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The Role Of Heroes In The Novels Of Rabindranath Tagore

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Abstract: *Gora, after whom the novel is named, is a real representative of the Indian creed and culture. He fights against the anti-social, anti-religious and anti-national powers for poverty-stricken folk in order to provide them their rights in society. Though he is a true nationalist, he is a follower of the orthodox customs and conventions of Hindu religion, for which he suffers a lot of internal and external conflict. But at the end, after knowing his real identity, he becomes an embodiment of the novelist's vision of new syncretistic India. Because he rises above the barriers of caste, creed and community. He has been a bigot and xenophobic Hindu nationalist, but after self-realization he opposes bigotry, fanaticism and sectarianism and promotes the ideals of liberal cosmopolitanism and liberal humanistic ethics. Through this vivacious character, Tagore has tried to save the common folk from the clutches of the conservatives and renegades and has inspired them to lead them on the path of liberality, rationality and modernity.*

Key words : Anti-Social, Anti-Religious, Anti-National Powers, Poverty-Stricken, Orthodox Customs

Gora depicts some of the social evils and religious tendencies prevailing in the Bengal's middle-class society towards the end of the last century. These tendencies had shattered the social and religious structure of the contemporary life. In fact, 'Gora' is an insightful study of the conflict between the two divergent faiths, Hindu and Brahmo.

The story of the novel 'Gora' rotates round the conflicting state of love affairs of four major characters-Gora-Sucharita and Binoy-Lolita. Gora is an Irish by birth. He is brought up in a Hindu family of Krishnadayal and Anandamoyi. As since his birth, Gora is brought up in a Hindu family so he considers himself a Hindu. He does not know that he is an Irish by birth. Gora and Binoy are fast friends. Binoy praises Gora for his courage, deep knowledge and genuine patriotism. But some time he criticizes him also for his unjust views on religion. Binoy calls him, "India's self-knowledge incarnate".

Binoy comes in contact with an old gentle man, Pareshbabu. Pareshbabu has three daughters and two adopted children, Sucharita and her brother Satish. Pareshbabu belongs to Brahmo-Samaj. Sucharita is not only highly educated and beautiful but also an ardent follower of Brahmo values. Pareshbabu does not like Hindu orthodoxy but he never speaks harshly and publically about his Hindu believes.

In no time Binony and Lolita become fast friends and their friendship develops into love. Gora does not like their relation on account of his disliking for Brahmo Samaj. On the other hand Gora also starts liking Sucharita. But he does not disclose his feelings. Sucharita also likes Gora but she also does not like Gora's dogmatism. As Gora thinks that girl's place is predetermined in home and she must be dutiful to her husband. It's highly ironical that both the boys Binoy & Gora have attraction for the girls of Brahmo Samaj.

But the fate has some other mystery. Gora's foster father Krishnadayal falls ill and in his last moments he discloses the secret of Gora's Irish birth to him. Now Gora's orthodox believes begin to shatter and he develops belief in humanistic values.

Ramesh, the hero of the novel, "The Wreck" passes the examination of law. He wants to marry Hemnalini. Hemnalini also loves Ramesh. Jogendra, the brother of Hem and fellow student of Ramesh introduced them to each other. But the orthodox parents of Ramesh have already chosen a bride for Ramesh. Ramesh makes a feeble attempt to oppose this proposal of his parents but all in vain, ultimately he has to submit to the decision of his parents.

During the marriage, due to Parda system Ramesh could not see the face of his bride. While returning from the marriage the ship carrying the two marriage parties-one of Ramesh and second of another, caught in wreck. In this accident all died leaving Ramesh and Kamala, the bride of another marriage party. Ramesh assumes Kamala to be his wife as he has not seen her face and brings her to his house.

After some time Ramesh comes across the reality of Kamala. But now he is in a fix. Neither he can keep Kamala in his house as his wife nor can he leave her. He decides of search for her real in-laws and admits Kamala in a girls' school as a boarder for schooling. Meanwhile Ramesh returns to Calcutta and tries to regain Hemnalini's love. He hurriedly agrees for an immediate marriage with Hem and thinks that after marriage he would tell everything about Kamala to Hem. But before all this Ramesh's reality is exposed. Jogendra warns Ramesh not to meet Hem again. Now Ramesh goes to west in Gazipur to stay with his uncle



Chakravarti. Here Kamala wins the heart of all. Ramesh tries many times to write everything to Hem but fails. V.S. Naravane points out that —

“Ramesh, thus loses to love of both the girls whom destiny had brought into his life. He is alone, shaken by this second wreck—the wreckage of all his hopes”.

No doubt, on the one hand Ramesh is intelligent, highly educated, eloquent, kind- hearted and traditionalist. Having no strong will-power, he is unable to reveal his relations with Hem to his father. He opposes the proposal half-heartedly, thinking that perhaps any accident might prevent the marriage; this is a tragic flow in his character.

But it's not that Ramesh has only flaws in his character, some great admirable qualities of his character that are revealed in the novel are his sense of duty and social-obligation, generosity and morality. He does not reveal the truth to Kamala and sets out in search of her husband. He knows well that after revealing the truth, she would not accept his shelter and again her life would be a hell. Ramesh thinks—

“Her husband had in all probability been drowned. Even if he could find out where the husband's people lived and send Kamala to them it was very doubtful if they would receive her, and it would not be fair to send her back to her uncle's house. What sort of reception would she have from society if it were known that she had been living all this time with another man as his wife”.

Atindra is the hero of Rabindranath's novel, Four Chapters. He is well educated young boy. He is madly in love with Ela. He has devoted his life to Ela. At the very first sight he falls in love with Ela. He said-

“The music of your voice thrilled me through and through. It stuck me like a sudden shaft of light. Could I become indignant at this unheard of impertinence from a strange girl”.

Atin loves Ela so much that he does whatever Ela wants. Ela does not like hoarding clothes.

According to her the spare clothes can be useful to those poor people who can not buy clothes. Atin loved Ela so much that he gave all his clothes to needy people and kept only four pair of them with him.

He is a true lover of Ela. Ela is life-force for Atindra. His love for Ela was selfless. Throughout his life he tries to win Ela's love. But the strange thing is that he had to pay Ela's life as its cost. He thinks that not only in this world but also in the immortal world he would love Ela. Even death can not separate him from Ela. He himself says to Ela-

“Tell me that you'll remember I loved you, even when I have ceased to live” The pain of love that he has been suffering from has become intolerable for him. At last this pain and agony of love burst out from his mouth and he says to Ela—

“What good will your service do me? You would pour nectar into the broken pitcher of my life! You can't even realize the intolerable growing at my heart of the might- have-been.... What can it avail one who has lost his truth?”

Nikhil, the central figure of the novel, The Home and The World is in many ways a self portrait of Tagore himself. Like Tagore, Nikhil also believes in non-violence. He believes in creativity and prefers to adopt creative ways and methods to achieve freedom. He thinks that the youth of the country, instead of burning foreign goods and clothes, should think for those ways and methods that can contribute in bringing progress and modernization in the country. When he comes to know that Sandip along with other members of the group is burning western clothes in the name of Swadeshi Movement, he becomes very angry. He does not agree with this destructiveness.

According to him burning of western clothes can only bring poverty and trouble to the poor traders. He said to Sandip—

“... Why this bonfire business? Why not try to build up something? You should not waste even a tenth part of energies in this destructive excitement”

Hence through Nikhil, Tagore has projected his own ideas and belief in non-violence and progressive thinking.

Nikhil, the hero of the novel, is a landlord of moderate stature. He is around thirty at the time when the events of the story take place. His mind and temperament are formed by whatever was best of Bengali life. He has rejected the ideal extravaganza of the typical land lord's life to tread a completely different path. On one hand Nikhil has introduced various schemes to ensure lasting benefits to his tenants; on the other hand, inside the house he educated his girl wife with new ideas and culture of the modern age so that she could have a taste of full life. Nikhil is broad-minded not only in his concept of progress of country but also in his concept about women.



Nikhil does not think that woman is an article of decoration of house. He believes in equality of man and woman. According to him man does not have any superior claim over woman. Nikhil's wife Bimala has a devotional love for Nikhil. She wants to worship Nikhil like god. She wants to find her place in Nikhil's feet, not in his heart. She says—

“I had my seat by his side. But my real joys was, that my true place was at his feet”.

But Nikhil is a man of modern thinking. He wants that his wife Bimala should not only educate herself but also find her place in outer world. He does not approve of conservative thinking. He wants that Bimala should live in the city house of Calcutta. He also wants to take her out of Pardah. He encourages her participation in freedom struggle. Nikhil insists her to see and experience the world outside the four walls of house.

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