



Psychoanalytical Analysis Of Rabindranath Tagore's Story 'The Home Coming'

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Abstract

Rabindranath Tagore's "The Homecoming" is a poignant exploration of the psychological dynamics between family members, particularly focusing on the troubled adolescent protagonist, Phatik Chakravorti. This research article employs psychoanalytical theory to delve into the underlying psychological forces that shape the characters and drive the narrative. By analyzing Phatik's actions and emotions through the lens of Freudian theory, this study uncovers the deep-seated anxieties and unconscious desires that influence his behavior. The analysis also considers the familial relationships and societal expectations that contribute to Phatik's inner turmoil. Through this lens, Tagore's story is revealed as a complex depiction of the struggle for identity and belonging within the constraints of a rigid social structure. The psychoanalytical approach not only provides a deeper understanding of Phatik's character but also highlights the broader themes of alienation, guilt, and the search for self-acceptance. This study aims to offer a comprehensive interpretation of "The Home-Coming" that enriches the reader's appreciation of Tagore's nuanced portrayal of human psychology.

Keywords Rabindranath Tagore, Psychoanalysis, Freudian theory, Adolescence, Family dynamics, Identity, Alienation, Guilt

Introduction

Rabindranath Tagore, a towering figure in Indian literature, has left an indelible mark with his multifaceted works encompassing poetry, novels, plays, and short stories. "The Home-Coming" (originally "Chhuti" in Bengali) stands out as a seminal work that captures the essence of human emotions and relationships. This story, through its depiction of a young boy's tragic journey, offers a fertile ground for psychoanalytical exploration.

The protagonist, Phatik Chakravorti, is a quintessential adolescent struggling with the tumultuous transition from childhood to adulthood. His actions and reactions are replete with psychological complexities that invite a deeper examination. This research paper aims to dissect these intricacies using Freudian psychoanalytical theory, focusing on concepts such as the unconscious mind, defense mechanisms, and psychosexual development.

Theoretical Framework

Freudian psychoanalysis, developed by Sigmund Freud, provides a comprehensive framework for understanding human behavior and mental processes. Key concepts such as the id, ego, and superego, along with mechanisms of repression, projection, and sublimation, will be employed to analyze the characters in "The Homecoming." Freud's theories on psychosexual development, particularly the latency stage, are particularly relevant in understanding Phatik's behavior and emotional conflicts.

Analysis of Phatik's Character

1. The Id, Ego, and Superego:

Phatik's behavior can be understood through the interplay of the id, ego, and superego. His impulsive actions, such as the decision to leave home, reflect the dominance of the id, driven by basic instincts and desires. The lack of a strong ego to mediate between his desires and reality results in his frequent conflicts with authority figures, such as his mother and uncle. The superego, representing internalized societal norms, manifests in Phatik's feelings of guilt and shame, particularly after he realizes the consequences of his actions.

2. Repression and Projection:

Phatik's rebelliousness and aggression can be seen as manifestations of repressed emotions. His father's death, coupled with his mother's perceived neglect, creates a sense of abandonment that he is unable to consciously acknowledge. This repression leads to projection, where Phatik attributes his negative feelings to others, viewing them as hostile or indifferent.

3. Psychosexual Development:

During the latency stage, children typically form same-sex friendships and begin to develop social skills. However, Phatik's environment, marked by familial strife and a lack of supportive relationships, hinders this development. His attachment to his mother, which remains unresolved, contributes to his conflicted emotions and behavior.

Familial Dynamics

1. Mother-Son Relationship:

In Rabindranath Tagore's "The Homecoming," the relationship between Phatik Chakravorti and his mother is central to understanding his psychological struggles. This dynamic can be scrutinized through the lens of Freudian psychoanalysis, particularly focusing on the Oedipus complex, feelings of neglect, and the impact of familial favoritism.

1. The Oedipus complex:

Freud's theory of the Oedipus complex posits that young boys experience a subconscious attraction to their mothers and a rivalry with their fathers during the phallic stage of psychosexual development. While Phatik's father is deceased, the elements of this complex are still present in his relationship with his mother. Phatik yearns for his mother's affection and attention, which is crucial for his emotional development. His mother, however, appears to be more affectionate towards his younger brother, Makhan, which intensifies Phatik's feelings of rivalry and jealousy. This perceived favoritism exacerbates Phatik's internal conflict, as he struggles with both his desire for his mother's love and his resentment towards his brother.

2. Feelings of Neglect and Rejection:

Phatik's perception of his mother's favoritism towards Makhan leads to deep feelings of neglect and rejection. He often feels unloved and unwanted, which profoundly impacts his self-esteem and sense of security. These feelings of neglect are evident in his rebellious behavior and his desperate attempts to gain his mother's attention, even if it means getting into trouble. Phatik's mischief and defiance can be seen as cries for help,

driven by his need for validation and love from his mother. This need is unmet, causing him to feel increasingly alienated within his own family.

3. Impact on Phatik's Identity and Behavior:

The lack of a nurturing relationship with his mother significantly impacts Phatik's sense of identity and behavior. He internalizes his mother's apparent rejection, leading to a diminished sense of self-worth. This internalized rejection manifests in his interactions with others, where he often expects hostility and rejection. Phatik's mother, preoccupied with the practicalities of running the household and managing her younger son, fails to recognize Phatik's emotional needs. Her inability to provide the necessary emotional support and guidance leaves Phatik feeling isolated and misunderstood.

4. Familial Favoritism:

The theme of familial favoritism is crucial in understanding Phatik's psychological state. His mother's preferential treatment of Makhan creates a sibling rivalry that further isolates Phatik. He perceives Makhan as the favored child who receives all the love and attention that he craves. This perception deepens his resentment and contributes to his rebellious behavior. The absence of a supportive and understanding relationship with his mother drives Phatik to seek acceptance and belonging outside the family, ultimately leading to his tragic demise.

5. Psychoanalytical Implications:

From a psychoanalytical perspective, the mother-son relationship in "The Home-Coming" underscores the importance of maternal affection and acceptance in a child's psychological development. Phatik's emotional turmoil is rooted in his unresolved Oedipal desires and his mother's failure to fulfill his emotional needs. His actions are driven by unconscious forces stemming from these unresolved conflicts. The story highlights how crucial a nurturing and attentive mother is for a child's healthy psychological development. Phatik's tragic end serves as a poignant reminder of the devastating effects of emotional neglect and familial favoritism.

The mother-son relationship in Tagore's "The Home-Coming" is a complex interplay of affection, neglect, and rivalry that significantly shapes Phatik's psychological state. Analyzing this relationship through the lens of Freudian psychoanalysis provides a deeper understanding of Phatik's character and the underlying causes of his behavior, offering valuable insights into the broader themes of identity, alienation, and the need for belonging.

2. Uncle's Role:

Phatik's uncle represents an authority figure who attempts to provide stability but ultimately fails to understand Phatik's emotional needs. The uncle's well-intentioned but misguided efforts to discipline Phatik further alienate the boy, reinforcing his sense of isolation and misunderstanding.

Societal Expectations and Identity

Phatik's struggle is not only personal but also a reflection of societal expectations. The rigid social structure and expectations placed on him contribute to his inner turmoil. The pressure to conform to societal norms conflicts with his individual desires, creating a sense of alienation and identity crisis.

Themes of Alienation and Guilt

Phatik's journey is marked by a profound sense of alienation. His inability to find acceptance and understanding within his family leads to a deep-seated sense of guilt. This guilt, stemming from his perceived failures and the consequences of his actions, exacerbates his psychological distress.

Conclusion

Rabindranath Tagore's "The Home-Coming" is a rich text that lends itself to a psychoanalytical reading. By examining the psychological underpinnings of Phatik's character and the dynamics within his family, this study highlights the complex interplay of unconscious desires, societal pressures, and familial relationships. Tagore's nuanced portrayal of these elements not only deepens our understanding of the characters but also offers a broader commentary on the human condition. Through the lens of Freudian theory, "The Home-Coming" emerges as a profound exploration of identity, alienation, and the search for belonging.

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