

"The Home-Coming" by Rabindranath Tagore

Rabindranath Tagore's short story "*The Home-Coming*" is a touching and tragic tale that explores the complexities of childhood, family relationships, emotional neglect, and the longing for love and acceptance.

The story centers around **Phatik Chakravorti**, a 14-year-old boy living in a rural village with his widowed mother and younger brother, **Makhan**. Phatik is energetic, playful, and somewhat rebellious. He frequently gets into mischief, often dragging Makhan into trouble. Phatik's behavior, though typical of an adolescent craving attention and freedom, is misunderstood by his mother, who sees him as a burden. In contrast, she favors Makhan, who is quiet and obedient.

After a particularly troublesome incident involving a prank gone wrong, Phatik's mother loses patience with him. At the same time, her brother visits from Calcutta and offers to take Phatik with him to the city for better education and upbringing. Phatik, feeling unloved at home and excited by the idea of city life, agrees eagerly.

However, Calcutta turns out to be nothing like what he had imagined. His aunt, resenting the additional responsibility, treats him coldly and shows no affection. Phatik struggles to adjust to city life and fails to keep up with school. His health begins to decline as he grows increasingly lonely, homesick, and depressed.

Throughout his time in Calcutta, Phatik yearns for his home, even though he had once wanted to escape it. The emotional distance between him and his new guardians deepens his sense of abandonment. His physical health deteriorates rapidly, and he falls seriously ill. On his deathbed, he repeatedly asks, "*When may I go home?*", expressing his desperate longing for the love and comfort he never truly received.

In a final twist of fate, his mother arrives just as he is dying. Tragically, she realizes too late the pain her son endured and the love he silently longed for. Phatik dies without being able to return home, making the story's title—"*The Home-Coming*"—a deeply ironic and emotional statement.

Tagore's story serves as a critique of emotional neglect and the failure to understand children's needs. Through Phatik's character, the story highlights the innocent yet intense emotional world of a child and the irreversible consequences of adult indifference.