

Kabuliwala-Tagore

Rabindranath Tagore, one of India's most celebrated writers, was the first non-European to win the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913 for his work Gitanjali. Tagore's stories often explore human emotions, relationships, and the social issues of his time. Among his most renowned works is the short story Kabuliwala, first published in 1892. This narrative delves into themes of friendship, love, and the passage of time.

The story is centred around a lively five-year-old girl named Mini, who has the habit of being talkative. Her mother finds her prattling tiresome, but her father, the narrator, enjoys these interactions and engages her in playful conversations.

One day, Mini spots a Kabuliwala from Afghanistan named Rahmun, on the street. He is a stranger in the bustling city of Calcutta. He is tall, wearing loose garments, and a distinctive turban. Mini's initial reaction to Rahmun is fear, especially due to the large bag he carries, which she imagines may contain other children. However, Rahmun's kind nature soon wins her trust.

Mini's innocent charm reminds Rahmun of his own young daughter, Parbati, whom he left behind in Afghanistan when he migrated to India in search of a better life. As they continue to meet, Mini and Rahmun form a special bond, sharing jokes and engaging in light-hearted conversations. For instance, Rahmun humorously tells Mini that there is an elephant in his bag, while they both laugh about the term "father-in-law's house," which Rahmun uses to refer to jail.

The friendship between the two grows stronger, filled with warmth and affection. However, their bond is shattered when Rahmun is arrested for a violent altercation with a local man over an unpaid debt. Rahmun is sentenced to several years in prison, and during his absence, Mini gradually forgets about him as she grows older.

Years later, Rahmun is released from prison and returns to Calcutta. Hoping to reconnect with Mini, he imagines her to still be the same little girl he once knew. On the day of Mini's wedding, he visits her father's house, bringing with him fruits and nuts as an expression of his love and remembrance.

However, when he meets Mini again, he is shocked to know that she has grown into a young woman. The child he had once known is no longer there, and the connection they shared has faded. Rahmun, overcome with emotion, is reminded of his own daughter, whom he has not seen for many years.

In their brief conversation, Rahmun asks Mini if she is going to her "father-in-law's house," now understanding the colloquial meaning of the term does not respond with the innocence she once did. Rahmun, feeling the weight of the passage of time, reflects on the distance between himself and Mini, and his daughter. The bond they shared was altered by time.

The narrator, the father of Mini deeply moved by Rahmun's desire to reunite with his daughter, decides to help him return to Afghanistan. Cutting off the light decorations and the military band, the narrator gives Rahmun the money he needs to go back to his homeland. Although the women of the house might be disappointed by these sacrifices, the narrator finds peace in the thought of a father and daughter reuniting after years of separation.

The short story Kabuliwala beautifully explores universal themes such as love, fatherhood, and the shared humanity that transcends cultural and social differences. The story highlights the inevitability of change and the deep emotional longing that often accompanies it.

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Rabindranath Tagore is one of India's most famous writers. Kabuliwala was first published in 1892.

The story is about a lively five-year-old girl named Mini. One day, she sees a man from Afghanistan named Rahmun, known as the Kabuliwala, walking the streets of Calcutta. At first, Mini is afraid of him, especially because of the large bag he carries, which she imagines might contain children. However, Rahmun's kind nature soon wins her over, and they become friends.

Rahmun is reminded of his young daughter, Parbati, whom he had left behind in Afghanistan when he came to India to earn a better living. Mini and Rahmun meet regularly, sharing jokes and stories, and form a unique bond.

But one day, Rahmun is arrested after getting into a fight with a local man over an unpaid debt. He is sent to prison for several years, and during this time, Mini grows into a young woman and forgets him.

When Rahmun is finally released from prison, he returns to Calcutta, hoping to find Mini. He finds Mini, on the day of her wedding, he is shocked to find that she is no longer a little girl but a young woman.

The narrator helps Rahmun with the money needed for his journey back home. Kabuliwala beautifully portrays how time changes relationships and the deep longing that arises from separation.