



The Postmaster

Rabindranath Tagore

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Poet, novelist, painter and musician Rabindranath Tagore created the modern short story in . Written in the 1890s, during a period of relative isolation, his best stories—including in this selection—recreate vivid images of life and landscapes. They depict the human condition in its many forms: innocence and childhood; love and loss; the city and the village; the natural and the supernatural. Tagore is 's great Romantic. These stories reflect his profoundly modern, original vision.

The Postmaster Details

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From Reader Review The Postmaster for online ebook

Satyam Saxena says

The raw emotions expressed in the last paragraph haunts me whenever I think of it.

Anatoly says

The short story "The Postmaster" by Rabindranath Tagore describes how a post worker (postmaster) received a job in a remote village. He felt lonely and probably for this reason he started teaching an orphan girl (Ratan) to read. At the time when the postmaster retired and had to come back home, the thought that he was leaving without her shocked Ratan. Describing the feeling of sympathy of the main character, the postmaster, Tagore made a conclusion:

"After that comes the misery of awakening, and then once again the longing to get back into the maze of the same mistakes."

Rabindranath Tagore's work includes a lot of poetic descriptions and generalizations. One interesting thing is his exploration of relationships between people, of the mechanic of emotional ties. He accomplished it in a very bright, colorful, poetic form, which includes the following parts:

The beauty of Nature:

"... the movement of the leaves and the clouds of the sky were enough to fill life with joy—such were the sentiments to which he sought to give expression."

The feeling of loneliness:

"When in the evening the smoke began to curl up from the village cowsheds, and the cicadas chirped in every bush; when the mendicants of the Baül sect sang their shrill songs in their daily meeting-place, when any poet, who had attempted to watch the movement of the leaves in the dense bamboo thickets, would have felt a ghostly shiver run down his back, the postmaster would light his little lamp, and call out "Ratan."

Readers would imagine the background where the story took place.

Memories:

We can notice that here and further the author uses the grammatical constructions with the words "would" and "used to" which expresses the feeling of nostalgia, maybe even regret that it remained in the past and will never happen again, for example, this one: "He used to come home in the evening after his work".

The theme of recollection is the clue in this part of the story: "Ratan would sit on the floor near the postmaster's feet, as memories crowded in upon her". The postmaster wouldn't tell other people about his family because he felt that he was lonely in that village, he would tell it only to this little girl. "... the girl would allude to his people as mother, brother, and sister, as if she had known them all her life. In fact, she had a complete picture of each one of them painted in her little heart."

Connection between the nature and feeling of loneliness:

Rabindranath Tagore explained this idea in these lines:

"the postmaster was ... thinking to himself: "Oh, if only some kindred soul were near—just one loving

human being whom I could hold near my heart!" This was exactly, he went on to think, what that bird was trying to say, and it was the same feeling which the murmuring leaves were striving to express."

Actions:

The decision to teach the girl alphabet is a next important step in building emotional ties between two people: "I was thinking," said the postmaster, "of teaching you to read."

The illness of the postmaster and helping the little girl meant a lot for each of them.

"Ratan ceased to be a little girl. She at once stepped into the post of mother, called in the village doctor, gave the patient his pills at the proper intervals, sat up all night by his pillow, cooked his gruel for him, and every now and then asked: "Are you feeling a little better, Dada?"

Climax:

The postmaster decided to leave this place forever and return home. "... the girl suddenly asked him: "Dada, will you take me to your home?". The postmaster laughed. "What an idea!" said he; but he did not think it necessary to explain to the girl wherein lay the absurdity. That whole night, in her waking and in her dreams, the postmaster's laughing reply haunted her—"What an idea!"

The reader of the story can observe the actions from different perspectives than the protagonists. The postmaster suggestion of giving all his money offended the girl.

He left the village alone and the author concluded:

"After that comes the misery of awakening, and then once again the longing to get back into the maze of the same mistakes."

That's all. The story is impressive and well-written such as many other things which Rabindranath Tagore did.

Here are the links to the text and audio of this short story:

The Postmaster by Rabindranath Tagore

<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/33525...>

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<https://www.theguardian.com/books/aud...>

Ambar says

Tagore has an incredible gift for description even in the simplest of stories and a surprising ability to convey the pathos of his more evocative stories. Would have been a five but for the poor translation.

Autumn Leaves says

" Alas for our foolish human nature!

Its fond mistakes are persistent. The dictates of reason take a long time to assert their own sway. The surest proofs meanwhile are disbelieved. False hope is clung to with all one's might and main, till a day comes

when it has sucked the heart dry and it forcibly breaks through its bonds and departs. "

Thabata says

How cruel and unfeeling must one be to detach himself from another so completely? The Postmaster bares all this in this narrative. A certain passage towards the end reads more or less like this "In the hardening heart of the detached traveler it dawned this fundamental realization: life is full of partings, full of death. So what is the point in retracing one's steps? Which of us can ever know who belongs to whom in this world?" Although the reader may quiver on his resolutions, I believe nurturing hope towards such a character is an exercise on futility. Tagore makes it clear what sort of man we are dealing here. As he captivates a young girl, he also shuns her of any real happiness. She is plain, common, ordinary and poor, with no prospects. In herself, she has an ocean of the deepest feelings, specially towards the undeserving hand of the man who leaves her behind.

Greg says

I read the first thirteen stories and the Introduction.

I was a little disappointed with the writing, a bit flat and the style is best suited to reading a single story now and then, not as a book. Each story is short, so not easy to recall later. I'll come back to the book.

Akanksha Chaudhary says

This book picks up the finest details of human behaviour and amplifies them with use of detailed, visionary literature, within perfectly thought-of stories. The images Rabindranath Tagore creates are at times so intense, you could tear up at any vulnerability. It's a fulfilling ride through twentieth century Calcutta life, and uncovers all of how people feel and behave across their everyday social affairs.

Nazish says

Written in 1891, when he was shooed away by his land lord daddy to take care of some of his estates at the North of Bengal, Tagore while swaying over the waves of the Bengal rivers and canals wrote this short story in his recluse. Tagore's sensitivity to human suffering, particularly the plight of a young girl's heart is the strongest element in the story. Perhaps, the nineteenth century is not such a far off era and the echoes of such tales can still be heard in many insignificant villages of India-Pak-Bangladesh. If anything, Tagore patronizes the right of education for women and just as surprisingly shows men in his stories tossing those rights away carelessly.

Phani says

Tagore was cheesy sometimes, but he wrote with a simple beauty and kindness, telling very human stories.

Sometimes, you really do feel like you are in 19th century Bengal.

A couple of supernatural tales here and there didn't do much for me, and some stories ended abruptly. But there is a beauty to his work that transcended the problems with these elements of his writing. A collection to be read at leisure, to be savoured in big gulps, and not tiny sips (as I was forced to, because of my schedule)

There is also an appendix of Tagore's letters, which really don't add much value to the book.

Selva Subramanian says

Totally brilliant !

Abhishek Kona says

There is so much pain and despair.

Red says

The world is at your doorstep

Apoorva Chitravanshi says

Nobel Prize for a reason.

Nikhil Bhatia says

Absolutely mesmerizing short stories by the great Tagore. Most of the stories have a really sad and gloomy ending but are a fantastic read.
