

THE THEME OF PAIN OF SEPARATION IN TAGORE'S SHORT STORY *KABULIWALA*

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Abstract:

The story entitled as *Kabuliwala* is the beautiful caricature of father- daughter relationship. The story also deals with the theme of human relationships on different levels. Perhaps the most powerful element of “*Kabuliwallah*” is the way Tagore portrays the human connection as it transcends social class, time, age, and culture. “*Kabuliwala*” is the title of this story, but it has two other significant meanings. The term *Kabuliwala* can be used to describe someone who comes from Kabul in Afghanistan, which is the country that *Rahaman*, the *Kabuliwala* comes from in the story. It can also be used to describe a traveling fruit salesman, which is how *Rahaman* earns his money and is the reason he is so far from home for such a long time. This paper tends to focus on the theme of separation and the pain which *Rahaman* experiences after departing from his little one *Mini*, in whom he sees the reflection of his own daughter who is far off in Afghanistan.

Key Words: *Kabuliwala, separation, relationship, pain, reliance, yearning.*

Kabuliwallah is the famous story by Rabindranath Tagore which is taken from his collection of Bengali short stories entitled as *Galapaguccha*. It describes the lives and miseries of downtrodden people. Tagore was a known poet, an author, philosopher, artist and educator. He was born in 1861 in Kolkata in a rich and aristocratic family. He contributed in the field of literature at large. He wrote number of musical plays, poems, novels, essays, short stories and travel diaries. Tagore was awarded with the Nobel Prize in 1913 for his masterpiece *Gitanjali*. His life and works made him a cultural icon, not only in India but also abroad. It has varied themes like filial love, separation, love, reliance, yearning and charity. It is about a story of an inquiring girl *Mini* who used to raise lot of questions out of curiosity to her father and her relationship with her father and a *Kabuliwala* who is *Rahman*. The story portrays filial love and provoke emotional pain to the readers especially those who are yearning for father and daughter intimate relationship.

The story *Kabuliwala* is a realistic presentation and the title is also very appropriate to a great extent. The author has emphasized the relationship of *Kabuliwala* with *Mini*. He perhaps becomes closer to little girl than her own parents. The basis of this bond is the *Kabuliwallah's* relationship with his own daughter who is miles away from him. The action of the story is based throughout on the events connected with him. The narrator describes him as a huge man, named *Rahmat* wearing soiled clothes of his place and a tall turban. He always carries a bag on his back and boxes of grapes in his hand he belongs to Kabul in Afghanistan and goes away to sell seasonal goods from his home country to people in other countries.

Mini's mother, *Rama*, was against the growing companionship between her daughter and the *Kabuliwala* and feared he would kidnap *Mini* one day and sell her off as a slave. She was quite skeptical and thought that world was full of thieves, bandits, drunkards all are waiting to harm her family. She was always alarmed at *Rahman's* presence in her house and his friendship with her little daughter. She is paranoid about all this and afraid of the consequences as she had heard tales of child lifting and slavery in

the far away land called Afghanistan. This is also one of the best instances of parental love which is explored in terms of Mini's relationship with her mother

The Kabuliwallah is a loving father. He has a little daughter, who is of Mini's age. He has to leave her behind, in order to visit distant countries to earn his living. He cannot take his daughter along; he carries with himself, an imprint of her hand, so as to feel her presence always with him but this fact is known to the readers towards the end of the story. It is for this reason that he is able to develop intimacy with Mini. Mini was initially scared of him for she had a blind belief that in his huge bag he carried small children like her. However, the Kabuliwallah knows how to win her heart. He gifts her almonds, raisins and nuts on every visit. When the narrator pays him for his offerings; he gives the money to Mini.

He has a great sense of humor his conversation with Mini comprises many amusing jokes. When Mini asks him what he carries in his bag, he replies "Hanthi" means an elephant. When Mini questions if he was going to his father-in-law's house he shakes his fist and replies, "I'll wallop my in law." This answer would send the child into pills of uncontrollable laughter in which Kabuliwallah would also join. He is rather short tempered he sells his things on credit and collects the payments before returning home. When one of the customers denies having bought a rampuri shawl from him and does not pay his due he loses his temper and stabs him. He is charged with murderous assault and sentenced 8 years of imprisonment. Here falls the separation of Kabuliwallah with Mini as he is taken away into prison.

The theme of the pain of separation is explored in the 2 episodes. Firstly, the Kabuliwallah has to leave his country and travel to distant lands to earn his living. This separates him from his family, specially his little daughter. He yearns for his daughter's presence but that is something that cannot be. It is through his relationship with Mini, who is perhaps of his daughter's age, that he seeks to bring into existence his relationship with his daughter. He sees in Mini a likeness of his daughter who is always from him and 2nd time he suffers the pangs of separation when he is taken away to prison for 8 years and when he returns back the little Mini was no more small and Kabuliwallah returns at her wedding day. Though the narrator was a broad minded person however he too has to observe the social norms he is little annoyed at Kabuliwallah's presence on the auspicious occasion of his daughter's marriage he asks him to come some other day however. When he learns the truth about the peddler's life he does not hesitate to satisfy the poor man's wish and sends Mini towards the end of the story narrator is moved to tears. As a father, who is about to be separated from his daughter because of her wedding he can understand the feelings of Kabuliwallah, who has been suffering the pangs of separation from his daughter. If the very thought of bidding farewell to Mini is painful to the narrator how much more pain the poor peddler must be feeling, who has remained away from his daughter from years.

Thus his emotional yearning for his own daughter is satisfied to some extent for he has met somebody on whom he can shower his parental love and the narrator too realizes his dilemma and gives him some money so that he can return home at the earliest. Thus the entire tale is a perfect homage to the filial love. Tagore vibrantly pictures the love between father and daughter.

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