

Rabindranath Tagore's the Kabuliwallah: Icon of Parental Love

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Abstract:

Bengal happens to be the fertile land for literatures. It produced many distinguished litterateurs' among them is Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore. He is the most celebrated and widely read Indian playwright, poet, novelist, musician, painter, and short story writer. He is the recipient of Nobel Prize for his Gitanjali which is his collection of poems and mystical works. The Calcutta University conferred on him the honorary degree of D. Litt for his outstanding achievement. His notable works are The Post Office, The Wreck, Red Oleanders, Chitra, Gora and much more. His entire literature is impregnated with universal brotherhood and love for motherland. England was first captured by Gitanjali which Edward Thompson called it, 'an impeccable material achievement'. His short stories are very heart touching and has the universal appeal. His The Kabuliwallah portrays the theme of parental love.

Key Words : Universal, impeccable, notable, portray, brotherhood,

Since time immemorial, the relations between fathers and daughters have been acclaimed by many writers and poets in all genres of literatures. Tagore's The Kabuliwallah depicts the iconic parental love between Mini and Rahman, an unlettered, uncouth a hefty stranger from the rugged mountains of Afghanistan. Kabuliwallah is a heart touching tale of friendship between a five year old girl called Mini and an Afghan moneylender Rahman. The story has been beautifully woven by Tagore which reveals a bond of mutual affection and the unconventional relationship between the two. It has no plot and action. Rahman sells dry fruits, nuts and shawls from Kabul in the streets of Bengal where Mini and her family reside. The men like Rahman are known as Kabuliwallah by the much dreaded Bengalis. They look upon them as barbarians who lend money at high rates and are ready to kill children and carry them away in big bags hung on their shoulders. Nonetheless, Rabindranath Tagore, as a person having milk of human kindness thinks positively that they too are human beings and must love their children as any other parents in the world. It has been taken for granted that the daughters are more caring than sons. V.P. Kale a noted Marathi writer rightly observes, "मुलगी म्हणजे, वाऱ्याची झुळूक, हळूच अंगावरून जाते, पण धरून ठेवता येत नाही." A daughter is the second mother of father because it is she who looks after her father in the old age.

One day Mini calls Rahman from the window of her house. But as soon as she is closer to him, she gets startled and runs backward. As a human being and out of compassion, Mini's father talks to Rahman and tries to understand about his family background in Kabul. He acquaints Mini to him with the title of Kabuliwallah. Rahman could learn that Mini is afraid. Therefore, Rahman offers her some dry fruits to make her more comfortable. In the course of time, their friendship blossoms and they start meeting and interacting regularly. Rahman narrates stories of his native place to Mini and she happily gathers warmth with her own innocent tales and playfulness. The most noticeable thing here is that Rahman gets involved and listens to the young girl with great intent and relish because he becomes nostalgic as he remembers his daughter of Mini's age in Kabul. He, like anyone in the world, loves his daughter dearly. Rahman and Mini indulge in many innocent jokes and burst into pearls of laughter. It is the general outlook of some of the people that they look suspiciously at the strangers. As suspicion gives licence to faith, the maidservant of Mini's parents starts filling the ears of Rama, Mini's mother regarding the Kabuliwallah's true intention. Likewise Mini's mother suspects of their growing friendship and fears that Rahman might even kidnap and sell her little one. She stops paying Rahman for his goods.

All of a sudden, misfortune overtakes Rahman. A man who buys a Rampuri shawl from Rahman denies to have bought it. There is a quarrel between them. In the fit of anger, Rahman stabs the man with a

knife. He is sentenced to several years of imprisonment for this murderous attack. It is noticeable that every stranger is not a criminal or detective. An incident occurred in Nagpur that the polymorphous (Bahuroopis) were stoned to death without identification that they were kidnappers. Such incidents also happened in many parts of the country. So the question is without making thorough inquiry, we shouldn't be ruthless towards these strangers. Later on, Rahman comes out of jail and directly goes to see his daughter like Mini. To his astonishment, he couldn't even imagine that Mini was no longer a little girl but a grown up one. He starts imagining that his own daughter must have grown up. When Mini's father tries to pay him money for the offerings the Kabuliwallah has brought for Mini, he catches his hands and says, 'You are very kind sir. Keep me in your memory. Do not offer me money. You have a little girl: I too have one like her in my own home. I think of her, and bring this fruit to your child, not to make profit for myself.'

Mini's father becomes numb for a while. Later on, Rahman shows him a small and dirty piece of paper. It bears the impression of a little hand and not a photographer or drawing. He often carries that touch of the hand of his own little daughter next to his heart as he comes year after year to Calcutta to sell his wares in the streets. The writer said- 'Tears came to my eyes. I forgot that he was a poor Kabuli Fruit seller, while I was. But no, what was I more than he? He was also a father.'

One day, he comes to Mini and sees that she is getting married. When Mini's father realizes his presence, he asks Rahman to leave the place immediately and not to show his inauspicious face again. Rahman follows the order but while leaving shows that scruffy piece of paper. Seeing that her father's heart melted and he called Mini dressed in wedding robe. But she is too apprehensive to meet her long-forgotten friend. Rahman is tormented by the thought of having lost his own daughter childhood. He thinks she would have also grown like Mini. Mini's father understands his precarious condition and offers him enough money for a safe journey back to Kabul and reunion with his daughter. Mini's mother also realizes her misjudgement, extends the money she saved for Mini's wedding ceremony.

The story The Kabuliwallah throws light on the fact that the feelings of a father, may be of a Kabuli fruit seller or a well educated- person are the same all over the world. Human feelings of every person are similar everywhere. They do not change with the caste, creed, religion or with the poor-rich and educated – uneducated. However, if we are patient with the people and try to understand their situations and problems, then we can find some common ground thus getting solutions. In this way, Rabindranath Tagore has very skilfully portrayed the father-daughter relationship through Mini and Rahman which is really an icon of true parental love. The couplet regarding the relationship between a father and daughter are very pertinent-
“डोळ्यात न दाखविताही, जो आभाळाएवढं प्रेम करतो, त्याला वडिल नावाचा राजा माणूस म्हणतात.”

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