

**Conflict of Phatik's Mental Turmoil to Go Home in  
Rabindranth Tagore's *The Home-Coming***

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**Abstract :**

Rabindranth Tagore was a well known Indian dramatist, short story writer and a well known artist. He has established the 'Shanti Niketan' a nature school. He believed that, man should go near to the nature, as nature is the best teacher. He has won the prestigious 'Nobel Prize for Literature' for his work *Geetanjali* in 1913. He wrote over one thousand poems; eight volumes of short stories; almost two dozen plays and play-lets; eight novels, many books-essays on philosophy, religion, and social topics. He also composed more than two thousand songs, both the music and lyrics. Two of them became the national anthems of India and Bangladesh. He died on 7<sup>th</sup> August 1941 at the age of 80. The present story, *The Home-Coming*, is about a school going adolescent child of fourteen named Phatik. He was sent to Calcutta for his schooling. This story discusses in details what happens to Phatik in Calcutta at his uncle's house; so that he becomes desperate for his, 'Home-coming'.

**Keywords :** Meditate, sullenly, bequeath, indiscreetly, espied, despot, allegations, prejudice, distressed, ornamental, despised, slighted, tyrant, wistfully, delirious, etc.

Right at the beginning of the story we are told that Phatik is a leader and ring master of the village boys. He is so mischievous that he always thinks about new mischief to seek enjoyment out of it. Now he proposes the fellow friends that they should all work together to shift the log by the main force of the river from its place and roll it away. The owner of the log would be angry and surprised and they would all enjoy the fun. Everyone seconded/supported the proposal and it was to be carried unanimously.

Makhan, Phatik's younger brother dislikes the proposal and sat on the log like a sage meditating peacefully without any concern with the world. Makhan did not allow log to be shifted from its place. Phatik orders the boys to push the log and let it roll over Makhan. The boys obey the orders of their leader. The log is pushed along with Makhan and Makhan gets hurt by it. He sullenly rises from the mother earth, attacks Phatik, kicks him, beats him and then goes crying home. This incident shows us how Phatik is a naughty boy. He always thinks about enjoyment and is careless about his studies.

Phatik is sitting at the river bank just at the same moment a boat comes up to the landing and a middle aged man steps down and asks Phatik about the address of Chakravorti's house. Phatik indiscreetly moves his hand in an indefinite direction. The man gets confused and moves further to search the expected house.

After some time Phatik was summoned by his mother. Phatik refuses to go home with the servant. But servant catches Phatik by his arms and takes him home forcefully. Phatik was expecting a good amount of scolding and beating from his mother. Accordingly mother scolds him for beating Makhan. As Phatik has not beaten Makhan he refuses the allegations of his mother. Makhan accuses Phatik for beating him. Phatik can not bear this injustice and beats Makhan in front of his mother. Mother holds Phatik and beats him for his misbehaviour. Just at the same moment a stranger comes at the door and mother stops beating Phatik.

The stranger was nobody else but brother of Phatik's mother and uncle of Phatik. The name of the stranger was Bishamber. He has left Calcutta immediately after the marriage of Phatik's mother to start business in Bombay. After 15 years he came back to Calcutta and rushed to meet his sister.

Bishamber enquires about the studies of Makhan and Phatik. Mother tells her brother that Phatik is lazy, disobeyed and wild, whereas Makhan was as good as gold, as quiet as a lamb and very fond of reading. Bishamber kindly offered to take Phatik off his sister's hands, and educate him with his own children in

Calcutta. The widowed mother readily agreed. When Bishamber asked Phatik, would he like to go to Calcutta with him, Phatik's joy knew no bounds, and he said 'yes'.

It was an immense relief to the mother to get rid of Phatik. She had a prejudice against the boy and no love was lost between the two brothers. She was in daily fear that he would either drown Makhan some day in the river, or break his head in a fight, or run him into some danger or other. At the same time she was somewhat distressed to espied Phatik's extreme eagerness to get away.

Phatik was joyous to know that he is going to Calcutta. He bequeaths his kite, fishing rod and his marbles to his younger brother Makhan. He continuously kept asking his uncle, 'when they are going to Calcutta'. He kept waking throughout the night thinking about the city life.

Finally Phatik reaches Calcutta with his uncle and for the first time in his life he meets his aunty. She was by no means pleased with this unnecessary addition to her family. Writer has intimated us that in this world of human affairs there is no worse nuisance than a boy at the age of fourteen. He is neither ornamental, nor useful. For a boy of fourteen his own home is the only Paradise. To live in a strange house with strange people is little short of torture, while the height of bliss is to receive the kind looks of women, and never to be slighted by them. Similarly Phatik too has to suffer with the problem of his growing age.

It was anguish to Phatik to be the unwelcome guest in his aunt's house, despised by this elderly woman, and slighted, on every occasion. If she ever asked him to do anything for her, he would be so overjoyed that he would overdo it; and then she would tell him not to be so stupid, but to get on with his lessons.

The cramped atmosphere of neglect in his aunt's house oppressed Phatik so much that he felt that he could not breathe. He wanted to go out into the open country and fill his lungs and breathe freely. But there was no open space to go to. Surrounded on all sides by Calcutta houses and walls, he would dream night after night of his village home and wished to be back there. He remembered the glorious meadow where he used to fly his kite all day long; the broad river-banks where he would wander throughout the day singing and shouting for joy; the narrow brook where he could go and dive and swim at any time he liked. He thought of his band of boy companions over whom he was despot; and, above all, the memory of that tyrant mother of his, who had such a prejudice against him, occupied him day and night. No one could understand it, but it preyed upon his mind continually.

In the school too there was no more backward boy in the whole school than Phatik. He used to keep silence whenever teacher asked him any question or read something. All the students used to tease Phatik for his backwardness. Moreover his own brothers were ashamed of him. Phatik was so disappointed that he could not mix among the other students. When other boys were out at play, he stood wistfully by the window and gazed at the roofs of the distant houses and if by chance he saw children playing on the open terrace of any roof, his heart would ache with longing to go to his village.

One day Phatik gathered all his courage and asked his uncle: "Uncle, when can I go home?" His uncle just smiled and answered; "Wait till the holidays come". Phatik suddenly asked, 'when will the holidays come'. But this time he has got no answer from his uncle. The holidays would not come till November and Phatik had a long time still to wait.

Phatik's misfortune was so strong that one day he has lost his lesson-book. Everyday he was beaten by his teacher in the school for the lesson-book. Phatik was afraid of his aunty so he has not told anything to her. But later on Phatik was unable to bear the beating by the teacher. He has made up his mind and told her that he had lost his lesson-book. He asked aunty for the money to perches/buy a new lesson-book. Instead giving money to Phatik his aunty scolded him a lot. She has let her tongue loose on Phatik. Tears rolled down from the eyes of the Phatik. That day Phatik has gone to the school with heavy heart.

That night, on his way back from school, Phatik had a bad headache with a fit of shivering. He felt he was going to have an attack of malarial fever. His one great fear was that he would be a nuisance to his aunt. The next morning Phatik was nowhere to be seen. All searches in the neighbourhood proved futile. It was

raining heavily all night and those who went out in search of the Phatik got fully drenched. At last Bishamber asked help from the police.

At the end of the day police brought out Phatik in their arms and placed him before Bishamber. It was still raining. Phatik was wet through from head to foot, muddy all over, he was full with the fever, his face and eyes were red and he was shivering top to bottom. Bishamber carried Phatik in his arms and took him into the inner room. The fever rose very high and all that night Phatik was delirious. Bishamber called a doctor. Phatik opened his eyes flushed with fever and looked up to the ceiling and said vacantly, "Uncle, have the holidays come yet? May I go home?" and closed the eyes again. He slept for some time in deep slumber cried,

"Mother, don't beat me like that! (I have not beaten Makhan) Mother! I  
am telling the truth!"

Next day Phatik was conscious for some time. He turned his eyes around the room and got disappointed as he could not see his mother. Bishamber knew the thoughts in the Phatik's mind and he told him that he has called his mother and she will come soon.

Later in the day Phatik's mother burst into the room like a whirlwind and began to toss from side to side and moan and cry in a loud voice. She was calling Phatik again and again by his name and asking him to open his eyes. Phatik was unable to open his eyes. He stopped his restless movements for a moment. His hands stopped beating up and down. Turning his head very slowly, he said, "Eh?... Mother, the holidays have come."

In this way a very emotional and heart touching story ends with a sad note of Phatik's critical condition. The writer has not told us what happens to Phatik and his wish to go back to his own home in the village...!

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