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Section : 22

**Book review of first 40-60 pages**

The story opens with Bimala remembering her mother's vermilion mark, a sign of Hindu wifehood and love. She feels better about her lack of physical beauty when she marries into the Rajah's home, but her heart is still burdened by her husband's dark face. She appreciates being wholly devoted to her husband because she loves him so much. Even with her husband, Nikhil’s encouragement, she first appears to be stuck in the stereotypical role of a woman and has no desire to leave it. The sacramental nature of Nikhil and Bimala's love and union is shown throughout the narrative. Nikhil demonstrated his undeniable devotion to his wife. He first demonstrated this by accepting the darker skin and poor family background of the woman he married. He went to considerable lengths to ensure that she understood not only her role in their home, but also her place in the wider world. He gives her freedom as a sign of his affection. However, Bimala's love for her husband is less materialistic. This can be seen in Bimala's daily practice of "taking the dust," (Rabindranath Tagore, 1916, p. 1) an Indian rite of respect that is uncommon for a wife to undertake for her husband. In that society described, Bimala, like most women, blindly worships her husband. Another one of the many scenes that alludes to a woman's place in this society is when Nikhil and Sandip argue and Bimala is asked her opinion, which she finds unusual, in addition to "Never before had I [Bimala] had an opportunity of being present at a discussion between my husband and his men friends" (Rabindranath Tagore, 1916, p. 39). This line demonstrates the stark disparity and the fact that women typically had no place in discourse in the actual world.

Nikhil wants Bimala to leave her house and venture outside. They have a lovely connection, but he persuades her that he won't know whether she truly loves him unless she has the chance to meet other guys and choose him over them. Nikhil lavishes Bimala with sophisticated, western items and attire because he appreciates them. But according to Hindu tradition, Bimala never leaves the confines of the house compound. Her world is a collision between modern Indian living and western culture. She appreciates the contemporary items that Nikhil brings her, but she perceives a danger to her way of life when Sandip arrives and speaks passionately about nationalism. Bimala battles with her identity. She belongs to the nation, but she only has experience with her own home, which is a cross-cultural fusion. She must decide whether to work to make her home, her entire world, free from conflict or to support her husband as an Indian woman is expected to do. She is divided between upholding the ideal of the nation she knows she should love. Bimala feels pressured to attempt to comprehend how her traditional way of life can coexist with the modern world without being damaged. This theme is connected to the nationalism theme because Tagore uses it to warn against the danger that nationalism can bring more harm than good.

The third main character in the book is Sandip. Sandip, a radical friend of Nikhil's, is introduced to her. A charismatic nationalist leader named Sandip is a visitor to the palace. Although he is driving the boycott of products created abroad, his anger appears to be centered towards Muslim-majority importers of goods. Bimala is greatly impacted by his revolutionary beliefs and words. Bimala is overcome by Sandip. He stands in stark contrast to her placid, calm, and rational husband. Sandip, who is the leader of the Swadeshi movement, is also a parasite who borrows money from Nikhil to support his opulent lifestyle. Due to her desire to collaborate with Sandip, Bimala becomes deeply entangled in the Swadeshi movement. Bimala starts to doubt her marriage to Nikhil because Sandip embodies all she desires in a guy, and she can tell that he is interested in her. Bimala experiences an emotional meltdown and oscillates between her spouse and Sandip when she sees him. The interaction between the home and the outer world is a prominent issue, as the title suggests.

Though a flaw in the story, the characters' representation of concepts may have been the author's forced compromise. The characters become flat and one-dimensional because Nikhil, who has too much Tagore in him, represents all that is good, and Sandip, who is Nikhil's exact opposite, represents all dishonesty and evil. Throughout the story, neither of these people seems to undergo any transformation. Throughout the book, Nikhil maintains his composure, gentleness, understanding, forbearance, liberality, reason, and altruism, whereas Sandip exhibits selfishness, manipulation, irrationality, oppression, and tyranny. Nikhil is so composed that he maintains his composure even when his wife flirts with his friend right in front of him at home. His logic is: “Perfect gain is the best of all; but if that is impossible, then the next best gain is perfect losing” (Rabindranath Tagore, 1916, p. 24). Given that men in the patriarchal system of India take their wives for granted and rarely allow any complex emotions to arise in their connections with women, especially in marriage, this is quite unusual. Bimala must recognize Nikhil's unconditional love for her on her own and choose to return it. Nikhil will suffer greatly if she chooses differently, but he must respect her right to freedom of action because of how much he cares for her. In a relationship, there is no room for oppression. He expects that Bimala's ideological and sexual infatuation with Sandip will dissipate as she matures and comes to terms with the outside world; he hopes that the spell will soon break and she will once more come to her senses. He should wait and maintain his faith in the meantime. Of course, that is his fate if she decides otherwise. Nikhil argues: “The passage from the narrow to the larger world is stormy. When she is familiar with this freedom, then I shall know where my place is. If I discover that I do not fit in with the arrangement of the outer world, then I shall not quarrel with my fate, but silently take my leave. Use force? But for what? Can force prevail against Truth?” (Rabindranath Tagore, 1916, p. 45). Only constitutional values may serve as the foundation for Indian society. These are the concepts that we all agree upon via daily vote, and they serve as the cornerstone for rapprochement between India's many ethnic groups. The solution to India's terrified minorities lies in Tagore's notion of welcoming variety despite its flaws.

# References

Rabindranath Tagore. (1916). *The home and the world.* Calcutta.