

2/1/20

class - 8th
Sub - Eng. Reader
Lesson No - 1

(1)

"The Kabuliwallah"

Continue - - - -

Summary

One day the author sees Mini laughing and talking with the Kabuliwallah. He gives almonds and raisins to Mini, for this author pays eight-anna bit and the man accepted the money without doubt. But after some time Kabuliwallah returns it to Mini. Her mother sees this and scolds Mini for this.

One day Kabuliwallah asked Mini that when was she going to the father-in-law's house. After some time he was arrested in some case and put into the jail. When he comes back, he comes to Mini's house and meets Mini's father. Her father tells him that there are ceremonies going on and he (her father) is busy. But Kabuliwallah requests him to meet Mini, because he always see the image of his daughter Parvati in Mini.

He requests Mini's father to call Mini. Mini comes out of the house and meets Kabuliwallah. It was her wedding ceremony. When he saw Mini, he smiled.

P.T.O

and said "little one are you going to your father-in-law's house". Mini could not reply to him as of old, and stood before him with her bride-like face turned down. Then an idea had suddenly come in Kabuliwallah's mind that his daughter too must have grown in this long time.

Marriage process going on but Rahmun sat in the little Calcutta lane. The author took out a bank-note and gave it to Rahmun saying "Go back to your own daughter, Rahmun in your own country and may the happiness of your meeting bring good fortune to my child." For the author the wedding feast was all the more brighter for the thought that in a distant land a long-lost father met again with his only child.

Assignment

1. Write meaning of underlined words.
2. Answer these questions:
 - (i) How does Mini overcome her fear of Kabuliwallah?
 - (ii) What does the author do when he sees Mini with the Kabuliwallah's gifts? What does the Kabuliwallah do?
 - (iii) What does Rahmun mean when he says "father-in-law's house"?
 - (iv) Rahmun was away for eight years because:
 - (a) he went back to Kabul
 - (b) he was arrested in some case.

(c) He was ill. (d) He was annoyed with Mini.

(V) Why does the author let Kabuliwallah meet Mini on her wedding day?

(VI) Kabuliwallah comes to their house everyday;

(a) to talk to Mini who reminds him of his own daughter

(b) to earn some money

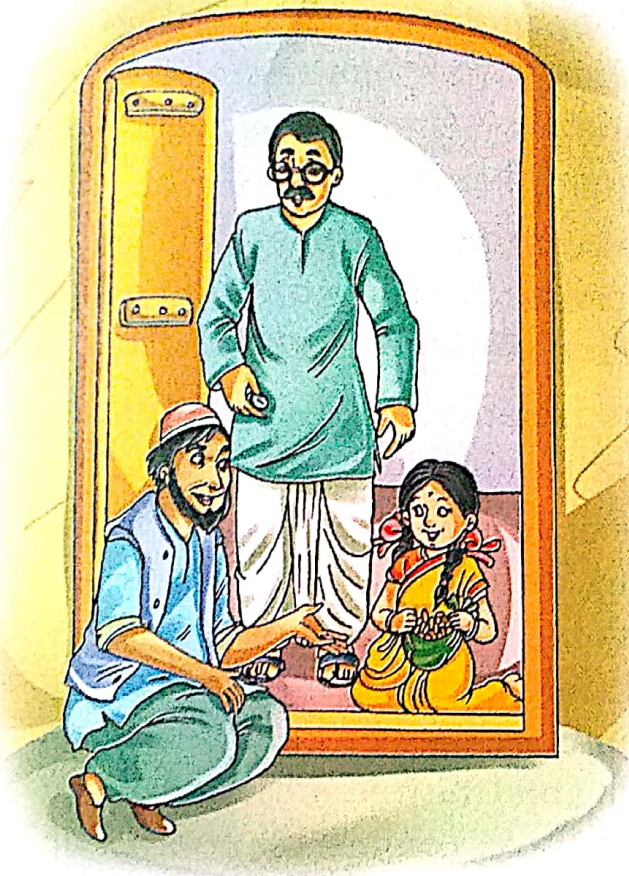
(c) to take revenge

(d) to say goodbye

(VII) Write brief character sketch of Mini.

Note:- Do all work in your Copy/As sheets

One morning, however, not many days later, as I was leaving the house, I was startled to find Mini, seated on a bench near the door, laughing and talking, with the great Kabuliwallah at her feet. In all her life, it appeared; my small



daughter had never found so patient a listener, save her father. And already the corner of her little sari was stuffed with almonds and raisins, the gift of her visitor, "Why did you give her those?" I said, and taking out an eight-anna bit, I handed it to him. The man accepted the money without demur, and slipped it into his pocket.

Alas, on my return an hour later, I found the unfortunate coin had made twice its own worth of trouble! For the Kabuliwallah had given it to Mini, and her mother catching sight of the bright round object, had pounced on the child with, "Where did you get that eight-anna bit?"

"The Kabuliwallah gave it to me," said Mini cheerfully.

"The Kabuliwallah gave it you!" cried her mother much shocked. "Oh, Mini! How could you take it from him?"

I, entering at the moment, saved her from impending disaster, and proceeded to make my own inquiries.

It was not the first or second time, I found, that the two had met. The Kabuliwallah had overcome the child's first terror by a judicious bribery of nuts and almonds, and the two were now great friends.

They had many quaint jokes, which afforded them much amusement. Seated in front of him, looking down on his gigantic frame in all her tiny dignity, Mini would ripple her face with laughter, and begin, "O Kabuliwallah, Kabuliwallah, what have you got in your bag?"

And he would reply, in the nasal accents of the mountaineer, "An elephant!" Not much cause for merriment, perhaps; but how they both enjoyed the witticism! And for me, this child's talk with a grown-up man had always in it something strangely fascinating.

Then the Kabuliwallah, would take his turn, "Well, little one, and when are you going to the father-in-law's house?"

Now most small Bengali maidens have heard long ago about the father-in-law's house; but we, being a little new-fangled, had kept these things from our child, and Mini at this question must have been a trifle bewildered. But she would not show it, and with ready tact replied, "Are you going there?"

Amongst men of the Kabuliwallah's class, however, it is a euphemism for jail, the place where we are well cared for, at no expense to ourselves. "Ah," he would say, shaking his fist at an invisible policeman, "I will thrash my father-in-law!"

Hearing this, and picturing the poor discomfited relative, Mini would go off into peals of laughter, in which her formidable friend would join.

These were autumn mornings, the very time of year when kings of old went forth to conquest; and I, never stirring from my little corner in Calcutta, would let my mind wander over the whole world. At the very name of another country, my heart would go out to it, and at the sight of a foreigner in the streets, I would fall to weaving a network of dreams—the mountains, the glens, and the forests of his distant home, with his cottage in its setting, and the free and independent life of far-away wilds. Perhaps the scenes of travel conjure themselves up before me, and pass and repass in my imagination all the more vividly, because I lead such a vegetable existence, that a call to travel would fall upon me like a thunderbolt. In the presence of this Kabuliwallah, I was immediately transported to the foot of arid mountain peaks, with narrow little defiles twisting in and out amongst their towering heights. I could see the string of camels bearing the merchandise, and the company of turbaned merchants, carrying some of their queer old firearms, and some of their spears, journeying downward towards the plains. I could see—but at some such point Mini's mother would intervene, imploring me to "beware of that man."

I tried to laugh her fear gently away, but then she would turn round on me seriously, and ask me solemn questions.

"Were children never kidnapped?"

"Was it, then, not true that there was slavery in Kabul?"

"Was it so very absurd that this big man should be able to carry off a tiny child?"

I urged that, though not impossible, it was highly improbable. But this was not enough, and her dread persisted. As it was indefinite, however, it did not seem right to forbid the man the house, and the intimacy went on unchecked. Once a year in the middle of January Rahmun, the Kabuliwallah, was in the

habit of returning to his country, and as the time approached he would be very busy, going from house to house collecting his debts.

This year, however, he could always find time to come and see Mini. It would have seemed to an outsider that there was some conspiracy between the two, for when he could not come in the morning, he would appear in the evening. Even to me it was a little startling now and then, in the corner of a dark room, suddenly to surprise this tall, loose-garmented, man; but when Mini would run in smiling, with her, "O! Kabuliwallah! Kabuliwallah!" and the two friends, so far apart in age, would subside into their old laughter and their old jokes, I felt reassured.

One morning, a few days before he had made up his mind to go, I was correcting my proof sheets in my study. It was chilly weather. Through the window the rays of the sun touched my feet, and the slight warmth was very welcome. It was almost eight o'clock, and the early pedestrians were returning home, with their heads covered. All at once, I heard an uproar in the street, and looking out, saw Rahmun being led away bound between two policemen and behind them a crowd of curious boys. There were blood-stains on the clothes of the kabuliwallah, and one of the policemen carried a knife. Hurrying out, I stopped them, and enquired what it all meant. Partly from one, partly from another, I gathered that a certain neighbour had owed the pedlar something for a Rampuri shawl, but had falsely denied having bought it, and that in the course of the quarrel, Rahmun had struck him. Now in the heat of his excitement, the prisoner began calling his enemy all sorts of names, when suddenly in a verandah of my house appeared my little Mini, with her usual exclamation, "O Kabuliwallah! Kabuliwallah!" Rahmun's face lighted up as he turned to her. He had no bag under his arm today, so she could not discuss the elephant with him. She at once therefore proceeded to the next question, "Are you going to the father-in-law's house?" Rahmun laughed and said, "Just where I am going, little one!"

Then seeing that the reply did not amuse the child, he held up his fettered hands. "I would have thrashed that old father-in-law, but my hands are bound!" On a charge of murderous assault, Rahmun was sentenced to some years' imprisonment. Time passed away, and he was not remembered.

Even my light-hearted Mini, I am ashamed to say, forgot her old friend. New companions filled her life. As she grew older, she spent more of her time with

girls. So much time indeed did she spend with them that she came no more, as she used to do, to her father's room. I was scarcely on speaking terms with her. Years had passed away. It was once more autumn and we had made arrangements for our Mini's marriage. It was to take place during the Puja Holidays. With Durga returning to *Kailas*, the light of our home also was to depart to her husband's house, and leave her father's in the shadow.

The morning was bright. After the rains, there was a sense of ablution in the air, and the sun-rays looked like pure gold. So bright were they that they gave a beautiful radiance even to the sordid brick walls of our Calcutta lanes. Since early dawn today the wedding-pipes had been sounding, and at each beat my own heart throbbled. The wail of the tune, *Bhairavi*, seemed to intensify my pain at the approaching separation. My Mini was to be married tonight.

From early morning, noise and bustle had pervaded the house. There was no end to hurry and excitement. I was sitting in my study, looking through the accounts, when someone entered, saluting respectfully, and stood before me. It was Rahmun the Kabuliwallah. At first I did not recognise him. He had no bag, nor the long hair, nor the same vigour that he used to have. But he smiled, and I knew him again.

"When did you come, Rahmun?" I asked him.

"Last evening," he said, "I was released from jail."

The words struck harsh upon my ears. I had never before talked with one who had wounded his fellow, and my heart shrank within itself, when I realised this, for I felt that the day would have been better omened had he not turned up. "There are ceremonies going on," I said, "and I am busy. Could you perhaps come another day?"

At once he turned to go; but as he reached the door he hesitated, and said, "May I not see the little one, sir, for a moment?" It was his belief that Mini was still the same. He had pictured her running to him as she used, calling, "O Kabuliwallah! Kabuliwallah!" He had imagined too that they would laugh and talk together, just as of old. In fact, in memory of former days he had brought, carefully wrapped up in paper, a few almonds and raisins and grapes, obtained somehow from a countryman, for his own little fund was dispersed.

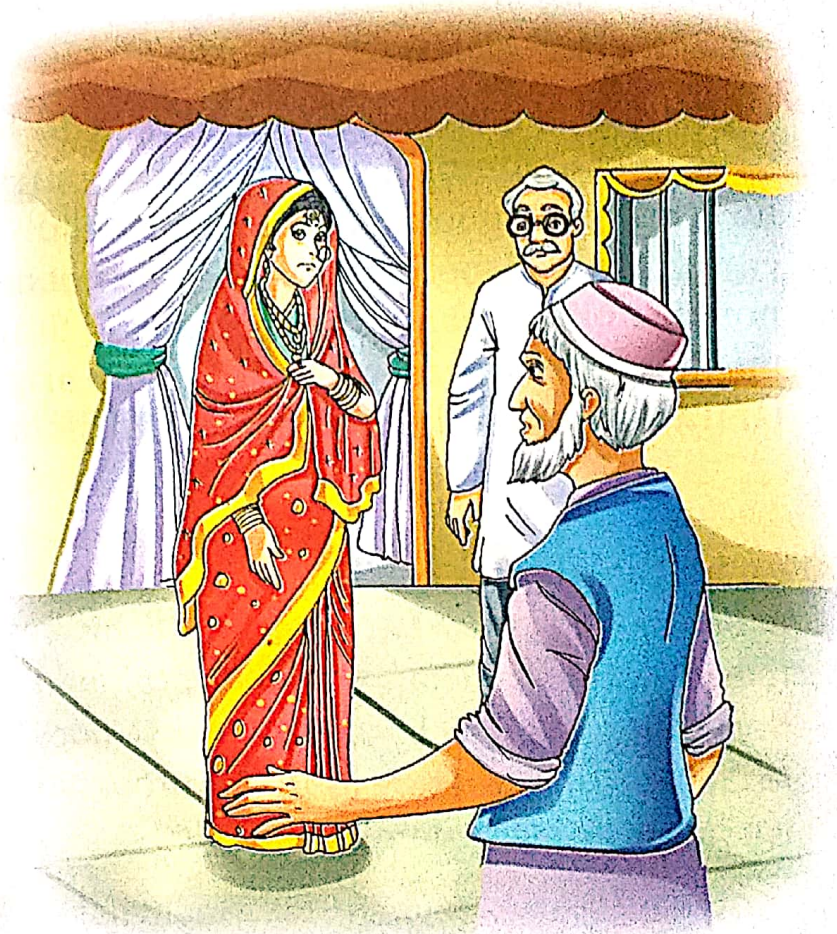
I said again, "There is a ceremony in the house, and you will not be able to see anyone today."

The man's face fell. He looked wistfully at me for a moment, said, "Good morning," and went out. I felt a little sorry, and would have called him back, but I found he was returning of his own accord. He came close up to me holding out his offerings and said, "I brought these few things, sir, for the little one. Will you give them to her?" I took them and was going to pay him, but he caught my hand and said, "You are very kind, sir! Keep me in your recollection. 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 fruits to your child, not to make a profit for myself."

Saying this, he put his hand inside his big loose robe, and brought out a small and dirty piece of paper. With great care he unfolded this, and smoothed it out with both hands on my table. It bore the impression of a little hand. Not a photograph. Not a drawing. The impression of an ink-smear hand laid flat on the paper. This touch of his own little daughter had been always on his heart, as he had come year after year to Calcutta, to sell his wares in the streets.

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 also was a father. That impression of the hand of his little *Parbati* in her distant mountain home reminded me of my own little Mini. I sent for Mini immediately from the inner apartment. Many difficulties were raised, but I would not listen. Clad in the red silk of her wedding-day, with the sandal paste on her forehead, and adorned as a young bride, Mini came, and stood bashfully before me. The kabuliwallah smiled and said, "Little one, are you going to your father-in-law's house?"

But Mini now understood the meaning of the word "father-in-law," and she could not reply to him as of old. She flushed up at the question, and stood before



him with her bride-like face turned down. I remembered the day when the kabuliwallah and my Mini had first met, and I felt sad. When she had gone, Rahmun heaved a deep sigh, and sat down on the floor. The idea had suddenly come to him that his daughter too must have grown in this long time, and that he would have to make friends with her anew. And besides, what might not have happened to her in these eight years?

The marriage-pipes sounded, and the mild autumn sun streamed round us. But Rahmun sat in the little Calcutta lane, and saw before him the barren mountains of Afghanistan.

I took out a bank-note, and gave it to him, saying, "Go back to your own daughter, Rahmun, in your own country, and may the happiness of your meeting bring good fortune to my child!" Having made this present, I had to curtail some of the festivities. I could not have the electric lights I had intended, nor the military band, and the ladies of the house were despondent at it. But to me the wedding feast was all the more brighter for the thought that in a distant land a long-lost father met again with his only child.

—by Rabindranath Tagore