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**Section:** 17

**Assignment:** Book Review Assignment

**Book chosen:** The Home and the World

**Review:**

‘The Home and The World’[[1]](#footnote-2) is an autobiographical novel. It was originally written in Bengali by Rabindranath Tagore on 1916 by the name of ‘Ghare Baire’. It was later translated by Surendranath Tagore. The book is primarily written on the background of the contemporary Swadeshi Movement of India.

The book has three main characters. They are Bimala, Nikhil and Sandip. The whole book is written around the event flow of these three characters, with taking the support of some other non-dominant characters like Bara Rani, Chandranath Babu, grandmother of Nikhil and a few more.

In the first chapter of the book, Tagore firstly explains the character of Bimala. She was not so beautiful, however was married into a Rajah’s house[[2]](#footnote-3). She loved her husband and was devoted to him like any other traditional Indian woman. This becomes clear from her actions, such as taking the dust of her husband’s feet at the morning[[3]](#footnote-4). She placed her husband on the crown position of her life. Tagore showed her character as a traditional Indian woman. On the other side, Bimala’s husband Nikhil was not a traditional Indian man of his time. Tagore showed this character which goes against the tide. Nikhil was a landlord. He gave her wife proper dignity. He was an educated person and wanted her wife to be educated as well[[4]](#footnote-5). Whereas, Bimala liked to stay inside the four walls of the house, called as ‘zenana’, however her husband wanted her to get out of the home and involve with the outside world. Though Bimala did not like the idea[[5]](#footnote-6), she could not let go of her husband’s will. So, Nikhil appointed Miss Gilby to teach her[[6]](#footnote-7). Nikhil also wanted to leave home for better education of Bimala, but Bimala was afraid of the property that they had. She was jealous of Bara Rani, her sister-in-law, lest Bara Rani acquires all the properties[[7]](#footnote-8). Here, a greedy characteristic of Bimala shows up. Meanwhile, Nikhil explained her of the more precious thing, education. So, Bimala started to receive education, not from outside home but at home from Miss Gilby. She learned English and used to read English books to her husband's grandmother[[8]](#footnote-9). Alongside, Nikhil taught Bimala political economy[[9]](#footnote-10). In this part, Tagore gave Nikhil such a character who would educate his wife and would like to make the outside world free for his wife, which was not a common sight on the early 20th century.

To further explain the character of Nikhil, Tagore written, he was a benevolent person and had a long list of charity[[10]](#footnote-11). Nikhil had enough resources as he was a landlord, he helped people financially whoever had an idea or courage to do something for the country[[11]](#footnote-12). But Sandip Babu, friend of Nikhil, took advantage of it and took away a lot of money giving various excuses and because of that, Bimala initially disliked Sandip and was annoyed with him[[12]](#footnote-13), as Tagore has put it.

Coming to the character of Sandip, he was a leader of the Swadeshi Movement. He used to spread the magical verse for the Swadeshi revolutionaries, “Bande Mataram”. However, Nikhil could not connect with the vibe of the verge and thus had different opinions with Sandip, though Nikhil continued to support Sandip financially[[13]](#footnote-14). Nikhil was annoyed with the exaggeration of Swadeshi Movement, due to humiliating Miss Gilby, just because she was an English[[14]](#footnote-15).

In the second chapter of the book, the characteristic of Sandip comes out more evidently. He came to deliver a speech in front of a huge crowd in the locality of Nikhil. Bimala saw him for the first time in person while he was delivering his speech, and started to like Sandip after hearing his speech[[15]](#footnote-16). She was basically impressed with him because of his strong personality, robust speech and endless confidence. After this event, Bimala’s view towards Sandip started to change. She invited Sandip oh her home as Nikhil was his friend[[16]](#footnote-17). Sandip attended the invitation the next day and Bimala dressed well for him; she was shy before him anyway[[17]](#footnote-18).

Bimala had much conversation with Sandip that day. She felt that, Sandip’s character is non-hesitating, very bold and attractive. Then she had a feeling that Nikhil was hiding his enthusiasm insistently[[18]](#footnote-19). From their conversation, it is clear that, Sandip thinked of his country as his god[[19]](#footnote-20). Sandip and Bimala tended to do sin as a human, they think it is an innate thing of them[[20]](#footnote-21). In contrary, Nikhil was reluctant to give anything bad of him to his country. Furthermore, he felt ashamed of himself as he was being taken as an advantage by his own friend Sandip[[21]](#footnote-22).

At the end of the chapter, Tagore introduced another character Chandranath Babu, who was the master of Nikhil[[22]](#footnote-23). He advised Nikhil and Bimala to visit Himalayas, where Bimala longed to go, for a refreshment. Surprisingly, Bimala refused Nikhil to go, because Sandip was at the neighborhood and will work from there and Bimala will be able to see him often[[23]](#footnote-24). Also, in the later part, Nikhil’s character seems to be calm, peaceful but worried about Bimala and the Swadeshi vibe that is spreading around[[24]](#footnote-25). On the contrary, Sandip’s story tells about his arrogance about the things he wanted and he would acquire those stuff by any mean possible, let it be right or wrong[[25]](#footnote-26).

In conclusion, Nikhil is the protagonist and Sandip is the anti-protagonist of this book, in my opinion. Bimala is the main supporting character, which depicts a traditional Indian woman of early 20th century. Additionally, I can see indecisiveness in her character. In the character of Nikhil, I can see a person who believes in righteousness, which is not a common sight in the then time. Furthermore, he loved his country and wanted freedom, but not through violent activities. Whereas, Sandip’s character is completely opposite. He also loved his country and wanted freedom, but he could do anything to achieve that. I can see selfishness and extravagancy in his character. In the end, Tagore picturized the situation of the Swadeshi Movement in this book quite brilliantly.

1. Rabindranath Tagore, *The Home and the World*, Edited by William Radice, Translated by Surendranath Tagore, Penguin Classics, 2005. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Tagore, page 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Tagore, page 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. *Ibid.*, page 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. *Ibid.*, page 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. *Ibid.*, page 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. *Ibid.*, page 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. *Ibid.*, page 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. Tagore, page 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. *Ibid.*, page 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. *Ibid.*, page 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. *Ibid.*, page 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. Tagore, pp. 14-15. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. *Ibid.*, page 16. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
17. *Ibid.*, page 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
18. *Ibid.*, page 16. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
19. *Ibid.*, page 21. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
20. *Ibid.*, page 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
21. *Ibid.*, page 27. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
22. *Ibid.*, page 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
23. Tagore, pp. 28-29. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
24. *Ibid.*, pp. 24-29. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
25. *Ibid.*, pp. 29-32. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)