

## Subha by Rabindra Nath Tagore :

The title of the story is given after its central character, 'Subha'. The actual name is **Subhasini** which means 'soft-spoken'.

*“WHEN the girl was given the name of Subhashini, who could have guessed that she would be dumb?”*

Subha is the youngest of the three sisters of Banikantha's family. The three sisters have rhyming names – Seukeshini, Suhasini and Subhasini.

The story is set in a small village called Chandipur, by the riverside in present-day West Bengal. There is beautiful description of the river flowing through the village,

Subha's parents had married their elder two daughters *'with usual costs and difficulty.'* Ofcourse, the social picture of India which remains unaltered till now. So, the theme of the story is about this family grappling with the question of getting their youngest daughter married, who is dumb and hence has a low prospect of finding suitors.

Tagore paints how Subha, though deaf and mute had feelings and emotions that people around her least bothered for. And, the parents' burden of marrying off a deaf and mute girl is above the anxieties and needs of the girl. Subha's large eyes and trembling lips are described as the girl's ability to communicate beyond words. Her mother's abhorrence is written as,

*"To a mother a daughter is a more closely intimate part of herself than a son can be; and a fault in her is a source of personal shame."*

Subha lived on the sidelines, after finishing her chores, she would go to the waterside or be with her two friends – Sarbbashi and Panguli, the two cows. Her loneliness found solace in a friendship with these cows, goats and a kitten. .

Subha lived on the sidelines, after finishing her chores, she would go to the waterside or be with her two friends – Sarbbashi and Panguli, the two cows. Her loneliness found solace in a friendship with these cows, goats and a kitten. I understand that Tagore wanted to show the antipathy of the society, family in particular to persons with a disability while drawing the closeness between Subha and the domestic animals.

Another relationship that the story explores is between Subha and a young boy named Pratap. The boy is idle and spends time by the river by casting his fishing line. Subha usually sits at a distance to him. There is no communication between them. And, Pratap likes the silence as it does not interfere with his fishing. Though, there is never a direct speech on whether there was any affection between the two.

Once the villagers began to talk about the young unmarried girl at Banikantha's home, Subha's father left for a few days. On return, he said, "*We must go to Calcutta*". This was unbearable for Subha, she was agonized to leave her home, her friends – the cows. She wept for Mother earth to keep her there but she had to leave with her family.

In Calcutta, the prospective groom visits with his friend and finds the teary-eyed Subha suitable for marriage. He says, “Not so bad.” After marriage, he was to leave with the bride in the west for work. But, within ten days of marriage, Subha being dumb and mute is disclosed to all. Though, Tagore writes that Subha was not at fault, for she never deceived anyone. And, leaves the reader pondering on what future might behold for Subha – the innocent voiceless village girl.