outside world.

Though Nikhil is educated and modern in thinking, he is not totally free from the patriarchal conventions. Bimala's closeness with Sandip becomes unbearable for him. But he tries to show as if nothing has happened. He consoles his heart thinking that family life is only one part of his life; it should not affect him much. He does not show his dissatisfaction with Bimala and never tries to say that her activities are wrong. It is nothing more than male ego of Nikhil.

So, Bimala is presented as a passive character. She is inspired to come out of domestic domain into the open world by her husband. He gives her the awareness of her position and her role in the society. The awareness in Bimala does not come from within. So it is not sustainable. When she enters into the outside world, Nikhil does not guide her. As the result a diabolic person—Sandip—exploits her. She is easily deceived by him. She becomes failure in the world. Her life was happy in the home; and it is Sandip who destroys her. So, she is played by the male Characters. She is unable to handle her life by herself. All these things affirm women as passive, weak, emotional and irrational beings.

Finally, Tagore has spoken for equality, freedom and education for women through his novel *The Home and the World*. Bimala has been designed as a modern woman in order to change the traditional patriarchal society. Bimala's characterization in the novel is the real challenge for the contemporary society. However, Tagore's characterization of his female protagonist is not totally free from the male hegemony. Bimala is presented as a failure character in the outer world. That is why, the representation of female character in the novel is problematic.

IV. Conclusion

The research paper has analyzed the dual mentality of Tagore while representing women in the novel, *The Home and the World*. In another words, the representation of women has been explored in this paper; and has been concluded the representation as problematic. Looking through the perspectives of feminism, it can be said that Tagore, on the one hand, is a strong supporter of female's freedom and equality. He tries to subvert the female stereotypes by allowing the female protagonist to enter into the outer world; and by equating her with male characters. On the other hand Tagore has portrayed her as a failure character in the outside world at the last part of the novel. She is forced to return back to her previous domestic world. Instead of awarding her, she is given frustration and failure in the outside world. It signifies that the outer world is purely a male domain; if, a woman tries to enter into it she will be destroyed there. It suggests the home as the proper place for women. Such a concept has been deep rooted in the patriarchal society. So, Tagore is not totally free from patriarchal mentality while representing women in the novel.

The research, carried out through feminist perspectives has presented the dual mentality of Tagore regarding the representation of the female character. The previous life of the protagonist seems to be happy and prosperous inside the boundaries of domestic domain. She had been living as an ideal and traditional wife there. But slowly she realizes that she has become a caged bird inside the home. Her husband has always inspired her to cross the narrow boundary of household duties and examine herself in the outside world to get her own identity. He wants to see maturity and perfection in Bimala by having the balanced experience of both worlds: the home and the world.

As the result, Bimala crosses the boundaries of the patriarchal tradition; and comes out of the home. It was not a simple thing for a woman in that period. She faces many hindrances from her family members as well as from the society but she ignores everything and comes out. Here, we see Tagore's great attempts to empower woman. Entering into the so called male domain, the outside world, suggests that women are as capable as men. It also raises the voice of equality and justice for women in the patriarchal society. Thus the strong and respectful position that Tagore has tried to give to Bimala in this novel shows him as a supporter of female equality and freedom. During Tagore's time women were not aware of their rights. They were busy in their household duties; and were enjoying their traditional life. None was there to make them aware about the importance of education. Most of the females were uneducated. But Tagore had tried to make them aware through this novel. He empowers women by subverting their stereotypes in the novel. So Tagore speaks for equality, justice and empowerment of women.

On the other hand, Tagore is not totally free from patriarchal concepts. Bimala is inspired by her husband to blur the traditional boundaries created by patriarchy. The inspiration does not arise from within her. In the very beginning her husband wants her to involve herself in the outer world. She refuses to come out of her home. But, steadily she is made realize the futility of her existence and walk out of her home. As she comes out her traditional home, she engages herself with Sandip. Her attempt to involve in the activities of outside world results in a complete failure. She is made return to her previous world. Here, if Bimala has been portrayed totally as a strong and conscious female character she would have affirmed the consequences of the outside world. It is not Bimala herself who

raises the voice of freedom rather it is her own husband. Bimala plays passive role not only in her home but also in the outside world. Previously she is guided by her husband and later she is also played by the male character, Sandip. In the outside world Sandip exploits her economically and sexually. There she becomes the puppet in the hand of Sandip. She can not use her inner will in either world. Tagore has given Bimala no actual active roles in the novel. It is because of Tagore's patriarchal concepts rooted in him. So the novel *The Home and the World* views female as the object of failure in outside world.

Finally, Tagore has spoken for equality, freedom and education of women through his novel *The Flame and the World*. Bimala has been designed as a modern woman in order to change the traditional patriarchal society. Bimala's characterization in the novel is the real challenge for the contemporary society. But Tagore's characterization of his female protagonist is not totally free from the male hegemony. Bimala is presented as a failure character in the outer world. That is why the representation of women in the novel is problematic.

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