

# **The Home and the World Study Guide**

## **The Home and the World by Rabindranath Tagore**

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## Plot Summary

The Home and the World by Rabindranath Tagore is an interesting allegory of Indian politics in the early twentieth century. As a means of encouraging his wife, Bimala, to emerge into the outer world, Nikhil introduces her to Sandip, an active leader in the Swadeshi movement. Bimala soon becomes immersed in the revolutionary fervour of Swadeshi and finds herself torn between the duties of home and the world. The Home and the World is a tragic example of the conflict between realism and idealism.

Though Nikhil and Bimala enjoy a peaceful marriage, Nikhil wants her to enter the outer world, believing their love is true only if they recognize one another in the outer world. When Bimala attends a Swadeshi rally led by Sandip Babu, she insists he visit Nikhil's estate. Bimala and Sandip are attracted to one another, so Sandip decides to make his headquarters at the estate.

Bimala becomes intimately involved with the Swadeshi movement because of her desire to work with Sandip. Sandip is obviously interested in Bimala, and Bimala begins to question her marriage to Nikhil because Sandip represents everything she wants in a man. At Sandip's request, Bimala steals 6000 rupees from Nikhil's safe for the Cause, but Sandip's subsequent behavior makes her feel torn as though she is two people, one who is appalled by Sandip and one who is attracted to him.

Though Nikhil is distraught at losing Bimala, he grants her the freedom to choose her own life. Guilt-ridden about her theft, Bimala sends Amulya, a young disciple of Sandip's, to sell her jewels so she can replace the 6000 rupees, but instead, Amulya steals the money from Nikhil's treasury. Nikhil forgives Bimala's deceit, causing her to realize her husband is the one who truly loves her. When there is a Swadeshi riot in Bengal, Sandip flees the city while Nikhil goes into town to try to calm matters. Nikhil is shot in the head, and Amulya is killed by a bullet through his heart.



# Chapter 1

## Chapter 1 Summary

The Home and the World by Rabindranath Tagore is an interesting allegory of Indian politics in the early twentieth century. As a means of encouraging his wife, Bimala, to emerge into the outer world, Nikhil introduces her to Sandip, an active leader in the Swadeshi movement. Bimala soon becomes immersed in the revolutionary fervour of Swadeshi and finds herself torn between the duties of home and the world. The Home and the World is a tragic example of the conflict between realism and idealism.

In Bimala's Story, Part 1, Bimala recalls her mother's vermilion mark, the mark of Hindu wifehood and the symbol of devotion. When she marries into the Rajah's house, her husband's dark face lifts her heart regarding her own lack of physical beauty, yet it leaves a lingering regret. Knowing from childhood how devotion is its own beauty, Bimala wakes early in the morning to take the dust from her husband's feet, but she is ashamed when he awakens and catches her. Though her father-in-law's home is old in dignity, Bimala's husband is modern in concepts and abstains from drinking. The other women of the house are renowned for beauty, but Bimala gains entry into the family by auspicious marks with which she is endowed. Her sister-in-law, the Bara Rani, affects contempt for Nikhil's modern notions, but Nikhil's gentleness knows no bounds and he implores Bimala to forgive the Bara Rani, claiming women are cramped into pettiness and crookedness by the pressures of society.

In Bimala's Story, Part 2, Nikhil is eager to take Bimala out of purdah, the seclusion of the zenana. When she does not understand what the outside world could want with her, he tells her, "What I want is, that I should have you, and you should have me, more fully in the outside world. That is where we are still in debt to each other" (page 23). Bimala refuses to leave zenana because she does not believe it is important enough to cause Nikhil's grandmother pain.

In Part 3 of Bimala's Story, the new era of Swadeshi, the Nationalist movement, comes to Bengal, and Bimala's hopes and desires become red with the passion of this new age. Bimala wants to fire Miss Gilby since the tutor is English, but Nikhil objects. When a boy in their house insults Miss Gilby on her way to church, Nikhil turns the boy out of the house, and no one can forgive him for that act. Miss Gilby leaves of her own accord, but Bimala will not soften toward her tutor even when Miss Gilby cries during their farewell. Nikhil is not against the Swadeshi cause but is unable to fully support it; "I am willing to serve my country; but my worship I reserve for Right which is far greater than my country. To worship my country as a god is to bring a curse upon it" (page 29).



## Chapter 1 Analysis

The first chapter begins by introducing Bimala, the wife of Nikhil. As a child, she resents her resemblance to her mother and prays to grow into the model of what a woman should be. A marriage proposal comes, and an astrologer says Bimala will become the ideal wife, but no one is surprised because she resembles her mother. In taking the dust from Nikhil's feet, she is not trying to earn merit; "it was my woman's heart, which must worship in order to love" (page 18). She emphasizes that her husband is a modern man and does not always follow traditional usages. Since his parents are dead, his grandmother is mistress of the house, and Nikhil, as the apple of her eye, is permitted to overstep such ancient usages. Despite gossip, he hires Miss Gilby to tutor Bimala. While he stays in college in Calcutta during the beginning of their marriage, Nikhil writes to Bimala nearly every day, and she keeps the letters in a sandalwood box, covered with fresh flowers from the garden. She finds joy at Nikhil's feet, but though she was born to worship her husband with devotion, he does not give her an opportunity for worship. It is worthy of him that he never expects her worship, but Bimala believes he would do her a service by accepting it. Nikhil gives into the Bara Rani's requests without considering whether they are right or reasonable, and Bimala is exasperated because she is not even grateful. The Bara Rani is young and forward, but there is none to gainsay her. She seems especially irritated that Bimala has the good fortune of a spotless husband, but Nikhil feels more sorrow for her lot than for the defects in her character.

In the second part of Bimala's Story, Nikhil wants Bimala to leave the seclusion of Purdah because he believes that, wrapped up in home, Bimala has no idea of what she has or what she wants, so he wants her to meet reality in the outer world because their love is only true if they meet and recognize one another in the outer world. When his grandmother dies, Nikhil wants Bimala to move to Calcutta with him, leaving the Bara Rani in charge of the house, but Bimala cannot abandon the house and refuses to leave her home in the hands of the enemy. Nikhil does not compel her to go to Calcutta because he will not use his power just because he possesses it, showing that he refuses to act in tyranny, an ideal that recurs throughout the novel. In the third part of her story, Bimala is swept up in the fever of Swadeshi. Nikhil tries to teach her political economy as he tries to teach his countrymen the idea of thrift. When the Swadeshi storm reaches her blood, Bimala decides to burn her foreign clothes, but her husband argues there is no point in wasting energy in such destructive excitement. After Miss Gilby leaves her post of her own accord because Nikhil dismisses a young Indian boy for insulting her, Nikhil causes a scandal when he drives Miss Gilby to the train station, and Bimala is ashamed of the way her husband has judged the boy for insulting the Englishwoman.



# Chapter 2

## Chapter 2 Summary

In the fourth part of Bimala's Story, Sandip Babu and his followers come to her neighborhood to speak at this time. Bimala does not like something about Sandip's features, and she feels he takes advantage of her husband's friendship since Nikhil gives into Sandip's demands unquestioningly; however, Sandip is transformed as he speaks, and when his eyes flash on Bimala, she feels she is the sole representative of Bengal's womanhood. When Nikhil mentions Sandip is leaving in the morning, Bimala wishes he could stay another day so she could invite him to dinner, so Nikhil arranges it. She is about to retire after the men dine, but Sandip first makes her promise to return after she eats. In Bimala's Story, Part 5, Sandip apologizes for spoiling Bimala's appetite when she returns, and she is ashamed for being indecently quick with her dinner. As Sandip and Nikhil discuss patriotism, Nikhil is outraged that Sandip tries to pass off injustice as a duty and unrighteousness as a moral idea. When Bimala says she would worship her country as divine, Sandip praises her, but Nikhil looks pained. Nikhil stops Sandip's raptures when his tutor, Chadranath Babu, arrives.

In the first part of Nikhil's Story, Nikhil once had faith that he could bear whatever came from God, but his trial has now come, and he has a constant pain in his heart as he is forced to see things he does not want to see. Bimala is angry at his lack of patriotism, but Nikhil feels men love excitement more than their country if they cannot be enthusiastic for their country as it really is. Sandip and Bimala accuse Nikhil of being unimaginative, but the difference of opinion is due to a dissimilarity of nature. Nikhil is ashamed to admit, even to himself, that Sandip is trying to take advantage of him. In Nikhil's Story, Part 2, sensitive to all omens of evil, Chadranath Babu suggests that Nikhil has detained Sandip long enough, but when Nikhil tells Sandip that Rangpur has complained that he is selfishly detaining Sandip, Sandip believes he can achieve more if he works from a center; he will use Bimala as his inspiration and borrow her enthusiasm to spread through the country.

In Sandip's Story, Part 1, Sandip believes the country will become his when he is able to win it by force because, "Every man has a natural right to possess, and therefore greed is natural" (page 45). Since nature surrenders herself only to the robber, he is not ashamed to ask for what he wants, and sometimes, he does not wait to ask before taking it. This power of mighty men wins women and the world of reality because women were not created for the lotus-eaters of idealism. Sandip agrees that God created special unions between man and woman but does not understand why he is expected to ignore his affinity for many for only one. He has discovered an affinity for many women in his lifetime, and now, he has an affinity for one more who has also discovered her affinity for him. Now, he is a coward if he does not win.



## Chapter 2 Analysis

In the fourth part of Bimala's Story, Bimala meets and is enchanted by Sandip. She returns home with a new pride and joy and is displeased when Nikhil does not mention it, thinking he should admit Sandip brought him to his senses. She persuades Nikhil to invite his friend to their estate for dinner the next day. Reproaching the Creator for not making her beautiful, Bimala spends much time on her appearance, and she is irritated when the Bara Rani finds her attire entertaining. She is tempted to change into everyday clothes but knows Nikhil will not like it if she appears before Sandip unworthily clad. When Bimala apologizes that dinner is not prepared in time, Sandip flatters her and says he does not mind the delay. Bimala excuses herself to eat once the men have dined, but first, Sandip makes her promise she will return after she eats, foreshadowing his sexual interest in Bimala. As Nikhil and Sandip discuss foreign medicines, Bimala can tell that Nikhil does not approve of Sandip's exaggerations. She finds her sister-in-law eavesdropping in the passage leading to the zenana. In the next part of Bimala's Story, Bimala returns to the sitting room after eating dinner. She is uncomfortable as she sits at the end of the sofa, and her vision of herself as the Shakti of Womanhood fails her. Nikhil and Sandip discuss patriotism as Bimala listens to their conversation. When Bimala points out that the history of every country is the history of stealing for the sake of that country, Nikhil objects that they are now paying for those thefts. Though Bimala sees her husband's skill in debate, her heart refuses to accept his position. Sandip says the truth takes flesh and blood from the hearts of women, and women will save the country, causing a shiver to run through Bimala's body. He appeals to the beautiful spirit of fire for courage and grace, but it is unclear exactly whom he is addressing. When Chadranath Babu arrives, Nikhil tells Bimala to make obeisance to his master, and when she bends to take the dust from his feet, Chadranath Babu gives her a blessing of which she is sorely in need at the moment.

Nikhil is introduced for the first time as a narrator in the first part of Nikhil's Story. Nikhil longs for Bimala to fully blossom in her truth and power, but he forgets that he must give up all claims based on conventional rights to do so, placing his full trust upon love. Bimala does not understand that Nikhil believes imposition of force is weakness. He hopes she will be rescued from her infatuation for tyranny when she finds herself free in the outer world, but this infatuation resides deep in her nature. Nikhil realizes Sandip is taking advantage of him. Because of Bimala's hero-worship of Sandip, it is difficult for Nikhil to explain that Sandip's love of country is another phase of his covetous self-love, but he believes it is better to speak out than let such feelings gnaw at him. In the second part of Nikhil's Story, Nikhil has known his master for thirty years, and his master has established the peace, truth and spiritual vision of his life into the center of Nikhil's, making it possible for him to realize goodness in its truth. Chadranath Babu realizes Sandip's evil intentions and tries to convince Nikhil to force his friend to leave, but Sandip refuses, deciding instead to set up his headquarters at Nikhil's estate. Another day, Chadranath Babu suggests Nikhil and Bimala visit Darjeeling, but Bimala refuses though she has long desired to see the Himalayas, foreshadowing Bimala's reciprocated infatuation with Sandip. Nikhil will wait, learning his place when she is familiar with her freedom, and then, if necessary, he will silently take his leave and not



quarrel with fate. If he cannot fit in with the arrangement of the outer world, force cannot prevail against Truth. At this point in the novel, Sandip emerges as a narrator, beginning with Part 1 of Sandip's Story. Sandip admits that he is greedy and willing to take what he wants without asking permission. He believes the weak are despised by the strong, and many men, such as Nikhil, are born with an obsession to die. Nikhil agrees that one cannot get anything except by force, but he believes in the strength of renouncing. Sandip believes he must steal or rob in order to live, and his way always wins the hearts of women who see the passion in his features and manners, feeling this passion is the lifeblood of the world. Sandip explicitly mentions his interest in Bimala, believing he will be a coward if he does not win her affections.





## Chapter 3

### Chapter 3 Summary

In Bimala's Story, Part 6, Bimala loses her feeling of shame even when the Bara Rani mocks her, saying it is time for the men of the house to weep. Sandip makes her feel beautiful, and since he is not a mere individual because he has the minds of millions in the country within him, her sister-in-law's jests no longer touch her, especially after he calls her Queen Bee of the hive, causing her to feel a strength she has never felt before. Sandip consults her about everything concerning the Cause, and since her responses seem to astonish him, he praises women for having a way of understanding without thinking. Bimala's mind is so clouded that she is unaware of a cruel thing happening, but she suggests that this is, perhaps, women's nature.

In the second part of Sandip's Story, Sandip gets an inkling that something has gone wrong. Nikhil's sitting room is accessible from the zenana and from Sandip's room. Hearing Bimala in the sitting room, he enters, offering to help her with the book she selects from the shelves, but then they begin talking about other subjects. One Thursday afternoon, a guard, Nanku, bars Sandip from entering the sitting room, but when Bimala angrily insists Nikhil dismiss Nanku, Nikhil sends the guard to another part of his estate instead. After this, Sandip is happy that Bimala summons him without the pretense of running into one another on accident. At one point, Sandip leaves a book about sexual problems lying out in the sitting room, and when he catches Bimala reading it, she quickly covers it with a book of poetry. He mentions the book which is filled with blunt things, wishing Nikhil would read it since he wants to go by invented maxims which knock against human nature. Bimala, quoting Nikhil, suggests, "Is it not a part of human nature to try and rise superior to itself" (page 57).

In the third part of Sandip's Story, Sandip knows it is unsafe to wake a sleepwalker, but he is impetuous and overly bold. When Sandip shows Nikhil the book about sex, Nikhil says it is well for those who think but poison for those who shirk thought. Bimala is silent during the discussion, to Sandip's irritation. Sandip suggests loaning the book to Bimala, and Nikhil sees no harm in her reading it. As Nikhil leaves, Sandip does not understand why he does not cast him out since he obviously feels the danger threatening his home. Seeing a double frame on the table with Nikhil's picture next to one of Bimala, Sandip takes the picture of Bimala and fills it with a photograph of himself from his youth. It is proper for his picture to be placed next to Nikhil's since they are two old friends.

### Chapter 3 Analysis

In the sixth part of Bimala's Story, the Bara Rani mocks Bimala for the time she spends with Sandip. Bimala dresses without design, but she knows which efforts will please Sandip since he discusses it openly. Sandip's compliments strengthen Bimala, but she has no time to question the nature of this strength; "It seemed to belong to me, and yet



to transcend me. It comprehended the whole of Bengal" (page 50). Though he sometimes disagrees with Bimala about matters concerning the Cause, he always confesses it was a mistake afterward. Bimala believes that Sandip is behind what is taking place, and behind Sandip is the plain common sense of a woman. She is filled with glory because of her great responsibility. Sandip does not consult Nikhil, claiming his affection for Nikhil prevents him from troubling his friend with the burden of the country.

In the second part of Sandip's Story, Sandip often arranges to accidentally run into Bimala in Nikhil's sitting room whenever he hears her stirring in the room. On an inauspicious Thursday afternoon, a servant prevents Sandip from entering, offending Sandip by physically detaining him, and when Bimala exits the sitting room and finds this exchange, she is infuriated and dismisses the servant, Nanku, commanding Sandip to come in. She sends a servant to Nikhil, summoning him to inform him that Nanku has insulted Sandip upon someone's orders. Nikhil summons Nanku who confesses the orders came from the Bara Rani. Bimala wants Nanku dismissed from his job, but Nikhil's sense of justice will not allow this, so the next day, he sends Nanku to another part of his estate. Sandip is thrilled that Bimala begins sending for him to chat with her in the sitting room without the pretense of running into one another on accident. He sees it as a triumphant progress of Truth because the attraction between a man and a woman is fundamental. Sandip enjoys it as the Truth gradually reveals itself, but he knows it is best to pretend he, like Bimala, is unconscious of it since she does not know which way she is treading and it will be unsafe to awaken her before it is time. When Bimala is surprised by his appetite at dinner, Sandip tells her there is no need to blush for him since he is shameless because women like greedy men since greed gives them the upper hand. When Bimala quotes Nikhil in regards to human nature trying to rise superior to itself, Sandip argues that she does not believe that because she is a healthy human who responds to the call of reality, unlike the weak majority which attempts to enfeeble others since Nature has denied them strength. When Bimala claims women are weak, Sandip objects that men laud women as delicate and fragile to make themselves believe they are weak, but they have given birth to reality. Women know men love delusion and allow it, but Sandip is troubling to destroy illusion for freedom because he wants his country and human relations to be free.

In the third part of Sandip's Story, Sandip admits to being overly bold by waking Bimala from her dreamlike state in regards to their relationship. As he and Bimala get along nicely, Chadranath Babu enters; these schoolmasters make Sandip want to quit the world in disgust. Bimala takes her place solemnly, inviting him to join them, and Sandip believes it is a womanly wile, a way to raise her value in his eyes. As Chadranath Babu begins to talk about Swadeshi, Sandip means to let him continue his monologue but impatiently debates with him until Nikhil returns and Chadranath Babu leaves. Nikhil agrees that there is no harm in Bimala reading the book about sex that Sandip suggests. He further claims that Sandip seeks the truth of man from science teachers rather than his own inner being and is bent on insulting man and making him petty. Nikhil is ready to suffer all, knowing all, because, "Man may be wounded unto death, but he will not die" (page 61). Sandip does not understand why Nikhil does not banish him from the estate since he is obviously aware of the danger Sandip poses to his

household, but Nikhil is waiting for Bimala to give him a cue, causing Sandip to fear she at last understands the current bearing her along and will now advance or retreat with open eyes.



# Chapter 4

## Chapter 4 Summary

In the third part of Nikhil's Story, Nikhil becomes depressed and heart-broken as he realizes he is losing Bimala to Sandip who is not a better man than he is. He decides he must not torture himself. As he readies for bed, a star shines through the window, making Nikhil believe his love is true. He goes to see Bimala, kissing her forehead. The Bara Rani chides him to go to bed since she cannot bear the worry on his face. He takes the dust from her feet before heading to bed.

In the seventh part of Bimala's Story, Bimala suspects nothing at first, feeling only the blissful surrender in dedication to her country, but Sandip feels the need to reveal himself, and his voice becomes intimate with passion. Bimala's feeling of worship passes away, and she ceases to even respect him.

In the eighth part of Bimala's Story, there is no pretense for Sandip's continued presence as talk of the Cause ceases. Bimala shies away from the outer apartments for two days, but life feels tasteless. She tries to distract herself with work and reading, but she nearly breaks her vow when she notices Sandip looks extraordinarily disturbed; however, the Bara Rani's sarcasm prevents Bimala from entering the outer apartments. When a servant brings a letter from Sandip regarding the Cause the next day, she dresses and hurries to the sitting room. In the next part of her tale, Sandip is immersed in a book about art when Bimala enters the sitting room. His eyes hold a reproach for her two day absence, but though it is an insult, she does not have the power to resent it. As he speaks, his worship of the country becomes interwoven with his worship of Bimala, and her repugnance fades away, causing her to feel her "resplendent womanhood made me indeed a goddess" (page 74).

In the tenth part of Bimala's Story, Bimala goes to her room where her bridal ways stare at her in dismay since meeting Sandip outside seems like a bad idea. She notes the framed photograph of Nikhil which she adorned with flowers daily until last week. Now, she pays attention to the double portrait where Sandip's portrait resides next to that of Nikhil. She smothers it with her pearls and diamonds every night. Desiring to throw the picture out the window, she instead begins to cry, throwing herself on the bed as she wonders what will be the end to all of this.

In Sandip's Story, Part 4, Sandip's theory of life makes him certain that the Great is cruel because to be just is for ordinary men and great men are unjust. He preaches the great discipline of injustice. Unlike Nikhil, he wants the western military style to prevail so they will no longer be ashamed of the flag of their passion because passion is beautiful and pure. In the next part of Sandip's Story, Sandip wonders why he allows his life to become entangled with Bimala's. Reading his diary, Sandip knows it is his policy to take what he wants, but poor Bimala is struggling with her bonds. There have been times he



could have taken her in his arms without meeting resistance, but he let the moment slip away.

In the sixth part of Sandip's Story, he cannot get rid of the idea that Nikhil is his friend. Sandip cannot swerve from his path because it will not do to abandon the Cause of the country. Instead, he will make Bimala one with the country; there is no shame in uncovering the veil from her face, and then she will see such a majestic vision of deliverance that her bonds will slip from her without shame. "The way of retreat is absolutely closed for both of us: we shall despoil each other: get to hate each other: but never more be free" (page 84).

## Chapter 4 Analysis

In the third part of Nikhil's Story, Nikhil becomes self-conscious as he tries to see himself as Bimala sees him and his habit of taking things too seriously. The world gets on by laughing, but he cannot dismiss his sorrows so. Bimala is his wife, but he wonders if one can imprison a whole personality within that name since names cannot change the facts of the world. "If Bimala is not mine, she is not; and no fuming, or fretting, or arguing will serve to prove that she is" (page 65). Though his heart is breaking, it will not make him bankrupt because man is greater than the things he loses in life. Nikhil is unable to care about Society if Bimala is not his. He must save himself from the self-torture of thinking his life loses value due to any neglect it may suffer. The time to divest Bimala of her lavish decorations has come, and though her nature may find true union with Sandip's, Nikhil knows Sandip is not a greater man than him. In the seventh part of Bimala's Story, Bimala ceases to respect Sandip as his passion becomes apparent. Chadranath Babu visits her, lifting her mind to an eminence from where she can see the boundary of her life. She wonders if she truly desires emancipation, praying her infatuation will not leave her, even as it is fearful. When the Bara Rani mocks her hospitality, Bimala is untouched by the sarcasm because women do not understand the nature of the cause of her devotion. She is wrapped in the exaltation of sacrifice. In the eighth and ninth parts of Bimala's Story, Bimala tries to avoid Sandip when talk of the Cause ceases, but she rushes to the sitting room immediately when he summons her. When she asks about the important matter, Sandip claims friendship is not a crime. He visualizes the whole Shakti of the country in Bimala and will know the sanction of the whole country when she anoints him with her hands. When Bimala's maid, Khema, bursts into the room, wanting her wages and to be let go because she was reviled by Thako, the Bara Rani's maid, Bimala leaves Sandip to tend to the slime of domestic life. In the next part of her tale, Bimala asks the Bara Rani why Thako has been calling Khema vile names, and the Bara Rani says she will tend to matters because she does not want to distract Bimala from her friend. Bimala notes her worship of the double portrait of Nikhil and Sandip. Sandip tells Bimala that hesitation is not in the nature of woman, and the words "I want", which Sandip claims are the primal words at the root of creation, echo through her head, silencing her conflicts. Bimala decides not to care what people think of her since the primal fire of creation burns inside her.



The novel continues with Parts 4, 5 and 6 of Sandip's Story. The present chapter of his life revolves around Bimala and Nikhil as he tries to keep his inner design concealed even from himself. Nikhil believes Sandip's kind of success comes at a cost to the soul, and one must gain their soul by recognizing the Greatest as greater than all. Sandip does not understand Nikhil's point of view because the poison of India's spirituality runs in his blood, and he cannot avoid the path of self-abnegation no matter how loudly he proclaims its madness. They must have religion and nationalism in the country, but the result is that both suffer. Sandip feels no false shame at desiring Bimala, but he feels that getting entangled with her teases him since he was born to rule. He thought he was a storm destroying flowers, but now he finds he is like a bee circling a flower. Sandip notes his shame that he has let the opportunity to take Bimala in his arms slip by several times. "The real tragedy is, that man does not know himself for what he really is" (page 83). Since Nikhil's point of view has begun to shame Sandip, he shies from his presence since he is not hypocritical and cannot pretend to agree with Nikhil's arguments. He sees this as a sign of weakness, and though there is no denying that he has weakened, weakness did not win Bimala. She is attracted to the strength of his unhesitating manliness. Sandip decides to make Bimala one with the country so she can be freed from her bonds. Sandip believes that if women could be free of the artificial fetters with which men bind them, then they could see the living image of the goddess Kali on earth. One day, he will worship Kali by setting Bimala on her altar of destruction.



# Chapter 5

## Chapter 5 Summary

In the fourth part of Nikhil's Story, Nikhil notes that every August he and Bimala celebrate their anniversary by going in a house-boat over the broads of Samalda, but he wonders if Bimala even realizes that time of year has come again. Nikhil fetches a book from his bedroom in the morning. When Bimala enters the room, he tells her he had come for Amiel's journal, hurrying away without looking her in the face. As Nikhil's Story continues, Nikhil decides it is useless to try to stay busy as Panchu, a man he knows through his master, arrives with a basket of cocoa-nuts, explaining he stole some from Nikhil's garden when he was hard-pressed and has come to repay them because he is old and may die at any time. Panchu's words lighten Nikhil's heart.

In Bimala's Story, Part 11, the change that comes over the mind of Bengal in an instant is tremendous, and the moment in history seems supernatural since it bears no resemblance to their past. Arguing with Nikhil about the movement, Sandip claims they have all lost their hearts in the forward rush to the hopelessly impossible, causing Nikhil to leave them. Their district is backward at first because Nikhil refuses to compel the villagers, but when Sandip settles there, the enthusiasm spreads. All turn to Nikhil who refuses to banish foreign-made items from his household. He had imported Indian products long before Swadeshi.

In Bimala's Story, Part 13, Suksar is one of the biggest trade centers in the district, and Sandip decides all foreign articles must be driven from the territory at the height of the Swadeshi enthusiasm. Nikhil does not mind the idea but refuses to use coercion to achieve it. Proud of her power, Bimala offers to see to it, believing Sandip must be impressed with the full strength of her Shakti and forgetting she is plain Bimala. When Sandip introduces her to a young disciple, Amulya, Bimala sees Amulya also has the vision of Shakti manifest. Confident in her success, she styles her hair in Nikhil's favorite way and sends for her husband without contrivance since she has lost the art of contriving.

In the sixth part of Nikhil's Story, Panchu's wife dies, and he is ordered to pay 123 rupees to undergo the purification ceremony to rid himself of sin and propitiate the community. Though Nikhil tells him not to submit, Panchu argues that he must because his eldest daughter must be married. Since Panchu is unable to resume his trade connections after leaving Bengal for some time, Chadranath Babu loans him money, feeling an outward gift would destroy Panchu's self-respect. Panchu buys cloth at the market and peddles it to the villagers, and when he pays the first installment of his loan to Chadranath Babu, there is a noticeable reduction in the depth of his bow, but the full shock of Swadeshi falls on Panchu while he is thus engaged.

In the next part of Nikhil's Story, youths return to the village during their vacation, and they enthusiastically attach themselves to Sandip's leadership, demanding Nikhil banish





foreign goods from the market. The youths are angry that Nikhil refuses to oust foreign articles from the market, and they leave with a shout of "Bande Mataram."

## Chapter 5 Analysis

In the fourth part of Nikhil's Story, the world is beautiful, but he is expressionless as he realizes Bimala has been languishing from a lack of companionship because he only receives. Since there is no one to blame, he can only lament that his house has been empty all along. Nikhil fears that Bimala does not even realize their anniversary is approaching, but he must silence his cry of pain because Bimala will never have true freedom while he suffers, and he shall never gain freedom from untruth as long as she is bound. It has been a long time since Nikhil visited his bedroom during the day, and he notes Bimala's gold-embroidered slippers and his portrait in the niche, noticing that the flowers around it are withered. As his story continues, Nikhil talks about Panchu, a poor neighbor. Because Panchu is poor, Nikhil once thought of making him a charity allowance, but Chadranath Babu objected because Bengal has many poor men, and Nikhil's gift cannot destroy the hardship of his lot. Nikhil told Bimala they should dedicate their lives to removing the root of sorrow in the country, but the idea passed in talk because she is a lady at heart and believes want is a permanent feature in the lives of the lower classes. Nikhil notes that Bimala came into his home but not into his life. He magnified her so that his whole life became narrow and confined when he lost her, and he had forgotten how nobly precious man's life is by decorating and educating her. Nikhil loses sight of the truth because the actualities of everyday life get the better of him, and he finds his house is empty this August.

In the eleventh and twelfth parts of Bimala's Story, the excitement of Swadeshi spreads through Bengal. Though Nikhil is not unmoved, his sadness deepens in the excitement, and he argues with Sandip that good fortune arrives at their gate only to prove they do not have the power to receive it. He is certain their preparations for the worship of God is lacking, and annoyed by this talk, Bimala joins in the argument against her husband. Bimala feels something extraordinary is about to happen, but it is not her responsibility since she is neither waiting nor hoping for any such thing. One night, she slips out onto the terrace and seems to see the future of the country. A woman like herself is drawn from home by the call of the unknown, and taking no time to pause or ponder, she hides her tryst because she has no ties, leaving her home and domestic duties. She has nothing but a yearning which hurries her forward. Bimala also has such a yearning; she has lost her home and her way, but she sees no reason to return when Death will serve as well.

In the next part of her story, difficult things become easy in Bengal. As the enthusiasm for Swadeshi spreads, its followers encourage Nikhil to banish foreign-made items from the market, but he refuses, though he has imported Indian-made goods long before it was popular to do so. He orders the Bara Rani Indian soaps, though Bimala knows her sister-in-law still uses European soaps and gives the Indian-made soaps to her maids. When Bimala chides the Bara Rani for being two-faced, her sister-in-law claims women must be able to bend without being made crooked, causing Bimala to feel, "If a man





needs must have some intoxicant, let it not be a woman" (page 96). As Bimala's Story continues, Nikhil still refuses to ban foreign items from the market at Suksar; though he is not adverse to the idea, he will not use force to achieve it. Bimala tells Sandip that she will persuade her husband to agree to their idea. She feels she is Shakti, the embodiment of universal joy, and nothing is impossible for her. She is overly confident that none can deny what she really wants, foreshadowing Nikhil's refusal to agree to Bimala's request. At this point in the story, Bimala also meets Amulya.

In the sixth and seventh parts of Nikhil's Story, Panchu is further impoverished after tending to the costs of his wife's funeral. Entering the depths of starvation after his wife's illness and funeral, Panchu finally leaves his children in his hovel and wanders off on his own. Chadranath Babu takes the children in until Panchu returns a month later. Chadranath Babu loans money to Panchu, refusing to give a gift and destroy the man's self-esteem. Chadranath Babu's belief is proven when Panchu holds himself higher after repaying the first installment of his loan. When youths return to the district during their school holiday and attach themselves to Sandip's leadership of Swadeshi, they request that Nikhil ban foreign goods from the market; however, Nikhil refuses, and his master claims they insist that the poor submit to their compulsion though they do not want to stand in the way and every moment is a struggle to live for the poor. The youths accuse Nikhil and his master of putting obstacles in the way of what the country would achieve. Nikhil objects he has imported Indian yarn into the market, and it is not his fault if it is not bought; it only shows that the whole country has not taken their vow. Chadranath Babu adds that what they have pledged to do is only to pester others.



# Chapter 6

## Chapter 6 Summary

In the eighth part of Nikhil's Story, Panchu is fined for selling foreign cloth, and though the cloth was burned in front of witnesses, including Sandip, none will bear him witness should he lodge a complaint. Nikhil and Sandip argue about the importance of truth, but they do not come to an agreement. Nikhil buys Panchu's holding that day, and the trouble begins when an aunt appears, laying claim to a life interest in all he has. Panchu has never heard of his uncle's second wife, but the facts are supposedly known by his zamindar, Harish Kundu, making it obvious that Harish Kundu is trying to eject Panchu from his holding. As Nikhil's Story continues, Nikhil is startled when Bimala sends for him for the first time in a long time. He goes to the room silently and looks at her enquiringly. When Bimala asks him to clear the market of foreign goods, Nikhil refuses to tyrannize, knowing she will never understand that "to tyrannize for the country is to tyrannize over the country" (page 109). Going outside, Nikhil feels he shall win as he has gained freedom because he is now content to see things as they truly are. He will allow others freedom, and his work shall be his salvation. Though his heart will still ache, he can disregard it since he understands the pain in all its truth. Nikhil will tread the path of Truth, even if he must walk alone, and he will let Truth lead him to victory.

In the seventh part of Sandip's Story, when Bimala sends for Sandip with tears in her eyes, he can see she was unsuccessful with Nikhil, so he tells her they will talk it over since their aims are one. As he presses her hand, Bimala pales, seeming to realize the crisis has come and gone leaving her unscathed. After Bimala leaves the sitting room, Amulya arrives with news of fights about foreign items, and Sandip is ready for the fray. After burning Mirjan's boat to dissuade him from carrying foreign goods, Sandip needs 2000 rupees to replace the boat since Mirjan promises he will no longer carry foreign goods. Sandip tells Bimala they need 50,000 rupees for the cause, and only she can make the impossible possible. She says he will have it, but Sandip tells her she must not sell her jewels; the money must come from Nikhil's treasury since it belongs to her as well as him. She must retrieve it for Her to whom it rightfully belongs. Bimala echoes Sandip's cry of "Bande Mataram."

## Chapter 6 Analysis

In the eighth part of Nikhil's Story, Chadranath Babu brings Panchu to Nikhil a few days later because Panchu's zamindar has fined him 100 rupees for selling foreign cloths. The cloth was burned before a number of people yelling "Bande Mataram," including Sandip. Nikhil advises Panchu to lodge a complaint, but Panchu objects no one will bear him witness. Nikhil summons Sandip who claims he will witness for the opposite side. Chadranath Babu tells Nikhil there is no point in arguing with Sandip because those who do not feel the truth within them cannot understand that bringing it from obscurity is man's highest aim. Sandip argues that man's goal is success, not truth,



before leaving. Chadranath Babu notes that Sandip's religion is the opposite of Nikhil's; "though you two do not rhyme, your rhythm is the same" (page 106). When Nikhil suggests buying Panchu's ancestral holding, keeping him as a tenant and procuring more cloth for him, Panchu worries they will burn his house with him and his children inside, so Chadranath Babu offers to take charge of Panchu's children. Once Nikhil purchases Panchu's holding, a sham aunt appears, claiming a life interest in the holding, and making it apparent that Harish Kundu is trying to evict Panchu. In the ninth part of Nikhil's Story, Bimala sends for Nikhil to request he ban the sale of foreign goods in the market, but he refuses to tyrannize. As he leaves, the world shines with fresh clearness. It is obvious Bimala dressed with care in order to coax the order from Nikhil, but this makes her decorations appear cheap to him. Nikhil decides his life work and his savior shall be Truth.

In the seventh part of Sandip's Story, Sandip can tell that Bimala was unsuccessful with Nikhil as soon as she appears in front of him with tears in her eyes. Sandip tells her they will fight through the obstacles, beginning by listing and assigning duties to the workers joining them from Calcutta. Bimala leaves Sandip, unable to attend to anything, and he chides himself for cowardice in allowing another moment to slip by. Most of Harish Kundu's traders have come over to Sandip while only some of the Mahomedan trades remain obdurate. The problem, according to Amulya, is finding money to replace the burnt foreign cloths with Indian cloth, but Sandip decides they cannot replace cloth for those who have had their foreign purchases confiscated. One boatman, Mirjan, still carries foreign goods, so Sandip orders Amulya to have Mirjan's ship burnt. After this is done, Mirjan comes to Sandip, begging for mercy. He needs 2000 rupees to replace his boat. Sandip turns to Bimala to request the funds, insisting they must come from Nikhil's treasury and encouraging her that her actions will be to the glory of the Cause. As though brainwashed, Bimala echoes Sandip's cry of "Bande Mataram."



# Chapter 7

## Chapter 7 Summary

In the eighth part of Sandip's Story, Sandip realizes the demand he has just made of Bimala is a large one, and though he feels scruples at first, he recalls that man's mission is to be aggressive. He worries Bimala will not be able to acquire the 50,000 rupees. Trouble arises when the police announce they are on the trail of the man who sank Mirjan's boat, and the men threaten to reveal Sandip's part in the arrangement if he is caught. Sandip must now bribe the police and pay Mirjan hush-money for his boat, so he needs the money soon.

In the next part of Sandip's Story, Sandip plans to rouse patriotism in his countrymen by making them see the motherland as a goddess. Nikhil argues he should not seek the aid of illusions for the true Cause because God clears away illusions, but Sandip believes illusions are necessary for lesser minds, though he cannot drive this into Nikhil's head. Worried the result of which Sandip speaks will have ill-effects, Nikhil seeks the result for all time, yet Sandip only seeks the result which belongs to today.

In the tenth part of Sandip's Story, Sandip tells Bimala that the Divine Mother laid the task of establishing her worship on him, but he is poor. She offers her ornaments, causing Sandip to hesitate because men should give ornaments to women, not take them. He crushes his hesitation, knowing Bimala is thinking of the impossible 50,000 rupees. He tells her that 5000 rupees will do for now, but they need the sum immediately, and she promises to acquire it immediately. Before leaving, Bimala asks when Sandip needs the money, and when he says by tomorrow, she promises he will have it by tomorrow.

## Chapter 7 Analysis

In the eighth part of Sandip's Story, Sandip expresses his belief that men are kings and must have tribute since the delight of the earth is to fulfill men's claims. By force of these claims, men open up all the latent possibilities of women, "So for men to accept is truly to give: for women to give is truly to gain" (page 116). Sandip dismisses his guilt concerning his request of Bimala, noting that the real reason for his qualms is because the demand is for such a large sum of money, but he rationalizes that riches should have been his; Nikhil would be alright if he were born poor. He needs the money soon because the police are on the trail of the man who burned Mirjan's boat so Sandip needs money to bribe the police as well. Though touching Bimala's hand the other day still vibrates in his mind, Sandip must curb his passion for now because he has much to do. As his story continues, Sandip notes they will never be able to fully bring the Mussulmans to their side, though they proclaim them as brethren, so they must keep them in their place to prevent trouble. Sandip and Nikhil argue about the need for truth and illusions, and Nikhil claims Sandip has lost the power of walking in the path of



Truth's attainment, causing Sandip to argue that the country must be made into a god in order to perform the impossible. He believes Nikhil shows a loss of imagination when he says God will grant them true fruition when they seek the good of the country along the path of righteousness; Sandip admits that Nikhil's words sound good on paper, but Sandip's words are meant to be scored into the heart of the country.

In the tenth part of Sandip's Story, Sandip repeats that he would never have known all of their country as one had he never seen Bimala the next time he sees her. As he talks to her about the gods, Bimala says none can stand in the way of progress of one on the path to Destruction. She is nothing in the presence of the divine and shall never truly live until the power of Destruction kills her entirely. Heart breaking, she falls to the floor, sobbing. Sandip believes Delusion, not Truth, will win in the end, and Bengal must create a new image to enchant and conquer the world. Sandip refuses Bimala's offer of her ornaments since men should give such things to women, not take them. Knowing she is worried about the impossibility of obtaining 50,000 rupees, he concedes that he only needs 5000 rupees presently; Bimala agrees to acquire the sum as soon as possible. In order to keep her heart in the air of idealism, Sandip reverts their conversation back to the worship of the demon-destroying goddess, and they discuss the ceremony they are planning at the annual fair in Ruimari. Bimala enthusiastically believes Nikhil can have no objection. Sandip smiles inwardly at how little Nikhil and Bimala know one another.



# Chapter 8

## Chapter 8 Summary

In Nikhil's Story, Part 10, letters come out in the local papers against Nikhil, accusing him of failing to support the Cause and claiming the residents in his estate fear punishment if they come out in favor of Swadeshi. Nikhil summons the local students because this is obviously their doing. Unfortunately, the students agree with Sandip that one must snatch in order to acquire anything.

In the eleventh part of Nikhil's Story, Nikhil worries about Panchu's sham aunt because her claims will be difficult to disprove, and it is obvious that Harish Kundu's true objective is to get the sale of Panchu's holding to Nikhil set aside. Nikhil considers offering Panchu a permanent tenure in his estates, but Chadranath Babu objects and insists upon handling the matter himself. Wandering through the garden, Nikhil comes upon Bimala to whom he offers her freedom. When he returns to the house, Chadranath Babu informs Nikhil that he has come to an arrangement with Panchu's sham aunt to leave for a certain amount of money. Nikhil is unsure whether they will be able to save Panchu, but at least they can die happy if they perish trying to save the country from such snares.

In the fourteenth part of Bimala's Story, Bimala worries about how to get the 5000 rupees for Sandip, but she knows she must do it and does not care how. She summons Amulya and orders him to get the money from the treasury, but he insists the cashier cannot be bribed and produces a gun. Bimala is horrified by his easy decision to kill the cashier, and the mother in her awakes as the boy repeats Sandip's phrases about how one can only pity oneself. Telling Amulya to do nothing because she will handle it, Bimala blesses him, and he is shocked. He tears up, and Bimala requests his pistol. Bimala is forced to see Sandip as cruel after noting the way in which he has influenced Amulya.

## Chapter 8 Analysis

When local papers publish papers claiming Nikhil's tenants fear reprisal if they come out in favor of Swadeshi in the tenth part of Nikhil's Story, Nikhil summons the students in his district, warning them that succumbing to desperadoes will defeat the country. People fearing the government will destroy freedom, but Nikhil wants to plant something greater than Swadeshi. Since the students agree with Sandip, Nikhil sees that slavery is breaking out into tyranny and decides his fight shall be against this cruel weakness. In the next part of Nikhil's Story, Chadranath Babu offers to handle the matter concerning Panchu's sham aunt. When Chadranath Babu packs and disappears for several days, Nikhil assumes he has gone to the village where Panchu's uncle lived in search of witnesses. Without his master to distract him, Nikhil's empty heart leads him to the gardens where he finds Bimala stretched on the grass. She rushes to leave, but he calls



her back to tell her there is no pleasure in keeping her shackled so he frees her because he no longer wishes to have her as a weight hanging over his head. Returning to the outer apartments, Nikhil finds his master waiting, and Chadranath Babu explains that he has been staying with Panchu in order to come to an understanding with Panchu's faux aunt. She has agreed to leave for a sum; however, Panchu has lost respect for Chadranath Babu who risked caste in order to win the woman over. Chadranath Babu intends to stay with Panchu for a few days after the woman leaves in case Harish Kundu is up to more devilry.

In the fourteenth part of Bimala's Story, Bimala feels drained of her newfound power when Nikhil refuses to banish the foreign goods from the market, and when he sets her free in the garden, she is shocked into a total state of bewilderment by how easily freedom can be taken or given away. Concerned with how to obtain the 5000 rupees for Sandip, Bimala summons Amulya to steal the money from Nikhil's treasury, but she is appalled by his easy decision to kill the cashier and rescinds her request. Bimala is distraught at the influence Sandip has over this young boy whom she views as a son. Madness dances upon her heart when she sees Sandip the next day since she has never before known this cruelty inside her. She feels a demon came to her, disguised as a god, demanding she worship Sandip and the country, and she obeyed by agreeing to obtain the rupees. The world will sway under her feet, and she will plunge to her death, leaving nothing to remain behind.





# Chapter 9

## Chapter 9 Summary

In the fifteenth part of Bimala's Story, Bimala cannot think of a way to obtain 5000 rupees until she realizes Nikhil has not yet made his annual reverence offering of 6000 rupees to his sister-in-law; it should be easy to steal it since the money is in Nikhil's safe. Bimala is anxious to give the money to Sandip because she feels there is no veil of decency for her any longer. Sandip told her she was the giver of light, life and Shakti, but if she is only good for 6000 rupees, she wonders if he will now tell her this is all false. In the next part of Bimala's Story, Sandip asks Bimala for the money, and she feels guilty as Amulya looks at her. Feigning enthusiasm, Sandip insists it is plenty, but he is truly delighted when he sees the sovereigns. He approaches her, but she rebuffs him. Sandip praises women for giving themselves, saying Bimala has given him more than life itself. Part of Bimala knows he is trying to delude her, yet the other part is content to be deluded; thus, Sandip wins both Bimala and Amulya back to him with his fair words. Amulya lifts his hands and cries "Bande Mataram," and Bimala needs this adoration to keep her self-respect alive. Entering her bedroom, she is shamed by dishonor, but still she wants praise and Sandip at the very price of her life.

In the seventeenth part of Bimala's Story, the Bara Rani approaches Bimala and Nikhil one day, mentioning her fear that bandits will get her money that is supposed to be secure in Nikhil's safe. Since the Bara Rani is obviously suspicious of her, Bimala offers to allow her sister-in-law to hold her jewels with which to repay herself should Bimala steal from her, but the Bara Rani refuses the jewels. Bimala summons Amulya and asks him to sell her jewels for she must have 6000 rupees. Bimala is distraught when she hears Amulya repeat many of Sandip's sentiments. When Sandip enters, Bimala says she is not yet done with Amulya and will have no time for a private talk today, causing Sandip to leave in irritation. Bimala sends Amulya to sell her jewels, bidding him not to tell Sandip. She asks what Sandip wants to prevent him from waylaying Amulya, but Sandip is angry she will not tell him about the box and claims he will not allow her to bring Amulya under her feet. Bimala knows he is angry because he cannot meet the power she wields. Sandip guesses the box contains her jewels, and he is angry that she trusts Amulya more than him when she refuses to tell him. Bimala tries to leave, but as Sandip reaches to grab her, footsteps warn them of Nikhil's approach. Nikhil enters to warn Sandip that the Mahomedan preachers are stirring up local Mussulmans, and they may attack Sandip at any moment. Nikhil insists he will no longer allow Sandip and his followers to oppress his tenants, asking Sandip to leave his territory, accompanying Nikhil to Calcutta in five days. Sandip hums a song of parting to Bimala, and his immense boldness forces her to leave the room. Amulya meets her along the verandah; he will be off tonight and will not return unsuccessful. Bimala tells Amulya to return to his mother, promising to make him food for the journey with her own hands.





## Chapter 9 Analysis

In the fifteenth part of Bimala's Story, Bimala steals 6000 rupees from Nikhil's safe which are intended for the Bara Rani but he has not yet had time to deposit in the bank. She reminds herself that it is for the country as she takes the gold from the safe, and though she feels guilty because theft is never worship, she does not have the strength to return the money. After spending the night on the terrace, Bimala is awakened by the Bara Rani telling her that Bimala's band of robbers has threatened to loot the treasury. She asks Bimala to call them off, promising to make an offering to the Cause if the house is spared the dishonor of burglary. Bimala is eager to rid herself of the money, but she wonders if Sandip will retract his claims that she is the Shakti of womanhood since she is only good for 6000 rupees. In the next part of her story, Bimala feels guilty as she meets Sandip and Amulya in the sitting room to give the money to Sandip. Wanting to fling the money at Sandip's head, Bimala is barely able to unwrap the rolls, and Sandip looks at her with such contempt that she hears pity in Amulya's voice as he asks if that is all. He springs toward Bimala, and she thrusts him away, causing his head to hit the marble table. She sinks into her seat as Amulya sits at her feet with a look of joyful radiance on his face. When Bimala recovers, she notices Sandip gathering the sovereigns in his handkerchief. Saying they only need 3500 rupees, Amulya asks Sandip to return the extra 2500 rupees to Bimala, but she refuses to touch the money again. Bimala allows herself to be deceived by Sandip willingly because she feels that she needs the praise he offers in order to sustain her self-respect. Her skin is radiant after she offers and receives worship. Though she is shamed by her theft and betrayal, Bimala covets Sandip and his praise, regardless of the cost.

In the seventeenth part of Bimala's Story, Bimala is too ashamed to face her husband at meals or to avoid him, so she sits so that they cannot see each other's faces. One day, the Bara Rani joins them as they sit thus, fearing the bandits will get her money since Nikhil has not yet put it in the bank in Calcutta. When Bimala foolishly mentions the Bara Rani's obvious suspicion of her, the Bara Rani agrees, so Bimala offers to allow the Bara Rani to hold her jewels so she can repay herself if Bimala steals from her. When Bimala asks Amulya to sell her jewels for 6000 rupees, Amulya is ashamed of taking the money from her, but Sandip is ahead of him since he has no regrets and understands money does not belong to the one whose box it happens to be in. It is needed for the use of patriots. Bimala trembles to hear Sandip's words in Amulya's mouth. Sandip is jealous of Bimala's secretive conversation with Amulya and the obvious fact that she trusts the boy more than Sandip himself. When Bimala steals Nikhil's money for Sandip, the music in their relationship stops, Bimala loses her own value, and Sandip's powers appear cheap. As Sandip attempts to prevent Bimala from leaving, Nikhil arrives with a warning that Sandip's life may be in danger from local Mussulmans. Sandip disdains Nikhil for the warning rather than using intimidation; however, Nikhil insists that Sandip leave his territory in five days. After leaving the room because of Sandip's boldness, Bimala encounters Amulya who promises he will leave on his mission and will not return unsuccessful, foreshadowing Amulya acquiring 6000 rupees for Bimala.



# Chapter 10

## Chapter 10 Summary

In the twelfth part of Nikhil's Story, Nikhil decides that he must tell Sandip to leave. Evil reports about Nikhil in the news make him notorious, but he will risk his money only when they are prompted by industry. In the thirteenth part of his story, Nikhil's Chakua sub-treasury is raided for 6000 rupees by an armed band. His guard is wounded, but the bandits leave the remaining 1500 rupees on the ground. Peace is now out of the question, and the police raid will soon begin. The Bara Rani is concerned and wants Nikhil to flee to Calcutta. She also worries about the money in his room, but Nikhil promises to tend to it soon. In the fourteenth part of Nikhil's Story, Nikhil visits Chadranath Babu who tells him sin is rampant in the country and advises Nikhil to send them all away and take Bimala to Calcutta because she is seeing too narrow a view of the world from Bengal. Hearing Bimala crying on the balcony that night, Nikhil wakes. He does not have the heart to judge her, and he cannot turn back, so he sits next to her and touches her head. Bimala grabs his feet to her breast with such force that he fears her heart will break.

In Bimala's Story, Part 18, Amulya is due to return this morning, but Bimala fears he will be suspected for attempting to sell such valuable jewelry. In the sitting room, she finds Sandip who will not leave her alone. Sandip tells Bimala that Amulya did not go to Calcutta, and he mocks her about her jewels, asking if she would take back her gift to the goddess. Amulya rushes in, angry because Sandip had taken Bimala's jewels from his trunk; Amulya had planned to return them to her. Bimala does not care about the jewels and insists he who hankers after them can satisfy his greed. Sandip claims he brought the jewels to return to Bimala, and it would have been wrong to take his gift at Amulya's hands. He informs Amulya that his trunks have been sent to Amulya's lodgings and he can no longer keep his belongings in Sandip's room before flinging himself from the room. In the next part of Bimala's Story, Bimala admits to Amulya that she was worried about him. Amulya produces 6000 rupees but refuses to tell her how he acquired it. Amulya praises Bimala for breaking Sandip's spell over him. Bimala tells the boy to return the money, and her command is enough for him though she tells him the command comes from above. Amulya says he will fulfill his duty this evening.

## Chapter 10 Analysis

In the twelfth part of Nikhil's Story, Nikhil learns from Chadranath Babu that Sandip has joined forces with Harish Kundu to prepare a grand celebration to worship the demon-destroying goddess, and Sandip claims he means to modernize the ancient deities. Chadranath Babu tells Nikhil that Sandip has no desire for truth and deludes himself. Nikhil refuses to establish a liquor distillery in his territory because he believes young men must not give themselves over to intoxication. When his Hindu tenants are upset by reports of cow-killing, he tells them that while they must remain staunch in their



convictions, they cannot control others; "oppression will not only not prevent cow-killing, it may leads to the killing of men as well" (page 161). In the next part of Nikhil's Story, 6000 rupees are stolen from Nikhil's treasury. The Bara Rani wants him to flee to Calcutta because she is concerned for both Nikhil and her money, but Nikhil promises to tend to the money later. The police arrest Kasim, the wounded guard, under suspicion of being involved in the robbery, but Kasim swears to Nikhil that he was not involved, though he is unable to give a coherent account of the robbery. In the fourteenth part of Nikhil's Story, Chadranath Babu advises Nikhil to flee to Calcutta with his family, worried Bimala is seeing a narrow view of the outer world in Calcutta due to the Swadeshi movement. Nikhil decides to wait until the next day to tend to the Bara Rani's money. When Nikhil finds Bimala crying on the balcony that night, he strokes her head because he is unable to judge her. She grasps his feet to her breast, a symbol of her worship which indicates Bimala has realized Nikhil is the man who loves her, not Sandip.

In the eighteenth part of Bimala's Story, Bimala is concerned for Amulya. She wants to save him but fears she may have sent him to his doom. Unable to shake the fear that Amulya is in trouble, Bimala turns to the Bara Rani and asks for her blessing. When Bimala finds Sandip in the sitting room, he mocks her for retracting her gift to the goddess, producing her jewels. Amulya joins them, angry that Sandip took Bimala's jewels from his trunk which is an obvious sign of Sandip's jealousy of Amulya. Sandip insists he is bestowing this gift upon Bimala, and he banishes Amulya from his confidence and his room before stalking away. In the next part of Bimala's Story, Amulya produces 6000 rupees but refuses to tell Bimala how he acquired the sum. Amulya is appalled because Sandip has not spent the money Bimala gave him; he forced the manager to return his letters but refused Amulya's request to return the gold to Bimala. Amulya had gone to Sandip when Bimala gave him the jewels, but Sandip refuses to give the money to Amulya, claiming the boy is infatuated with Bimala. Sandip then steals the jewels and brings them to Bimala. Amulya credits Bimala with breaking Sandip's spell over him, and when she commands the boy to return the 6000 rupees to Nikhil's treasury, he agrees, promising to fulfill her request that evening.



# Chapter 11

## Chapter 11 Summary

In the twentieth part of Bimala's Story, Sandip returns to tell her that battles in the world are fought by two hypnotic forces and he has found his match in her, before asking what she will do with him now. Bimala chides him for his endless speeches and tells him to look in his book because he is getting the words wrong. Nikhil enters and looks at Sandip in surprise before announcing that Sandip will accompany him to Calcutta tomorrow. Sandip objects, but Nikhil insists. Sandip claims he has been a fixture in Bengal because his entire world has been reduced to this single spot, but he takes leave of Bimala with worship in his heart. As he again takes his leave, Bimala hands him her jewels to convey to the object of her worship to whom she has dedicated them through Sandip. Nikhil remains silent as Sandip exits the room. In the next part of Bimala's Story, Bimala makes cakes for Amulya, and the Bara Rani chides her for cooking on her birthday. She had been planning to cook for Bimala until she heard the treasury was raided for 6000 rupees. Bimala is relieved to learn that Amulya stole the money from Nikhil's treasury. Before she can summon Amulya, she receives a note that he has already left to do her bidding. Bimala tries to wait patiently for tomorrow to decide her fate, but concerned, she prays for Amulya. In Bimala's Story, Part 22, Bimala fries cakes for Amulya as she waits for him to return that evening, but when she sends for him and learns he is already gone, she fears she has sent him to his death. Bimala longs to end her birthday by taking the dust from Nikhil's feet, but he stirs in his sleep and pushes her away. As she lies prone on the verandah and prays for mercy, Nikhil comes and strokes her head.

## Chapter 11 Analysis

In Bimala's Story, Part 20, Bimala tries to call Amulya back as soon as she sends him away, but he has already gone. When Sandip returns and attempts to praise Bimala, she chides him for his endless speeches. Angry at the insult, Sandip's harsh rudeness causes Bimala joy as it frees her. Nikhil enters to insist Sandip accompany him to Calcutta the next day, and Sandip responds with a stirring speech about how his world has been minimized to this one spot because of his worship for Bimala. His wonderful speech again stirs the fire in Bimala's heart, causing her to feel that there are two people inside her, one that recoils from Sandip and one who finds the vision of Sandip as Chaos to be alluring. She feels Sandip has come as a messenger of calamity to test her trust in truth. As Bimala's Story continues, Bimala learns from the Bara Rani that Nikhil's treasury has been robbed of 6000 rupees as she cooks for Amulya. Bimala is relieved to learn Amulya stole from Nikhil, rather than someone else who would punish him more severely. Despite her betrayals, Bimala still trusts in Nikhil's goodness and justice. As the Bara Rani leaves to talk to Nikhil about her money, Bimala rushes to her dressing room and checks the safe, hoping it may have all been a dream; "alas, everything was empty as the trust which had been betrayed" (page 180). When Bimala



learns that Amulya has already left to return the money, she is concerned for his safety, but she does not know how to talk to Nikhil about the matter since communication between them is no longer easy. When the Bara Rani questions Bimala about going to Calcutta with Nikhil tomorrow, she agrees though this is the first she has heard of it, and she is uncertain what their relationship may be by tomorrow.

In the twenty-second part of Bimala's Story, rumors fly about the robbery, and the maids entrust Bimala with their savings and treasures to lock in the safe. She tries not to think what will happen when she opens the safe tomorrow. Bimala continues to worry about Amulya's safety. At the end of her birthday, she attempts to take the dust from Nikhil's feet as he sleeps, but he pushes her away in his sleep. Sitting on the verandah, Bimala feels the stars are afraid of her because she is alone. Her heart is breaking, and she wants to die as she prays for God to forgive her. Nikhil joins her, sitting by her head and stroking her hair. Thinking of the flutes that played to welcome her to the house at her wedding, Bimala is crushed at the idea that they will never again sound for her, and she wonders how to find her way back to that day. She thinks "God can create new things, but has even He the power to create afresh that which has been destroyed" (page 186).



# Chapter 12

## Chapter 12 Summary

In the fifteenth part of Nikhil's Story, Nikhil prepares to go to Calcutta today, leaving the bonds of union with his love behind since they will only hamper them if they try to preserve the love. When the Bara Rani insists on accompanying him and Bimala to Calcutta, he realizes that he is the only friend she has and agrees that she will not be left behind. The police inspector arrives with Amulya who has brought the 6000 rupees to the manager of the Chakna sub-office, claiming he found them under a bush, but the inspector believes Amulya knows the thief and wishes to draw suspicion to himself. When Nikhil questions the boy, Amulya insists he stole the money for a grave reason but will only explain why he returned it in the presence of the Chota Rani at whose command he did so. Nikhil sends for Bimala, and when she enters, Amulya prostrates himself and tells her that her command has been executed. Seeing he is unwanted, Nikhil leaves the room. He realizes that the story of his life shows he does not have the power to save anyone.

In the sixteenth part of Nikhil's Story, Nikhil is drawn to the Bara Rani's room, and she joins him in his room so he can prepare her money to take with them; however, the key to the safe is missing from his ring of keys. When Bimala comes in after dinner, Nikhil asks her about the key, and she admits she has it. She also confesses she spent the Bara Rani's money, ignoring her sister-in-law's questions about how she spent it. Nikhil knows there is a connection between Bimala taking 6000 rupees from the safe and the theft of 6000 rupees, but he has no curiosity about the matter and will never ask. Nikhil begins to suspect a vein of tyranny in himself due to his desire to mold his relationship with Bimala into a perfect form, but he did not realize this tyranny caused them to drift apart. He wishes he could go back to the beginning and follow the path of the simple, asking if the wound can ever be made good. Hearing a sound at the door, Nikhil sees Bimala retreating, but he calls and she stops. He leads her into the room by her hand, and she sobbingly throws herself on the pillow. He holds her hand as she says nothing. Bimala kneels at Nikhil's feet, begging that he allow her to do worship when he tries to pull away. He stays still, feeling he has no right to deny her request.

In the twenty-third part of Bimala's Story, Bimala now fears nothing for she has dedicated herself to him "who has received all my sin into the depths of his own pain" (page 199). She packs for Calcutta, chiding Nikhil for helping since he needs to sleep, but he insists on working because he cannot do without her. When a servant interrupts to announce Sandip has arrived, Nikhil leads Bimala to hear what he has to say. Sandip presents the sovereigns and Bimala's jewels, not because he feels guilty but because he cannot take anything from her. He leaves hastily, and when Nikhil bids him stay, Sandip says he does not have time because the Mussulmans plan to kill him so he has only twenty-five minutes to catch the train. He advises them to flee also, saluting Bimala before taking off at a run. No longer caring about material things, Bimala is seized with the need to flee. Chadranath Babu enters to tell Nikhil that the Mussulmans are out of





hand and are looting Harish Kundu's treasury and doing violence to the women of the house. When Nikhil claims he must be off, Bimala begs him to stay, but he gallops away without a weapon. The Bara Rani comes running, chiding Bimala for allowing Nikhil to leave. She calls the Dewan without thought for appearances as the Rani never appear before the Dewan. She orders him to send for Nikhil, telling him the Bara Rani is on her deathbed. As night falls, Bimala cannot move from the window while the Bara Rani prays in the temple. Bimala feels the turmoil would end if only she could die. At 10 o'clock that night, a crowd surges toward the palace gates, and the Dewan rushes to the gate to ask for news from Jata. Jata says the news is not good. When the doctor approaches, the Dewan asks his opinion, but the doctor cannot say yet. Nikhil's head wound is serious, and Amulya is dead from a bullet through his heart.

## Chapter 12 Analysis

In the fifteenth part of Nikhil's Story, the Bara Rani is upset that he packing his books because he no longer plans to immure himself in Bengal. She intends to join him in Calcutta. Nikhil realizes they have been friends since she came into his home as a bride when he was six years old, and she plans to follow him because theirs is the only relationship she has left in the world. He also realizes that the animosity between his sister-in-law and his wife is due to the jealousy each feels because of the other's relationship with him. Since the Bara Rani refuses to be left behind, Nikhil informs her that the train will depart at 11:30 that night. When Khema announces the police inspector has arrived with a prisoner, the Bara Rani sends cakes to occupy them while Nikhil hurries through his bath. He finds Bimala sitting on the floor outside, a sign of mourning, and she requests to speak to him after he tends to his business. Entering the sitting room, Nikhil is surprised to find Amulya with the police inspector. Amulya admits he stole the money, but he refuses to tell Nikhil why he has returned it unless Bimala is present since he returned the money at her bidding.

In the sixteenth and final part of Nikhil's Story, Nikhil realizes the key to his safe is missing when the Bara Rani insists he retrieve her money in preparation for their departure to Calcutta. When he confronts Bimala about the matter, she confesses that she spent the money. Checking her criticism, the Bara Rani leads Nikhil to his room and chatters at his bedside while smiling at Bimala until a maid comes to tell Bimala her dinner is getting cold. The Bara Rani leaves with Bimala. Nikhil has spent his life trying "to express some great idea in the process of giving shape to my life on the lines suggested by the Creator" (page 197), but the difficulty is that one's life is not solely one's own. He dreams of drawing Bimala to join him in creating himself, but though he loves her, he cannot win her to his purpose. Nikhil has received the vital spark but is unable to impart it to others. He is left alone when he most wants a helpmate. When he sees Bimala at the door, Nikhil summons her into the room where she throws herself, sobbing, onto the pillow. Though he initially tries to stop her, Nikhil allows Bimala to do her worship by taking the dust from his feet, feeling he has no right to stop her. This seems to fulfill Bimala's earlier wish that Nikhil would allow her to do her worship.



In the last part of Bimala's Story, Bimala and Nikhil prepare for their imminent departure to Calcutta; Nikhil insists on helping pack because he cannot do without Bimala, showing his continued devotion to his wife. Sandip arrives to return the money and jewels that Bimala gave him, claiming he is unable to take anything from her, though he still does not feel guilty. He is leaving the city immediately because of a Mussulman riot, and he advises Nikhil and Bimala to do so also. As soon as Sandip leaves, Nikhil receives word of the Mussulman riot from Chadranath Babu, and so he rides out to try to calm matters and facilitate peace; however, his earlier observation that he cannot impart his beliefs to others foreshadows his demise. Bimala and the Bara Rani are both extremely concerned for Nikhil, revealing their devotion to him. When word finally comes that evening, Bimala learns that Nikhil has been shot in the head and Amulya has been killed by a bullet through the heart. Oddly, she does not comment on these facts, suggesting that her story also ends at this point figuratively as it does literally.





# Characters

## Bimala

Bimala is one of the main characters in this novel, as well as one of the narrators. She is Nikhil's wife and is completely devoted to her husband, offering worship in the form of taking the dust from his feet. Nikhil married Bimala despite the fact that she is from a poorer family and has a dark complexion. Though Nikhil and Bimala enjoy a peaceful marriage, Nikhil wants her to enter the outer world, believing their love is true only if they recognize one another in the outer world. When Bimala attends a Swadeshi rally led by Sandip Babu, she insists he visit Nikhil's estate. Bimala and Sandip are attracted to one another, so Sandip decides to make his headquarters at the estate.

Bimala becomes intimately involved with the Swadeshi movement because of her desire to work with Sandip. Sandip is obviously interested in Bimala, and Bimala begins to question her marriage to Nikhil because Sandip represents everything she wants in a man. At Sandip's request, Bimala steals 6000 rupees from Nikhil's safe for the Cause, but Sandip's subsequent behavior makes her feel torn as though she is two people, one who is appalled by Sandip and one who is attracted to him. Though Nikhil is distraught at losing Bimala, he grants her the freedom to choose her own life. Guilt-ridden about her theft, Bimala sends Amulya, a young disciple of Sandip's, to sell her jewels so she can replace the 6000 rupees, but instead, Amulya steals the money from Nikhil's treasury. Nikhil forgives Bimala's deceit, causing her to realize her husband is the one who truly loves her.

## Nikhil

Nikhil is one of the main characters in this novel, as well as one of the narrators. Educated and gentle, he is a loving husband to Bimala and loves to decorate her with European accessories. Though Nikhil and Bimala enjoy a peaceful marriage, Nikhil wants her to enter the outer world, believing their love is true only if they recognize one another in the outer world. He encourages her to become involved with the Swadeshi movement through Sandip, but as the relationship between his wife and his friend unfolds, he does nothing to stop it. Though Nikhil is distraught at losing Bimala, he grants her the freedom to choose her own life.

Nikhil refuses to fully support the Swadeshi cause, and he denies Bimala's request that he ban foreign goods from the market. He frequently debates life matters with Sandip, disagreeing with his supposed friend's tendency to exaggerate and his affinity for illusion. After realizing that his wife was involved in the theft of 6000 rupees from his safe and treasury, Nikhil forgives Bimala's deceit, causing her to realize her husband is the one who truly loves her. When there is a Swadeshi riot in Bengal, Sandip flees the city while Nikhil goes into town to try to calm matters. Nikhil is shot in the head.



## Sandip Babu

Sandip Babu is one of the main characters in this novel, as well as one of the narrators. Sandip resides in Nikhil's house as a guest, but he pursues Bimala, engaging her in matters concerning the Swadeshi cause. He is a very selfish and greedy individual who masks his true identity by feigning care for his country. When Bimala attends a Swadeshi rally led by Sandip Babu, she insists he visit Nikhil's estate. Bimala and Sandip are attracted to one another, so Sandip decides to make his headquarters at the estate.

Bimala becomes intimately involved with the Swadeshi movement because of her desire to work with Sandip. Sandip is obviously interested in Bimala, and Bimala begins to question her marriage to Nikhil because Sandip represents everything she wants in a man. At Sandip's request, Bimala steals 6000 rupees from Nikhil's safe for the Cause, but Sandip's subsequent behavior makes her feel torn as though she is two people, one who is appalled by Sandip and one who is attracted to him. When there is a Swadeshi riot in Bengal, Sandip flees the city while Nikhil goes into town to try to calm matters.

## Bara Rani

The Bara Rani is Nikhil's sister-in-law who lives with him and Bimala at the Rajah's house. Her strained relationship with Bimala frequently causes tension in the household. The Bara Rani often uses Nikhil to obtain the material things she desires, and though Bimala constantly complains about her sister-in-law, Nikhil is tolerant of her because he pities her lot in life. The Bara Rani continually mocks Bimala's friendship with Sandip.

## Amulya Babu

Amulya Babu is Sandip's young disciple whom Sandip introduces to Bimala. Amulya is also dedicated to the Swadeshi movement, though he struggles between the goals of the movement and developing personal relationships. Bimala looks at Amulya like a son, but she and Sandip both use him in their power struggle. Bimala asks Amulya to sell her jewels to replace the 6000 rupees she steals from Nikhil. Sandip is jealous of Amulya and Bimala's affection for the boy. During the Swadeshi riot at the end of the novel, Amulya is killed by a bullet in his chest.

## Panchu

Panchu is a poor man who has a holding in Harish Kundu's estate. He is submerged in debt when his wife dies, but Chadranath Babu loans him money to buy cloth with which to support himself and his children. Unfortunately, the cloth is burned by followers of Swadeshi who disapprove of buying foreign articles. Harish Kundu fines Panchu, so Nikhil buys Panchu's holding, keeping the poor man as a tenant; however, Harish



Kundu produces a false aunt with a life interest in the holding which is obviously an attempt to evict Panchu. Chadranath Babu comes to the rescue, bribing the woman to leave Bengal.

## **Miss Gilby**

Miss Gilby is Bimala's English tutor. Nikhil dismisses an Indian boy from his household for insulting the tutor, causing Miss Gilby to leave of her own accord.

## **Chadranath Babu**

Chadranath Babu is Nikhil's old tutor who preaches the ways of Truth. He disapproves of Sandip and tries to help Panchu.

## **Harish Kundu**

Harish Kundu is Panchu's zamindar who tries to evict Panchu from his ancestral holding.

## **Nanku**

Nanku is the guard ordered by the Bara Rani to prevent Sandip from entering the sitting room where Bimala is. Bimala wants Nanku dismissed from his service, but instead, Nikhil sends Nanku to another part of his estate.

## **Khema**

Khema is Bimala's maid.

## **Thako**

Thako is the Bara Rani's maid.



# Objects/Places

## India

India is the main setting of *The Home and the World*. This is the country where the characters live, as well as the country for which Swadeshi is fighting.

## Bengal

Bengal is the territory where Nikhil lives as a rich landowner with Bimala as his wife. This is where the majority of the action occurs with few variances.

## Calcutta

Calcutta is the Indian city where Nikhil attends college during the early part of his marriage. At the end of the novel, he intends to move to Calcutta with Bimala and the Bara Rani.

## Swadeshi

Swadeshi is the Nationalist movement in India during the early twentieth century. Its main object is the encouragement of indigenous industries. Bimala becomes intimately involved with the Swadeshi movement after meeting Sandip.

## Bande Mataram

Bande Mataram, meaning "Hail Mother," is the national song of the Swadeshi movement.

## Rajah's House

The Rajah's house in Bengal serves as the main setting in this novel since it is the house where Nikhil and Bimala live and where Sandip stays as a guest for an extended period, attempting to use the home as his headquarters for Swadeshi.

## Sitting Room

The sitting room, in the outer apartments of Nikhil's home, is where Bimala often meets Sandip to discuss matters concerning the Cause.



## Safe

Nikhil's safe is where Bimala steals 6000 rupees from Nikhil, meant for the Bara Rani, for the Cause at Sandip's request.

## 6000 Rupees

Sandip requests Bimala acquire 6000 rupees for the Cause, so she steals it from Nikhil's safe. When she feels guilty, she asks Amulya to sell her jewels, but he robs Nikhil's treasury. Nikhil knows there is a connection between the two thefts but prefers to remain ignorant of the matter.

## Suksar Trade Center

Suksar Trade Center is one of the biggest trade centers in Nikhil's district, within his estates. Sandip and his followers want Nikhil to prohibit the sale of foreign goods in the market, but Nikhil refuses, even when Bimala implores him.

## Zenana

Zenana is the secluded area of the Rajah's house, reserved for wives as a part of Purdah.

## Panchu's Holding

When Harish Kundu wants to evict Panchu from his holding, Nikhil buys the holding and keeps Panchu as a tenant. A woman claiming to be Panchu's aunt claims a life interest, obviously part of Harish Kundu's scheme to evict Panchu, but Nikhil and Chadranath Babu bribe the woman to leave.



# Themes

## Nationalism and Religion

Perhaps the most important theme in *The Home and the World* involves the joint themes of nationalism and religion. The novel's action is driven by the Swadeshi movement, led by Sandip Babu. Though Sandip realizes the movement has the potential to become violent, he believes freedom is worth the cost. Bimala becomes engrossed in this movement, while Nikhil, her husband, refrains from the fervor, choosing to love his country as it is rather than as Sandip would make it. This theme is expressed most obviously through Sandip's desire to ban foreign goods from the market, but Nikhil refuses to use tyranny to force nationalism on his tenants, despite Bimala's pleas.

Nikhil's views are strongly influenced by his religious beliefs, while Sandip's perspective is upon a more worldly view. Sandip's view of reality, as he sees it, is strongly based upon his belief in nationalism and obtaining one's desires. Nikhil, on the other hand, believes man should try to rise superior to his nature, rather than yielding to material desires. Bimala supports Sandip's views while Chadranath Babu agrees with Nikhil. In the end, Sandip's beliefs are shown to be tragic and detrimental to the nation when a Swadeshi uprising takes the lives of Amulya and Nikhil.

## Truth and Illusion

An important theme in this novel is the continuous contrast between truth and illusion which is emphasized in the differences of opinions of Nikhil and Sandip. Sandip creates illusions for the benefit of Swadeshi, but these illusions often have a negative effect on his followers who succumb to his cult-like beliefs. He seeks wealth and enjoyment without regard to how it affects others. Sandip also deludes Bimala by claiming she is the Shakti and can influence the nation to nationalism. Bimala admits that she is torn between being deluded by Sandip and welcoming the delusion. Sandip also presents the illusion that his actions are out of his love for his country; however, his actions are truly driven by his own greed and material desires.

In contrast to Sandip's illusions, the novel presents the truth which is the goal of Nikhil's life, as he was taught by his tutor, Chadranath Babu. Nikhil takes a more idealistic and caring view of the world as opposed to Sandip's reality which is focused solely on oneself. Bimala is confronted with both versions of truth and must decide which is based in the reality she knows and accepts, and the reader is left to make the same comparison and decision. The difference between these truths seems most apparent in the results between the two; Sandip's version of the truth leads inevitably to war while Nikhil tries to prevent a violent reaction to his tenants' beliefs.



## Love and the Role of Women

A recurring and important theme in *The Home and the World* is the love and the role of women in the world of the novel. The marriage and love that Bimala and Nikhil share is seen as sacred and pure. Nikhil proves his devotion to his wife repeatedly throughout the novel, particularly in his desire to educate her and for her to learn about the outer world, despite the fact that this is contradictory to traditional beliefs. Bimala is equally devoted to her husband in the beginning of the novel; however, after she meets Sandip and is overwhelmed by her desire for the strong, greedy man, Bimala's loyalty changes and she even breaks her trust with Nikhil by stealing 6000 rupees from him in order to fund the Cause when Sandip requests that she do so. Sandip attempts to prove his love for Bimala by worshipping her and praising her attributes; however, Sandip is incapable of loving anyone or anything as he loves himself. In the end of the novel, Nikhil forgives Bimala for her betrayal, and she realizes that her husband is the man who truly loves her.

Bimala follows the rules of society by blindly worshipping her husband, but Nikhil objects to most signs of her worship in the beginning of the novel, such as Bimala taking the dust from his feet. Bimala's upbringing has taught her that women must express their love through worship, yet Nikhil believes that they are equal in their love and so he tries to dissuade his wife from worshipping at his feet. Bimala is enchanted by Sandip because he shows deference to her opinion, though this is unheard of in their society which undervalues women. He also praises her womanliness, though insincerely, convincing Bimala of her value as the Shakti of womanhood and a key figure in the spreading of Swadeshi.



# Style

## Point of View

The point of view in *The Home and the World* is first person. This point of view is limited and reliable, proven by the fact that each of the narrators is only able to access their own thoughts and feelings. Though the narrators report upon events and conversations that they witness, they are unable to convey the thoughts and emotions of the other characters in the novel. This style of narration is important to the plot of the story as this method of alternating between these three viewpoints provides a well-rounded and more accurate account of the story.

In this novel, the distribution of exposition and dialogue is fairly equal. A good portion of the narrative is devoted to the interactions between the characters, while the remainder focuses on describing events and each narrator's personal reflections. This distribution is important to the novel since it emphasizes the difference in opinions of the three narrators. The viewpoint in this novel alternates between the three narrators, Bimala, Nikhil and Sandip.

## Setting

This novel is set in the real world, in India, specifically Bengal, during the early twentieth century. The characters are segregated based upon wealth and nationalist beliefs. The majority of the characters, with the sole exception of the tutor, Miss Gilby, are Indian natives. Much of the novel's conflict arises because of political and religious beliefs, as well as financial issues.

India is the main setting of *The Home and the World*. This is the country where the characters live, as well as the country for which Swadeshi is fighting. Bengal is the territory where Nikhil lives as a rich landowner with Bimala as his wife. This is where the majority of the action occurs with few variances. Calcutta is the Indian city where Nikhil attends college during the early part of his marriage. At the end of the novel, he intends to move to Calcutta with Bimala and the Bara Rani. The Rajah's house in Bengal serves as the main setting in this novel since it is the house where Nikhil and Bimala live and where Sandip stays as a guest for an extended period, attempting to use the home as his headquarters for Swadeshi. The sitting room, in the outer apartments of Nikhil's home, is where Bimala often meets Sandip to discuss matters concerning the Cause. Suksar Trade Center is one of the biggest trade centers in Nikhil's district, within his estates. Sandip and his followers want Nikhil to prohibit the sale of foreign goods in the market, but Nikhil refuses, even when Bimala implores him. Zenana is the secluded area of the Rajah's house, reserved for wives as a part of Purdah. When Harish Kundu wants to evict Panchu from his holding, Nikhil buys the holding and keeps Panchu as a tenant. A woman claiming to be Panchu's aunt claims a life interest, obviously part of



Harish Kundu's scheme to evict Panchu, but Nikhil and Chadranath Babu bribe the woman to leave.

## Language and Meaning

The language used in this novel tends to be quite stiff and formal, particularly in the sections of dialogue. This proper grammar is appropriate for the location and time period in which the narrative is set. It is also important because of the social status of the main characters, particularly Bimala and Nikhil. For the most part, the language is easy to comprehend; however, some of the philosophical concepts that Nikhil and Sandip discuss can be difficult to understand. The language in this novel tends to characterize the political turmoil of the nation as well as the difference in philosophical beliefs of the individual characters, particularly that of Nikhil, Sandip and Bimala.

In this novel, the distribution of exposition and dialogue is fairly equal. A good portion of the narrative is devoted to the interactions between the characters, while the remainder focuses on describing events and each narrator's personal reflections. This distribution is important to the novel because it emphasizes the difference in opinions of the three narrators. The language aids the writing style since it is appropriate for the novel's setting, and while the language itself is fairly simplistic, the concepts are frequently more complex and elusive. Overall, the language is accessible, though readers may have a difficult time grasping the philosophical and political concepts that guide the events of the novel.

## Structure

The Home and the World is divided into twelve chapters which encompass 203 pages. The chapters average fifteen pages in length, and though they are not titled, they are numbered and divided into sections titled by narrator. Each narrator's account of the story is also numbered chronologically as the narrator alternates throughout the novel. The chapters are fairly long and detailed, but a short amount of time passes in each chapter.

The Home and the World by Rabindranath Tagore is an interesting allegory of Indian politics in the early twentieth century. As a means of encouraging his wife, Bimala, to emerge into the outer world, Nikhil introduces her to Sandip, an active leader in the Swadeshi movement. Bimala soon becomes immersed in the revolutionary fervour of Swadeshi and finds herself torn between the duties of home and the world.

The pace of the novel is fairly slow, and it can be difficult to read at times due to the philosophical concepts presented and considered which serve as a background and motive for the actual narrative. Occasional flashbacks occur, especially during Nikhil and Bimala's narratives. Overall, this novel is an interesting and tragic account of the conflict between realism and idealism in India during the early twentieth century.



## Quotes

"At that time the Prince of the fairy tale had faded, like the moon in the morning light. 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."  
Bimala, Chapter 1, page 19

"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."  
Nikhil, Chapter 1, page 23

"I was utterly unconscious of myself. I was no longer the lady of the Rajah's house, but the sole representative of Bengal's womanhood. And he was the champion of Bengal. As the sky had shed its light over him, so he must receive the consecration of a woman's benediction."  
Bimala, Chapter 2, page 31

"I truly believe my country to be my God. I worship Humanity. God manifests Himself both in man and in his country."  
Sandip, Chapter 2, page 37

"The true value of love is this, that it can ever bless the unworthy with its own prodigality. For the worthy there are many rewards on God's earth, but God has specially reserved love for the unworthy."  
Nikhil, Chapter 2, page 41

"All his gaze proclaimed that I was a wonder in beauty and power; and the loudness of his praise, spoken and unspoken, drowned all other voices in my world. Had the Creator created me afresh, I wondered? Did he wish to make up now for neglecting me so long? I who before was plain had become suddenly beautiful. I who before had been of no account now felt in myself all the splendour of Bengal itself."  
Bimala, Chapter 3, page 50

"Women have a weakness for greedy men; for it is this greed of ours which gives them the upper hand. The indulgence which I have always received at their hands has made me all the more shameless. I do not mind your watching the good things disappear, not one bit. I mean to enjoy every one of them."  
Sandip, Chapter 3, page 56

"At first I suspected nothing, feared nothing; I simply felt dedicated to my country. What a stupendous joy there was in this unquestioning surrender. Verily had I realized how, in thoroughness of self-destruction, man can find supreme bliss."  
Bimala, Chapter 4, page 68



"Winning your kind of success is success gained at the cost of the soul: but the soul is greater than success."

Nikhil, Chapter 4, page 80

"This cry of pain must be silenced in me. So long as I continue to suffer, Bimala will never have true freedom. I must free her completely, otherwise I shall never gain my freedom from untruth."

Nikhil, Chapter 5, page 86

"Those who make sacrifices for their country's sake are indeed her servants, but those who compel others to make them in her name are her enemies. They would cut freedom at the root, to gain it at the top."

Nikhil, Chapter 5, page 94

"Oh, our artless little Chota Rani!- straight as a schoolmaster's rod, eh? But a woman is not built that way. She is soft and supple, so that she may bend without being crooked."

Bara Rani, Chapter 5, page 96

"It is no use arguing about these things, Nikhil. How can they who do not feel the truth within them, realize that to bring it out from its obscurity into the light is man's highest aim- not to keep on heaping material outside?"

Chadranath Babu, Chapter 6, page 105

"Queen! You only can make the impossible possible. Indeed you have already done so. Oh, that I could show you the extent of your achievement- then you would know it. But the time for that is not now. Now we want money!"

Sandip, Chapter 6, page 114

"How little these two persons, who have been together, day and night, for nine whole years, know of each other! They know something perhaps of their home life, but when it comes to outside concerns they are entirely at sea. They had cherished the belief that the harmony of the home with the outside was perfect. Today they realize to their cost that it is too late to repair their neglect of years, and seek to harmonize them now."

Sandip, Chapter 7, page 127

"Our country has been brought to death's door through sheer fear- from fear of the gods down to fear of the police; and if you set up, in the name of freedom, the fear of some other bogey, whatever it may be called; if you would raise your victorious standard on the cowardice of the country by means of downright oppression, then no true lover of the country can bow to your decision... The freedom that exists in any country may be measured by the extent of this reign of fear. Where its threat is confined to those who would hurt or plunder, there the Government may claim to have freed man from the violence of man. But if fear is to regulate how people are to dress, where they shall trade, or what they must eat, then is man's freedom of will utterly ignored, and manhood destroyed at the root."

Nikhil, Chapter 8, page 129

"We think that we are our own masters when we get in our hands the object of our desire- but we are really our own masters only when we are able to cast out our desires



from our minds."

Chadranath Babu, Chapter 8, page 134

"And then, the other day in the garden, how easy my husband found it to tell me that he set me free! But can freedom- empty freedom- be given and taken so easily as all that?"  
Bimala, Chapter 8, page 137

"We men can at best give of our power. But women give themselves. Out of their own life they give birth, out of their own life they give sustenance. Such gifts are the only true gifts. Queen! If what you have given us had been only money I would not have touched it. But you have given that which is more to you than life itself!"  
Sandip, Chapter 9, pages 148-149

"Evolution is at work amongst the gods as well. The grandson has to remodel the gods created by the grandfather to suit his own taste, or else he is left an atheist. It is my mission to modernize the ancient deities. I am born the saviour of the gods, to emancipate them from the thralldom of the past."  
Sandip, Chapter 10, page 160

"Man's history has to be built by the united effort of all the races in the world, and therefore this selling of conscience for political reasons- this making a fetish of one's country, won't do. I know that Europe does not at heart admit this, but there she has not the right to pose as our teacher. Men who die for the truth become immortal: and, if a whole people can die for the truth, it will also achieve immortality in the history of humanity. Here, in this land of India, amid the mocking laughter of Satan piercing the sky, may the feeling for this truth become real! What a terrible endemic of sin has been brought into our country from foreign lands."  
Chadranath Babu, Chapter 10, pages 165-166

"My greed today embraces the wealth of all Bengal. Is there a greater force than greed? It is the steed of the great ones of the earth, as is the elephant, Airauat, the steed of Indra. So then these jewels are mine?"  
Sandip, Chapter 10, page 169

"The harsher he became in his rudeness, the more did this joy well up within me. His snaky coils, with which he used to snare me, are exhausted- I am free. I am saved, saved. Be rude to me, insult me, for that shows you in your truth; but spare me your songs of praise, which were false."  
Bimala, Chapter 11, page 176

"My devotion to you has made me cruel; my worship of you has lighted the raging flame of destruction within me. I am not righteous. I have no beliefs, I only believe in her whom, above all else in the world, I have been able to realize."  
Sandip, Chapter 11, page 177

"To sin is easy enough, but to make up for it is above all difficult for a woman."  
Bimala, Chapter 11, page 181



"My union with you, my love, was only of the wayside; it was well enough so long as we followed the same road; it will only hamper us if we try to preserve it further. We are now leaving its bonds behind. We are started on our journey beyond, and it will be enough if we can throw each other a glance, or feel the touch of each other's hands in passing. After that? After that there is the larger world-path, the endless current of universal life."  
Nikhil, Chapter 12, page 187

"The freedom to which we pass through sorrow is greater than the sorrow."  
Nikhil, Chapter 12, page 190

"Then I discovered that those who could simply and naturally draw their environment into the process of their self-creation belonged to one species of the genus 'man',- and I to another. I had received the vital spark, but could not impart it. Those to whom I have surrendered my all have taken my all, but not myself with it."  
Nikhil, Chapter 12, page 197



## Topics for Discussion

Why does Nikhil want Bimala to experience the outer world?

Who is Bara Rani, and what is her relationship with Nikhil and Bimala?

Compare and contrast Sandip and Nikhil.

Why does Sandip make Bimala feel she is two people?

How does Bimala feel about Amulya?

What is the significance of the six thousand rupees?

How do Bimala's feelings for Nikhil and Sandip change throughout the novel?