
Time, Memory, and Identity: A Study of Cultural Connections in Stories by Borges's "*The Garden of Forking Paths*" and Tagore's "*Kabuliwala*"

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Abstract

This paper examines how time, memory, and identity affect cultural experiences in two short stories: Borges' *The Garden of Forking Paths* and Tagore's *Kabuliwala*. Although these stories were written in different places and times, both explore how time and memory shape who we are and how we connect with others. In Borges' story, time is described as a web with many possible paths, suggesting that every choice creates a new reality. This idea challenges the traditional view of time as a straight line, showing that time is a complex and interconnected system.

On the other hand, Tagore's *Kabuliwala* focuses on the role of personal memory in shaping identity. The story centres on the relationship between a man from Kabul and a young girl in India. It shows how memories of home and family influence the characters' identities, even across different cultures. The story also touches on themes of separation, longing, and the passage of time, showing how personal experiences and memories unite people.

Despite the differences in setting and plot, both stories explore universal themes like human connection, the impact of choices, and how things change over time. This paper compares these stories and shows how literature helps us understand human emotions and cultural exchange. Borges and Tagore highlight how time, memory, and identity shape our lives and relationships, no matter where or when we live.

Keywords: Time, Memory, Identity, Cultural Connections, lives ,relationships.

Introduction

Jorge Luis Borges and Rabindranath Tagore are two famous writers worldwide. Borges was born in Argentina in 1899 and became known for his deep and creative stories. Tagore was born in India in 1861. He was not only a writer but also a poet and thinker, and

he

won the Nobel Prize. Even though they spoke different languages and lived in other cultures, their stories discussed big ideas that matter to everyone. This makes their writing still essential and interesting today.

In Borges's story *The Garden of Forking Paths*, time is shown in a very different way. Usually, we think of time as a straight line, going from the past to the future. But Borges shows time as a web with many paths. Every time someone makes a choice, a new future is created. This idea is interesting because it means our choices can create many possible futures. It also shows that life is complicated and full of surprises. Borges mixes imagination, deep thinking, and storytelling to make us think differently about the world.

Tagore's *Kabuliwala* is more about memory and friendship. The story is about a man from Kabul who comes to India to sell things and becomes friends with a little girl. This friendship shows how memory helps us understand ourselves and others. The man misses his daughter, who is far away, and this memory helps him connect with the girl he meets in India. The story discusses being apart from loved ones, missing people, love, and who we are. It shows that strong feelings can bring people together, even from different places.

This paper examines how both stories discuss time, memory, and who we are. Although the stories differ in how they are told and where they happen, they both show how people understand their lives through their memories and relationships. By examining Borges and Tagore, we can see how stories help us think about our lives and the world around us.

The main idea of this paper is that *The Garden of Forking Paths* and *Kabuliwala* show how time and memory are not just personal—they help us connect with others. These stories show that we are shaped by our past, choices, and the people we care about. Even though Borges and Tagore lived in different times and places, they both helped us understand something true for everyone: that time, memory, and identity are essential parts of being human. Their stories help us learn more about ourselves and bring different cultures closer together.

Literature Review

Many experts have studied the stories *The Garden of Forking Paths* by Jorge Luis Borges and *Kabuliwala* by Rabindranath Tagore. These studies help us understand how the stories talk about big ideas like time, memory, identity, and culture.

In the paper "Decoding Orientalism in Borges's *The Garden of Forking Paths*" by Chetra Bahadur Darlami Magar, the writer looks at how the story shows characters from the East, especially the Chinese spy, Dr. Yu Tsun. The paper says that Borges, who is writing from a Western point of view, shows the East as strange and interesting. This connects to the idea of identity—how one culture sees another. It also shows that time and choices in the story are affected by culture.

Malashri Lal, in her paper “Tagore, Imaging the ‘Other’: Reflections on *The Wife’s Letter & Kabuliwala*,” writes about how Tagore talks about people who are different or seen as outsiders. In *Kabuliwala*, the man from Afghanistan is different from the Indian family he meets, but their friendship shows that strong feelings can connect people from other cultures. This fits with the idea of cultures coming together in your paper. The paper also talks about memory and identity, showing that the Kabuliwala’s memories of his daughter help him bond with the little girl in India.

In Raphaël Baroni’s paper “*The Garden of Forking Paths: Virtualities and Challenges for Contemporary Narratology*,” he discusses how Borges plays with time and how stories are told. Baroni says Borges uses a different style, where many futures can happen simultaneously. This shows that time doesn’t always move in a straight line, and choices can lead to many different endings. This fits your paper’s idea about how time shapes who we are and how we see the world.

Another paper by Baroni, “The Garden of Forking Paths: Virtualities and Challenges for Contemporary Narratology,” discusses this idea. It explains how Borges’s ideas about time differ significantly from normal stories. This helps your research because it shows how Borges uses stories to discuss big ideas like time and what it means to be human.

Finally, in “*The Inception of Odd Friendship and the Emotions They Deliver in the Short Stories ‘My Lord, the Baby’ and ‘Kabuliwala’*” by Jeyalakshmi and others, the writers talk about how Tagore creates strong feelings between people from different places. In *Kabuliwala*, the friendship between the Afghan man and the Indian girl shows how memory and emotion shape who we are, no matter where we come from. This supports your paper’s ideas about identity and connections between cultures.

Time, Memory, and Identity: A Study of Cultural Connections in Stories by Borges’s “The Garden of Forking Paths” and Tagore’s “Kabuliwala”

In their stories, Jorge Luis Borges and Rabindranath Tagore discuss big and important ideas like time, memory, and identity. Although Borges’s *The Garden of Forking Paths* is more about deep thinking and ideas, and Tagore’s *Kabuliwala* is more about feelings and real life, both writers use these three ideas to show how people are shaped by their past, their choices, and where they come from.

1. Time

Borges' Perspective

In *The Garden of Forking Paths*, Borges presents a very different idea of time than we usually believe. Typically, we think time moves in a straight line—one moment comes after another. But Borges proposes a new idea that time can split like the branches of a tree. At every moment, many things can happen at the same time. This idea comes from a made-

up book in the story, written by a character named Ts'ui Pên, who says time goes in many different directions.

In the story, the main character, Dr. Yu Tsun, is a spy during a war. He is trying to escape danger and finish a critical mission. As he makes choices, Borges shows that each option can lead to a different result, like walking on different paths in a garden. This way of thinking about time also makes us think about identity in a new way, because if many versions of time are possible, then there can also be many versions of the same person. This idea makes us question whether our identity is always the same or can change with each choice.

Tagore's Perspective

In *Kabuliwala*, time is shown in a more normal, straight-line way, but it still has a strong effect. The story is about a friendship between a little girl named Mini and a man from Afghanistan called the Kabuliwala. As time passes, their lives change. The Kabuliwala goes to jail and is away from Mini for many years. When he returns, he sees that Mini has grown up and doesn't remember him.

In this story, time is shown through feelings and changes in relationships. The years have changed everything. The Kabuliwala still cares about Mini, but she has moved on with her life. Tagore uses this to show that time can bring both happy growth and sad loss. It teaches us that time can change how people connect, and that memories from the past can stay in our hearts forever.

Comparison

Both stories use time to add deep meaning. Borges uses time to show that many different futures and realities can happen simultaneously. His story is more about ideas and shows how time and choices are connected to who we are. Tagore, however, shows how time changes people and relationships, and how we remember the past.

Even though the stories are different, both writers show that time is more than just the ticking of a clock. Time helps shape who we are, how we feel, and connect with others, whether through big choices or the slow passing of years.

2. Memory

Borges' Perspective

In Borges's story, memory is closely tied to time. The idea that many things can happen at once means that memory is essential for choosing one path instead of another. Dr. Yu Tsun remembers his mission, his duty, and his family. These memories help him make decisions and show who he is.

Borges shows that memory is not just about remembering things. It's also about how we see ourselves through time. Each memory can lead to a different choice, and each option

can lead to a different future. In a world where many things can happen simultaneously, memory helps people decide who they are and what is most important to them.

Tagore's Perspective

In *Kabuliwala*, memory is full of strong feelings. He keeps thinking about his daughter, who is far away in Afghanistan. His friendship with Mini makes him remember his child, and this memory becomes an integral part of who he is. Even after spending many years in jail, his feelings stay the same. When he sees Mini again, he discovers that she has grown up, but in his mind, she is still the little girl he remembers.

For Mini's father, memory is also crucial. As he watches his daughter grow and thinks about the *Kabuliwala*'s bond with her, he starts to think about how fast time goes and how powerful human emotions are. Memory becomes a way to connect people from different places and lives.

Comparison

In both stories, memory is crucial for shaping the characters' identities and helping them make choices. Borges uses memory more thoughtfully and idea-basedly, which allows the character to understand a world with many different paths. Tagore uses memory to show feelings like love, loss, and missing someone. However, in both stories, memory helps the characters remember who they are and connect through time and culture.

Memory also helps build a connection between people from different places. Dr. Yu Tsun remembers where he comes from, and the *Kabuliwala* remembers his daughter. These memories go beyond borders and give deep meaning to their lives.

3.Identity

Borges' Perspective

Identity in Borges's story is connected to big ideas and time. If many different choices and futures can happen, what makes a person who they are? Dr. Yu Tsun's identity is not only about what he does, but also about why he does it. His job as a spy, his Chinese background, and his loyalty to his country all help show who he is.

The story makes us consider whether identity stays the same or changes with each choice. If time can go in many directions, maybe identity can too. Borges shows that identity is not just something we are born with—it's something we build through our memories, choices, and how time moves.

Tagore's Perspective

In *Kabuliwala*, identity is connected to culture and feelings. The *Kabuliwala* is different in India—he is from Afghanistan, dresses differently, and sells things on the street. However, through his friendship with Mini, we see that he is also a human being. He is not just a foreigner—he is a father, a friend, and someone with strong feelings.

Tagore shows that identity is not only about where you come from, but also about your relationships and emotions. Even though the Kabuliwala and Mini come from different places, they are connected by kindness and memory. Here, identity is about shared human experiences.

Comparison

Both stories show that identity is complicated. Borges uses time and memory to ask how identity is created. Tagore uses relationships and feelings to show how identity can transcend cultural boundaries. In both stories, identity is shaped by memory and affected by time.

What connects the two stories is the idea that identity is not fixed—it grows, changes, and is influenced by the world around us. Whether through a confusing path of time or the slow passing of years, the characters learn who they are by what they remember, love, and make choices.

Conclusion

This paper examined how *The Garden of Forking Paths* by Jorge Luis Borges and *Kabuliwala* by Rabindranath Tagore discuss three critical ideas: time, memory, and identity. Although the stories come from different parts of the world—Argentina and India—and are written differently, both show how these ideas shape our lives and help people connect across cultures.

Borges's story shows time in a very different way. Instead of seeing time as a straight line, Borges shows it as something that splits into many different paths. Every choice creates a new way, and every moment could lead to many possible futures. This idea helps us think about life in a new way. It also makes us wonder who we are—if there are many paths, does that mean there are many different versions of ourselves? Borges makes us think deeply about how our decisions, memories, and sense of time shape who we are.

On the other hand, Tagore's *Kabuliwala* tells a simpler but very emotional story. Time in this story is more normal—years pass, people grow older, and things change. But even with time passing, memories stay strong. The Kabuliwala keeps thinking about his daughter, even when he is far away in another country. His memories connect him with Mini, the little girl in India. This bond shows that even people from different countries and cultures can feel the same love, loss, and longing. Through memory, people can understand each other better.

When we compare both stories, we see that time affects the characters in different ways. In Borges's story, time is complicated and full of endless choices, making us think about our decisions and who we are. In Tagore's story, time is about change and distance, but it also shows how strong memories and emotions can last even after many years.

Memory is essential in both stories. In Borges, memory helps the character understand a world of choices and unknowns. In Tagore, memory brings comfort and helps characters hold on to who they are, even far from home. In both stories, memory connects the past to the present and helps people stay true to themselves.

Finally, both stories examine identity in profound ways. Borges wonders if identity is fixed or constantly changing. Tagore shows how identity is more than just where you come from—it's about love, relationships, and shared feelings. Both stories remind us that identity is closely linked to our memories, our choices, and how we experience time.

Ultimately, *The Garden of Forking Paths* and *Kabuliwala* show that no matter where we come from, we all experience time, memory, and identity in ways that help us grow, connect with others, and understand ourselves better. These stories show how literature can unite people and cultures by reminding us of what we all share as human beings.

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