

Humanity and Humanism beyond Borders: A Study of Humanity in Tagore's Kabuliwala

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DOI:10.5281/zenodo.17170683

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received : 14-09-2025

Accepted : 17-09-2025

Available online : 21-09-2025

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Citation: Rozario, M. A., & Rao, A. S. (2025). Humanity and Humanism beyond Borders: A Study of Humanity in Tagore's Kabuliwala *IKR Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (IKRJAHS)*, 1(4), 215-219.



ABSTRACT

Original research paper

Rabindranath Tagore was born in that age where he observed the suffering of people, so he was very much concern about human rights. Though he was born in a rich and well-known family in Kolkata, Thakur family (a luxury family of Kolkata) but he has led his life very simple and natural way. He observed human beings from very closely. So, almost in every of his writings is a piece of song in humanity. He liked to worship human. Because of this, he is still alive in human mind. Rabindranath Tagore is a name of a treatment for mental stress specially for Bengali people or those who read Rabindranath. If people start reading his writings in Bengali they will never feel satisfied to read of those translated versions, but they can have a feel of his writings. Tagore reached each and every part of a human life can have, such as spirituality, love, God, Nature, life, death, leadership of nation, and specially in humanity and humanism. In his writing we can find all solutions of all kind of problems. It's told that Rabindranath's writings are very powerful more in every part. He never argued about particular religion. For him humanity is the only religion in earth. Human beings were highly respectful to him. He was very much depressed when he looked people are suffering in society. He is a wonderful human and still leading our society by his writings on humanism. There is a close relationship between Rabindranath and humanity. A man who was strongly aware of human rights and emotions. Tagore is a leader of all human to be concern about their human rights, to make the society a better place for human beings. Later many humanist and human writers followed him. He observed people, he noticed human's desire, emotions, and later he has given a perfect guide in his literary form.

Keywords: Humaniam, Humanity, Rabindranath Tagore.

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Rabindranath Tagore

In Bengali Rabindranath Thakur and Rabindranath Tagore is in English. A Bengali poet, writer, playwright, painter, short story writer, essayist and song composer. He was born in 7 may 1861, in a Brahma family Calcutta, India. He was named as **Bhanu ShinghaThakur** and Bengali people call him **Gurudev**, **Kabiguru** and **Bishwakabi**. Tagore is the only one of the world who composed two national anthems for two different countries, India and Bangladesh. He was exceptionally well-known and influential in exposing Indian culture, Society and the Nation to the western and to world.

The youngest son of Debendranath Tagore was the prominent leader of BrahmoSamaj, a new religious cast in nineteenth century in West Bengal. He has grown up in Calcutta and early education taken from home. Tagore's father Debendranath dreamed his son to be a barrister. So Tagore enrolled at a public school in Brighton, east Sussex, England in 1877. At the age of seventeen he went to England for his institutional study. But he was more interested in literature, arts, painting etc. So his family took back him to home without completing his degree.

In the year of 1891, Tagore was moved to East Bengal now that is known as Bangladesh, to operate his family's immovable at Shilaidahand Shazadpur for 10 years.

He was a manager there to control their property and later his wife and children joined there. He mostly passed his time in a houseboat on the Padma River, in a familiar relationship with village tradition, folk people and his compassion for those became the spirit of much of his later writing. Villagers were pleased by him. He met with BaulLalonShah there. Tagore was greatly influenced by his folk songs. Later he also adopted tone for his own lyrics. That is now national anthem of Bangladesh ‘Amer sonar bangla amitomayvalobashi’. Almost all of his best short stories, which prove “humble lives and their small miseries,” from the time 1890s and have a sharpness, connected with soft irony, that is unique to him.

In 1901, he founded an experimental of school ‘Shantiniketon’, in a village area, where he wished to practice in mixture of Indian and Western traditions. After twenty years which became ‘Visva-Bharati University’ that is now most renowned university in Asia. He started staying there. So many days he suffered for the sadness because of the death of his wife and two children during the years 1902 to 1909. That he expressed in his poetry collection ‘Gitanjali’ for this he won Nobel Prize. Rabindranath Tagore is the first non-European and first Indian Nobel Prize winner in Literature 1913, for his collection of poetry ‘Gitanjali’ that was published in London in 1912 with an introduction by W B Yeats. In 1915, Tagore was awarded ‘Knighthood’ by British government King George V as Birthday Honors but later he rejected the honor in 1919 as a protest against of Amritsar, JalianwalaBagh, Massacre because British rulers killed a large number of unarmed people. He was very much disappointed on British rulers. So he wrote a letter to Lord Chelmsfort, the British viceroy of India. This represents his patriotic mind and humanity.

The date, 7 August 1941, at age of eighty he died because of kidney infection in Jorasanko Thakur Bari, Kolkata in the same place where he was born. But he died only physically and he will be there in people’s mind, by his writings and works.

Humanity

Humanity is the mankind, which comprises every person on Universe. It’s also a word for the qualities that make us human, such as the ability to love and have compassion, be creative, and not be a robot or alien.

The word **humanity** is come from the Latin word *humanitas* which means "human nature or kindness." **Humanity** encircles every humans, and it is also refer to the kind of feelings to humans have for one to another. If we talk about humanity, we could only be talking for people as completely. When we see people are doing bad things to other, we become sentimental for humanity. When someone asks for any kind of help we feel emotional in sense because of humanity. Humanity is a grace God that attached in primary morals formed by human mind. It also refers to human emotions, soul, love and sympathy for each other.

Many popular and well known philosophers talked about humanity, some are given below-

“You must not lose faith in humanity. Humanity is an ocean; if a few drops of the ocean are dirty, the ocean does not become dirty.” **Mahatma Gandhi**

“War is the greatest plague that can afflict humanity, it destroys religion, it destroys states, it destroys families. Any scourge is preferable to it.” **Martin Luther**

“The sole meaning of life is to serve humanity.” **Leo Tolstoy**

Human beings are individualized by several simple skills of senses, emotions, minds, actions, feelings and so on. These characteristics make us different from other living things on universe.

Because of these specific qualities we behave differently, we feel bad when we see bad. Human are different from other creatures because of the quality that is humanity. Humanity is all about the human beings.

Humanism

Humanism is the study of humanities. It is a philosophical study or a system of study about the universe. Those who study about this field they are humanists. Humanism is upwards of religions in world. It indicates non-theistic to life, to understand the world through human mind with ethnics. The first humanist of the world is Manifesto, he was emerged by an assembly at the University of Chicago in 1933 and he said humanism is an ideal reason, morality and justice by society. It’s based on morality.

Some views by many humanists are given below:

- All humans need honor. All human should be seen as same and all are allowed to have respect. They have rights to live in peace, love and trust.
- People will have their own choice to live their own life; they can take their own decisions to solve their own problems.

First humanist ideas were emerged in Ancient Greece from Thales to Anaxagoras and Protagoras. The humanist Zarathushtra and Lao Tzu had strongly discussed about humanism. Ancient Greeks were studied in 1400s during the period of Renaissance. Humanism is a study of human mind where we can make our world is a better place.

Later many humanists came to the earth, and described the definition of it in their own way. But the summary of all the definitions are same in it.

However, in modern times humanity means western humanism. The revival that took place in Europe from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century took the form of an ideological movement. The key is to emphasize the importance of putting human dignity above all else, the welfare of the people, its overall development, creating an environment conducive to the social life of the people. Acknowledging the freedom of the human being over religious orthodoxy, supporting human rights to meet the

religious needs and aspirations of human beings, not just in the eyes of the religion, but with the knowledge, understanding and reasoning of the people.

Humanity and Humanism in Rabindranath

Rabindranath's short story also shows a surprising reflection of his humanitarian thinking. In many short stories Rabindranath Tagore represents unhappiness, depression in life, injustice, humiliated people, and downfall of the society. He wanted to whip up the consciousness of society by depicting the deplorable state of women in cruel society.

Kabuliwala

Rabindranath's world-consciousness is reflected in the story of 'Kabuliwala'. The sound of greater humanity is heard in it. In this story, he has shown that human empathy is universal, and that the field of fundamental relations of humanity is above nationalism. 'Kabuliwala' is a very famous short story of Rabindranath Tagore. The plot of the story is in Kolkata, a middle-aged hawker comes from Afghanistan to sell fruits and nuts and he became friend with a little girl 'Mini'. When he looks at Mini he remembers his own daughter who is in Afghanistan. In every winter he goes to his family. One day Rahmat the hawker heard news that his daughter is sick and he decided to go to his family. But he was in shortage of money and since he thinks to sell his items on credit to increase his money. But, unfortunately when he starts to collect his own money, one customer misbehaved him and fight began, Rehmat threatens that he will not accept his misbehavior and stabs that customer. In the court Rehmat's lawyer tries to save him but Rahmat tells the truth. The judge, Rehmat's honesty pleased the judge and gives him eight years punishment to be in jail. One day when he gets release from jail he immediately goes to see 'Mini' when Mini turned into 14 years old and same day she is about to be married. Mini does not remember Rahmat with whom she talked in childhood. Rahmat realize his daughter will not recognize him. Mini's father becomes emotional and gives him an amount from the wedding budget to travel to his own daughter to Afghanistan. For this Mini agrees and sent gift for Rahmat's daughter.

Here, Rahamat represents the lower class people in the society, they work hard whole year for their living. But at the end, they don't get their proper payment what they deserve. They work hard but still they suffer for their living. And if they protest against the injustice happens with them, they face problems even and life becomes more problematic. On the other side, the high class that described by society they live freely without feeling guilty. Tagore was very shocked for this injustice of ritual in the society.

In the story of 'Kabuliwala', Kabuliwala (Rahamat) left his relatives and came to a country far away to earn a

living, but every moment the little girl remembered her father's hearty. When Rahamat seen the little girl Mini, he finds his own daughter in Mini within a minute who loves her father by heart. So as a father, he pulls Mini on her chest. This scene made the reader emotional and they become sentimental for the main character Rahamat. He told, he finds her own daughter in Mini because his daughter is same in Mini's age. So, he never missed the chance to meet Mini in everyday and plays with her.

Kabuliwala is a story of full emotions and feelings of humanity. In the story Rabindranath Tagore highlights the everlasting affection of the father for his daughter of Bengal. That is what Mini's relationship reveals. After getting mercy from the jail, Rahamat goes to their home to see Mini. But Mini's father doesn't want that. So he tries to avoid any hassle on the wedding day of his loving daughter, Mini's father said this. However, this statement failed to appeal to the father's love for his daughter. The behavior of Mini's father shows the mentality of people during the time of nineteenth century in Bengal. It is not only a story but a real scene of society.

Mini is a character in the story, which represents the purity, innocence. Who does not aware about discrimination of religious between Hindu-Muslim, upper-class, lower-class. But her family feels irritate for her innocence activity. They were raising their voice high, things like Mini is doing a big crime. Once Mini took something from Rahamat, and she was beaten by her mother. Helpless Mini was unable to express her pure friendship with Rahamat Kabuliwala. Though Mini was not remembering Rahamat in her wedding day because she grown up but she felt an emotion for him. That's why she also agreed to pay him with her father from her wedding budget against all the family members.

Whether the hawkers have ever actually stolen children, history itself does not know. But there is evidence that they used to sell dry fruits and some national goods by hanging in the country. But the children were terrified by their fear of being taken down and the fear made by their seniors. Mini and her father developed a very good relationship with Kabuliwala during only few days. However, the whole family has kept a watchful eye on that affection between Mini and Rahamat. And the watchful eye is in utmost doubt. Though the doubtful talking is about Mini's mother clearly in the story, but her father was not completely skeptical about Rahamat hawker. He repeatedly requested to pay special attention to him. In fact Mini's father was not completely innocent but he was blaming for Mini's mother. He didn't accept Rahamat hawker naturally from mind. In his words, "Kabuliwala returns home every winter but once he comes to see Mini. It looks like a conspiracy is going on between the two Mini & Rahamat.

Readers got to know by Mini's father that Rahamat used to go to his own home in every winter and before that time he is quite busy to collect the money from his customer those are dues. So, one day morning he went to collect money from the neighbor near Mini's house but the neighbor refused

to give his money. At one point in the conversation, Rahamot put a knife on his body. He was carrying two guards at Rahamot with blood clots. In the back there were long rows of small curious children. This scene of the story represents the inhuman behavior against a hardworking man, who has been leaving the family all year long and working hard for his living but the people in the area are refusing to pay him. Yet it is not a serious crime. A man who lends in simple faith is not the identity of his greatness. Here, the words are used by the writer in the field of mentality on Muslim community by the society.

Mini's father played a dual minded character in the story. Sometimes he had positive expression for kabuliwala and sometimes negative. He knows that Mini is having a good friendship with Rahamot but he was thinking negative because Mini's mother told some incidents those took place somewhere in society. Mini's mother is not a positive thinker at all, described by her husband. She always feels afraid to happen something bad. When some normal sound comes from outside of home, she thinks badly.

After suffering eight years in jail for 'serious injury' Rahamot returned straight to Mini's home to see Mini. But by that time Mini grown a lot, she was not remembering the Kabuliwala. And that day was the day of Mini's wedding day. So the house was well organized. And on such day Mini's father was embarrassed to see Rahamot hawker in his house. His reaction was not normal at all. According to him, "I have never seen a murderer, seeing all this, my heart is shaken. I wished, on this specious day, it would be fine if he left from here." Here Mini's father represents the character of a man who has bad ideas about a poor hawker who did a crime only for the situation. Mini's father was very inhuman in that time.

When Rahamot came to see Mini after eight years from jail, he was not able to control his tears come out. He became emotional, he remembers his own daughter. He realized the reality that his daughter also grown up the same, maybe she has forgot him also. So he will need to make her remember all from first.

As a reader, we may feel that Kabuliwala the Rahamot hawker cannot come in Mini's home without any reason. May be there are some reason or any particular ideas. But on the day of seeing Mini's wedding, Rahamot's heart has wept. According to Mini's father, "I saw a mall handprint on the paper. Not a photograph, but a little bit of hand rubbing his mark on the paper. Every year he used to take the handprint by his own daughter when he leaves for Kolkata and when he touches that he feels as touching his little daughter's hand. Mini's father realized but it was too late to understand Kabuliwala is also a father as he is, the feeling is same of their fatherhood in both of them. Apart from Mini's father, at the end of the story there was no change in perspective. As a result, it appears that the same attitude Rabindranath needed to have towards the people is not in this story. In this story the power of humanity has strongly showed Mini's father, and he has given a big amount to

Rahamot from Mini's wedding budget, so he could go back to his family and daughter. It is a big sacrifice by Mini and her father.

People might say that this is an image of society, which Rabindranath Tagore captured by color in a wonderful story. It is not logical to speak of communalism or unequal vies here. In the case, my clear point is that the author's moral responsibility is to purify the society. Weakness is not a manifestation of a particular group or religion. The author will convey the message in the story so that people can raise their humanity. But here the victim is of discrimination, Rahamot kabuliwala, under suspicion. And such discrimination still exists in our society. As a result, the seeds of doubt made for Muslims in terrorizing. It is an incident of a part of conspiracy. And with such a subtle analysis it is evident that humanity is crushed in this story of Rabindranath Tagore.

"Kabuliwala" is the most emotional story of Rabindranath among all the stories. The story makes the readers cry.

Conclusion

Rabindranath had deep faith and confidence on people and humanity and that is the main basis of RabindraSahitya and today's Rabindranath. Therefore, in Rabindranath's thoughts and writings, the brilliant manifestation of humanitarian ideology has been seen. As the effects of oriental humanism has seen in his writings and the signs of western humanism also seen. There is no confusion that the Upanishads influenced Rabindranath's consciousness. But the sense of humanity of Rabindranath is different from the humanity of Upanishads. The basic of humanity of the Upanishad is universalism. Rabindranath acknowledged authoritarianism and also recognized the separate existence of God.

However, Rabindranath believed in both God and in human beings. But in his literature, the tone of European humanism is not insignificant. He did not believe that the God protected humans. According to him, human beings are protecting themselves by harnessing the power of their thoughts, actions, and knowledge. In fact he has carried on the Renaissance tradition of human faith in his literary work. From this point he is a full-fledged humanist. His work is the face of humanity. He is the motivation for breaking down all the closed doors of human life has become embodied there.

It is noticeable Rabindranath Tagore attempt to eclipse the real in his short stories; it inevitably places the acid-honey relationship between the various members of the family. By placing the family at the center of the story, Tagore contrasts the background of the story with the place of logic, individualism, women-freedom, modern thinking, and urban nature, as opposed to tradition, reform, belief, values, and polytheism. Gradually that conflict has become a clan or family conflict with the individual. At first the person was tied up close to the family in a conflicting heart, but

Rabindranath Tagore showed how the person had gone out of the family by rebelling against family. After all of these, Rabindranath emerged as a dual form of family relations in his short stories. One is in harmony and the other one is in conflict. These two variants are depicted in bold somewhere light colors. But the feel of humanity is clear and strong.

Rabindranath Tagore, the leader of humanity, and the leader of Indian independence movement, he will live in human's mind. He will lead us by his writings. There were many writers and more will come but Rabindranath is the one among all. He said-

I am in a beautiful universe and don't want to die. I want to live among human.

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