

Amelioration through Altruism and Encouragement: An Inadequate Virtue of Personal – A Representation of Manju Kapur's *Brothers*

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Abstract: *This paper explores the humanity represented in the novel of Manju Kapur and the altruistic sense in real life. In the day-to-day busy life, people are working round the clock for their family's development. In this condition many forget to serve others or think about the life of poor, abandoned people in the world. Leading a machine life will not give any satisfaction in the later part of our life. That satisfaction will be gained through the good deeds we did for others in the past. This paper is about the necessity of altruistic nature of each personal as portrayed in Manju Kapur's novel *Brothers*. It shows the result of showing kindness towards a person. Except a few people, others forgot this quality. Humanity does not build relationship alone between two persons. It creates a strong bond, oneness, peace and harmony in their minds through mutual love and understanding.*

Keywords: Altruism, Amelioration, Encouragement, Faith, Generosity, Humanity

1. INTRODUCTION

We live in a world filled with a lot of living things such as animals, plants, insects, etc. God has given different features for each and every life. Animals, birds, plants, insects live in its habitation with its blessed life. We as humans play a dominant role in this earth. Though we all come under one category as humans, there are many things which divide us. Some of them are language, lifestyle, caste, religion, sex, region, class, and so on. Even if there are such external factors that divide people, there are some internal factors which connect them. Love, kind, desire, passion, hatred, honesty, sympathy, courage, generosity – all these innate characters show human nature, the common quality of humans. Every individual has these qualities and expose it when appropriate time comes.

2. ALTRUISM

The word 'altruism' refers to the highest human value, called humanity. The altruistic behaviour is showing kind, love, mercy, and sympathy towards everyone. This behaviour is very essential in the amelioration of human life. People's status and lifestyle differ based on the external factors. Only birth and death is common to all. But the life we live in between varies a lot. We toil in our day-to-day life to lead a good and happy life. Many people think that earning alone is enough to lead a pleasant life. But the truth is, apart from the every individual needs a few inner good qualities are required for 'their' happiness and 'others' too. One such quality is humanity. Human cannot be a human when he lacks in humanity.

As per the old saying, charity begins at home. In this busy world, many people are running out of time even to take care of their family members, especially elders. They are longing for love and care. It is good to strive for the good life, but at the same time they should not forget morality and good values in their life. They are induced to do good things or even help others when they hear good speech about humanity or read something about it. Writings play a major role in inculcating so many good values in the minds of the people.

The glaring cause of their success as novelist lies in the fact that they are born story-teller and they are endowed with the gift of delving deep into the workings of human mind and heart with sympathy, sensitivity and understanding. But there is also the common element of conflict of values and fighting between different ways of life. (Rajput, 110-111)

Many Indian women writers are dealing with human mind and heart. Each and every work of any author brings out a good moral and leads the readers to learn something for their life. That value may be new to the readers or like a reminder to them to follow it. One such value is humanity which is very essential to be attained by everyone in the world.

3. MANJU KAPUR'S "BROTHERS"

The present study examines the concept of humanity as portrayed by the well-known Indian novelist Manju Kapur in her novel '*Brothers*'. '*Brothers*' is the latest novel of Manju Kapur. Like her other novels, in this novel also the author has depicted the life of common people in her own style. Apart from that there is a humanitarian touch in the portrayal of the life of Virpal and Gaur Sahib. Manju Kapur's novels deal with the Indian society and culture. The critic Yernani says,

She portrays the lives and manners of the middle/upper middle class Indian families. ... Her characters are drawn from life and engage the attention of the reader who could probably identify with the sensibilities of the characters. ... There is also an underlying analysis of social, political and economic issues as seen through the eyes of the characters. (142-143)

Timely help is the best help. We shall think twice before doing any work. But if we think a lot to help a person in his need, we will lose our virtue. The most celebrated Tamil poet Thiruvalluvar's book '*Thirukkura*', the book of ethics and morality, has chapters on kindness, charity, etc. This shows the importance of morality that every human has to acquire. We shall come across this in Manju Kapur's novel '*Brothers*' through the character Gaur Sahib and Virpal. Apart from caste, religion and all other external barriers, the bond between the two characters grows stronger. Gaur Sahib's humanistic attitude brings amelioration in the life of Virpal. Manju Kapur has presented the relationship between these two characters gently in the novel.

4. GAUR SAHIB'S ALTRUISM

Manju Kapur's novel, '*Brothers*' discusses the life of two generation of brothers. The first generation brothers are Virpal and Dhanpal, and the second generation siblings are Himmat and Mangal. Each one's life has been clearly picturised by the author. Among them Virpal's life and his relationship with Gaur Sahib is quite interesting. Virpal is the elder brother of Dhanpal. They belong to Lalbanga, Ajmer. Lalbanga is a village in which people are divided by their caste. Virpal is a Gaina.

Virpal's usual village life takes a turn when a quarrel arises between the two community people in which Virpal involves. Virpal is also waiting for a perfect time to join in Gandhiji's freedom struggle movement from the moment he heard about Gandhiji's march to Dandi. Virpal wants to go to Ajmer and join in the struggle. He decides to leave without informing anyone in the family. He runs out from the

village during dawn. He is only twelve years old when he takes this decision. His courage makes him to reach Ajmer without anybody's help. As McCarthy says,

At the level of choice, magic enters one's life – magic that shows us the Power of the Possible and *our true magnificence*. It takes courage to step that far. To let yourself see that *light in yourself*. Not many have that level of courage. Be the one who does. (62)

Virpal imagines a lot about freedom struggle and his role to be taken in that. He thinks that only his brother Dhanpal will miss him than anyone and he too thinks only about him. On the third day, he reaches Ajmer, a strange place which he sees in his life for the first time. The place is strange to him because he has not even heard much about it.

When a stranger comes to our place, not everyone will be willing to help him voluntarily. If a person helps so, he is a man of humanity. One such man is Gaur sahib. Gaur Sahib is introduced as a strict Brahmin, who expects a social change. His aspect of social change is opposite to Gandhiji's view.

Besides Gandhiji was always going on about Muslims, toilets, scavenging, Harijans, temple entries. Gaur Sahib shudders at this horrible mixing of castes. Social changes may be inevitable, but cleaning toilets should be left to those born to do it. (B, 60)

To Gaur Sahib mixing of castes is horrible. His concept about caste would make him to avoid Virpal, whom he cannot think as Brahmin. But action towards the sleeping boy on the pavement reveals his real character. He wonders, whether the day will come when no poor sleeps on pavements. Juxtapose to his thought about caste discrimination, he takes the boy to his house without asking anything about him. He unconsciously expresses his kind nature at this moment. In the author's words, "Gaur Sahib's wife is used to her husband's eccentricities, but he has never picked up waifs from the street before." (61)

For the first time, Virpal is in the house of a Brahmin. Gaur Sahib's wife has little hesitation to consider the small boy. Still the couple has sympathy for the boy and asks him to stay at their home. They provide him food. The couple enquired about Virpal. Virpal reveals his desire to join in Gandhiji's movement. But Gaur Sahib cannot allow him to join in the freedom struggle, because he is too young to take part. Instead he advises the boy and plans to give him a proper dwelling place. He wants to give him education too. Virpal is ready to do any work for his living.

As told earlier not all the people have that sympathy or kindness for others. The priests in the temple hesitate to give him shelter. To them the care of such destitute is in the hands of God. But they accept him immediately when Gaur Sahib says, "The boy would stay in one of the outhouses, cook his own food and run errands for the priest when he came back from school." (63) They are happy to have a free servant. Most people do their help and expect something in return from others. This is not a real help. True help is doing something for others without expecting anything. The boy Virpal wonders, "...how different Brahmins could be from each other."(64) He dislikes living in the place allotted for him.

4.1. Gaur Sahib's Instigation:

Virpal's life gets worse in the following days. He keeps on working after his school time. The priest's wife suspects him while he purchases something and weighs everything. Virpal has never faced an insult like this. Every day he thinks of escaping from that place. But his respect for Gaur Sahib stops him. So he continues to bear this insult and beatings just for Gaur Sahib who took care of him. The bond between Gaur Sahib and Virpal is strong now. Gaur Sahib becomes the well-wisher

of Virpal and Virpal bears everything for Gaur Sahib. Gaur sahib is also being a Guru to Virpal and teaches him about our country, society, and people's literacy. He also encourages him to help his village in future as an educated person. The bond between the two grows stronger. McCarthy says, "Compromise in a relationship is a very positive thing but only if you haven't sacrificed your values for it. ... And not as a "give and take" either. Give and take doesn't exist in a good relationship. Only "give and give" does." (67)

They both compromise each other. Gaur Sahib takes care of Virpal like his son. Virpal fails for the second time in the eighth class exam. Gaur Sahib talks with him politely to know his mind. There lies his concern for the boy. It is very clear that Virpal has no interest in studies and wants to become a patriot. Gaur Sahib advises him by saying that, "First stand on your own feet. After that what you do is your responsibility." (67) He consoles Virpal when he says he wants to go back to his village. He asks him to do some great work before returning.

Gaur Sahib finds a job for the boy in a nearby shop. This job is easy for Virpal. With his first earning he presents a box of sweets to Gaur Sahib and gets his blessings. After three years, for the first time Virpal sends money to his family. A year later, Gaur Sahib becomes ill. Virpal cannot see him suffering with chest pain. He takes care of him well. Every day he visits him and serves him. To Virpal,

Nothing in the city would have any meaning if this man removed his hand from his head. His desire to offer civil disobedience vanished. Let Gaur Sahib live, he would serve him for the rest of his life, serve him as Hanuman had served Lord Ram. (B, 68)

4.2. Faith

Apart from blood and caste, a pure bond between Gaur Sahib and Virpal is formed. Soon Gaur Sahib dies. The world is now nothing for Virpal. He cries for his care taker. Gaur Sahib's wife gives fifty rupees to Virpal saying, "So much caring, such generosity, where will you find? He left this for you.... Now you will have to be independent. He always said you had some fire in you. Prove him right." (69) Gaur Sahib was being the stepping stone in the life of Virpal. He decides to use this chance to prove others who he really is. He understands the hope Gaur Sahib had on him.

Virpal finds a suitable place to begin a shop. He works hard to shine in his life with the blessings of his Lord Gaur Sahib. His faith in Gaur Sahib must also be considered. Virpal believed Sahib than anyone in Ajmer. He changed his view about life only through the faith he had in Gaur Sahib. He believed each and every word of him. He accepted it whole heartedly and that brings a vast change in his life. Norman Vincent Peale says,

...the gift of faith is the meaningful gift in the world, and you can give it to anyone, anytime. Even if your gift of faith is presented just as a small seed, it has the potential to grow and become the gift of a lifetime. (154)

Manju Kapur's portrayal of the life of Virpal differs from other characters in the novel. She leaves a touch of humanity in depth in her character Gaur Sahib too. Many young boys and girls are left abandoned in the world for many reasons. The fault may be on their part or on the family or the society. Their abandoned life can be changed into a fruitful one unless a right person gives his/her hand to lift them up. A person needs a big heart to give life to others. We can give money, clothes, old things, etc, to the one who is in need of that. But providing them food, shelter,

good guidance, motivation to achieve in their life is not an easy one. It needs a heart with love and concern and humanitarian attitude to care that pitiful soul.

Manju Kapur has presented the common problem exists in the real life. The way she handled the situation in the story shows that social realism present in the novel. About Manju Kapur, Pramila comments,

She talks about reality, the roots of Indian psyche, family-centred life, generation gap and all real life situations faced by common man. Hence it is observed that she revives the traditional linear narrative fashion and adheres to social realism rather than magic realism. (78)

In the novel '*Brothers*' Gaur Sahib is a minor character, but he becomes the sole reason for the growth of Virpal in his life. If Gaur Sahib has offered him only food and shelter for a week or a month or a year, Virpal might have spoiled his youth by spending time in some other things or he might have run away to another place as he did earlier. Gaur Sahib has guided him and motivated him in all ways. He finds the best in him, and his interest. He has moulded the boy in the way he can stand in his own leg. Even before knowing fully about the boy and his family, he takes him to his house and nourishes him. That real care makes the boy to forget his pain and go in the path Gaur Sahib has showed him. Gaur Sahib's humanitarian attitude gives life to a boy.

5. VIRPAL'S ALTRUISM

Like Gaur Sahib, Virpal shows his altruistic nature like kindness and sense of humanity to his nephew. In this world, even siblings relationships too become nothing when they are grown. In their childhood it seems like they will never be apart at any cost and will be together till their last breath. Apart from their childish fights the siblings have strong bond at their childhood. But that bond vanishes completely in their later life. Many people are leading nuclear family because of various reasons like job, children's studies, good surrounding and also misunderstandings in the family. Children brought up in this situation will not have any tendency of sacrificing, love, humanity, kindness, integrity with others, etc.

The present generation does not possess any of the above qualities. But the earlier generation people lived in joint family. They had many good qualities that the present generation lacks. Virpal and Dhanpal were brought up in a village surrounding in his childhood where they spent their days with friends, family, brother, sisters and other relatives. When Virpal reached Ajmer, he was cared by the humanitarian person Gaur Sahib. So Virpal and also Dhanpal knew very well about showing care on others. They did not fail to show the love towards each other till the end of their life.

In his later life Virpal loses his only son in an accident. Dhanpal leaves his own son to Virpal. Virpal pushes Himmat towards his uncle's feet. 'Your son Bhai. He will look after you, care for you, yours for life.' (111) It needs a big heart to offer one's own son to someone. Here Dhanpal has shared his valuable wealth with his brother. Virpal too takes care of him as his own son. This is not a common thing nowadays. Even this love and humanity between brothers are very precious that many people are unaware now.

Virpal brings up Himmat and gives him good education. Only through Virpal, Himmat learns life and gets so many exposures in his life. He gets quality education, ambition in life, has connection with political persons, and also becomes MLA. If Virpal would have said that he could not take care of Himmat in the beginning, Himmat might spoiled his life being a fool in the village. Virpal is very affectionate that he is ready give good life for his brother's second son Mangal.

Manju Kapur has presented the value of humanity and the necessity of tenderness in every one. Character of a person will speak about him. Apart from relationship Virpal and Dhanpal in the story proved that they are humans.

6. CONCLUSION

If humanity prevails everywhere, people's life will also be good. The relationship among the people will be strong and thus can avoid many problems in the society. Humanity is the moral value one must acquire. The sympathy and compassion one show on the others will change a person's life and through him some others life. Being a selfish cannot be useful at any cause. Treating others with concern and love will do miracle. This is revealed through the characters Gaur Sahib and Virpal. The taste of humanity cannot be explained but it can be felt personally.

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