

Subha by Rabindranath Tagore

In Subha by Rabindranath Tagore we have the theme of fear, isolation, loneliness, connection, selfishness, innocence, tradition and control. Taken from his Collected Stories collection the story is narrated in the first person by an unnamed narrator and after reading the story the reader realises that Tagore may be exploring the theme of fear. Subha's parents don't really know what to do with Subha. Her mother looks upon her with scorn while her father knows that it will be difficult to find Subha a husband because of the fact that she is dumb. If anything both parents are afraid and rather than embracing Subha's uniqueness worry about her future. It is as though Subha is a burden to her parents. Something that Subha herself understands. Subha also lives a very isolated life apart from Pratap she has no other human friends. All her friends are the animals that her father owns particularly the two cows. This may be important as Tagore may be suggesting that Subha identifies with the cows because they too are dumb. It is also interesting that the only affection that Subha receives is not from any of her family but from the two cows. Along with Nature they are her connection to her emotions.

It might also be a case that Tagore is suggesting that Subha's parents are selfish. Though they are following tradition and marrying Subha off to a total stranger. There is no sense that Subha is in agreement. She is doing as she is told to do not what she wants to do. It is also interesting that while Subha's mother is getting Subha ready for her bridegroom that Tagore uses words like 'imprisoned', 'hung' and 'kill.' It is as though Subha knows that the world she wants to live back in the village is over. Her life is to change dramatically again without her consent. Which might be the point that Tagore is making. He may be suggesting that the tradition of marrying of daughters to complete strangers and providing the stranger with a dowry is not suitable to everyone. Subha's life is to change dramatically. From living an innocent and simple life she has been thrown into a complicated world in which she has no way of expressing her feelings. Apart from crying. Which Subha's bridegroom misinterprets. If anything Subha's parents are not acting responsibly and are following a tradition that they are afraid to go against. In case they themselves become outcasts like Subha.

What is also interesting about the story is the feelings that Subha has for Pratap. She obviously likes him and there is a sense that she would be happy to marry Pratap rather than being brought to Calcutta where she is to marry a complete stranger. However Pratap is as much an outcast as Subha is and as such Subha's father does not consider him to be a suitable bridegroom for Subha. It is as though Subha's whole life is being controlled by her father and mother. She has no say in any matter that directly involves her. Even her tears do not register as sadness with her parents. Which would play on the theme of selfishness again. Despite it being obvious that Subha is sad because she

is marrying a stranger who she does not love. Her parents do not take Subha's feelings into consideration. Subha is not being treated as the individual she is. She has become a problem for her parents and as such they consider that the best thing to do is to marry Subha off.

The end of the story is also interesting as Tagore appears to be further exploring the theme of isolation. Not only has Subha been taken away from her village but she is to live her life with not only a man she does not know but also she is to live in a city in whereby she knows no one. It is as though the pain the Subha feels is even more internalized. Not only can she not tell anyone she is sad but she will know no one after she has been married off. If Subha felt isolated by her inability to communicate with others while living in her village things will be much worse for her living with a strange man in a strange city. Life is going to be more complicated for Subha. Any happiness that she had felt while living in her village is gone due to the fact that her parents are following a tradition of marrying Subha off in order that they themselves will not be viewed as outcasts. At no stage in the story has Subha's feelings been put to the forefront by her parents. Though Subha cannot talk her tears speak louder than words yet her parents do not realise this. A young innocent girl who longs for the simple things in life has had her life destroyed because of her parent's fears and selfishness.