
A story of dormant kindness and love: Explicating the metamorphosis of the brute to the benevolent in K A Abbas' "*Sparrows*"

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Paper Received on 03-09-2023, Accepted on 09-10-2023,
Published on 10-10-23; DOI: 10.36993/ RJOE.2023.8.4.34

Abstract

"Sparrows" by Khwaja Ahmad Abbas is about Rahim Khan, a fifty-year-old man who detaches himself from the society due to the disappointments he had gone through in his young life. He vents out his frustration in the form of anger at the society and his own family. Everyone was scared of his anger and ignored him. So, he was socially secluded. Though Rahim Khan is depicted as a cruel man in the beginning, everyone is deeply moved by his love towards the sparrows at the end. He craves for love and solace and the sparrows in his hut were the only beings he expressed his love and tenderness.

Keywords: kindness, love, brute, tenderness.

K.A. Abbas is a celebrated Indian short story writer. His stories reflect the feelings of the deprived and the poor. His short story "Sparrows" tells us the importance of love and affection to the fellow human beings. Through this story, the author tells us about the dormant kindness and love in man and also expounds the metamorphosis of the brute to the benevolent through the character of Rahim Kan. All that is needed is a sense of sympathy and sincere love expressed towards worldly creatures.

K. A. Abbas is a master at writing short stories, presumably influenced by O. Henry. His work presents a different picture of India and is mainly based on humanity. Reading K.A. Abbas means noticing the old culture of India. "Sparrows" is a wonderful story where nature teaches man to behave himself. What human beings could not establish, nature's minute creation a happy sparrow-couple could effortlessly achieve. This story is remarkable not just for its narration but also for its characterization of the infra human, yet ultra humane sparrows. This is a very moving story of sorrow

and disappointment of an allegedly hard-hearted man. His transformation from utter cruelty to one of endearing love and compassion forms the life line of the narrative. Kwaja Ahmed Abbas is an eminent and distinguished short story writer, novelist and journalist. He attained great fame as a good storyteller with two volumes of stories, namely Rice and Other Stones and One Thousand Nights on a Bed Stone. His stories warmly reflect the feelings of the down trodden and the poor.

Rahim Khan is returning from the field after the day's work. When the other people see him, they start talking about him. Nanha tells how cruelly he hit Ramoo's child for throwing pebbles at his oxen and Ramnath recalls the incident when Rahim nearly killed his mare for running into his field. He found it unnecessary to reveal that the act was done purposefully to irk Rahim.

On reaching home he finds out that his wife has gone, perhaps forever. He vents out his anger on a cat and grumbles for his wife's absence, whose presence was disliked by him equally. He recalls his earlier life and all the athletic skills he had and much he wanted to join the circus, he remembers Radha, the girl he wanted to marry. He rewinds all the events of his marriage and how proud his father was assuming that Rahim had obeyed him. He recalls the wedding night when he had decided to avenge himself for the destruction of his dreams. Since

then he has become a ruthless man who quarrelled with the neighbourhood, who beat his wife, and who was responsible for the abandonment of his sons. The next day, while smoking hookah, he revealed some cobwebs in the corner of his hut and decided to tidy the house. While doing so he discovers a nest with two sparrows housing in it. His first instinct was to wreck it in one go but then there was something within him that didn't allow him to do so. He was intrigued and on exploring further he found two red-flesh baby sparrows laying inside. The sparrow splayed their charm on Rahim and he not only allowed them to reside in that corner of his house but also took care of them. He repaired the ceiling of the hut to prevent rain from entering and when he knew he was dying the only thing he worried about was, not his wife, not his sons but the sparrows.

"O Bundu, O Nuru, who will feed you when I am gone?"

The neighbours complaining about his beating the kids and almost killing the mare, the elderly woman who's scared to speak to Rahim, the kids run away the moment they see him - portrays Rahim in a bad light. However, the backstory is different. It is a character-driven plot where through the characters that the readers understand the internal and external conflict of the story. Sparrows did too when Nanha gave his judgment on the cruel nature of Rahim and very casually ignored the

fact that it was Ramoo's kids who were throwing pebbles at the oxen. Another instance follows when Ramnath, with aid of half-truth, throws a bad light on Rahim.

There's always a backstory in whatever a person says or in whichever way they appear. Rahim was not only separated from his beloved Radha but was also forced into a marriage with his current wife. His violence made his wife look nothing more than furniture, an important one though. The neighbours knew nothing about this backstory and irked him now and then for their entertainment. They fabricated the events to which people like the grey-haired Patel believed readily. After all, society is divided among three parts, the dominating, the dominated, and the credulous lot in between. Society has set its norms and the people are compelled to follow them; the ones who don't are treated differently. It is a matter of dishonor if a girl belonging to one community marries a man coming from another, more so in the case of Hindus and Muslims. Based on his skills and personality, Rahim did qualify to become a perfect husband for a girl like Radha if only society allowed it. Rahim's parents were also a part of the society who, to preserve their honor, allowed Rahim neither to join the circus nor let him marry the girl he chose for himself. As the circus left the village without his company and Radha was married away to a pot-bellied banya, Rahim saw his life's

dreams shattering. After agreeing to the Kazi's formal questions, he does to his wife what a butcher does to a sheep. There on, society neither came to rescue the poor woman from Rahim's beatings nor did it interfere with his life the way it earlier did. Notwithstanding, it did peak from the crack of the door and on overhearing him speaking to sparrows, concluded him as a madman and called for his wife. While Rahim was sure his wife would not return ever, in the end, she does, not alone but with the sons. The society, which Rahim and Radha belonged to, is the same society that Rahim's wife and sons belonged to. It can be said that responsibility drove them to Rahim's hut; love was, at least, not the force.

The bird Sparrow keeps appearing in Literature and always with meaning. Some say it symbolizes caution, joy, creativity, and wisdom while others say it signifies love and kindness. However, the existence of these in Rahim's life is highly questionable. The sparrows appear in the latter half of the story and take away the title.

Through "Sparrows" the author, in no way, intends to tell the readers that they have the liberty to treat others miserably because they have been through the same. His point is to tell the readers that there's kindness in every soul, for some it is on the surface for others it is buried deep. As an individual, we need to find the light in

ourselves and be as less a judge as possible. Six years earlier his elder son Bundu ran away from home after an unusually severe beating. Three years later his second son Nuru also joined his brother. One day when here turned home from the fields an old lady from the neighbourhood told him that his wife had gone to her brother's place and that she would be back shortly. Rahim Khan knew that she would never come back. He suddenly began to feel lonely not because he loved his family but because he had no one now to display his anger. Nobody was there to wash his feet; to give him food and other eatables. His wife's absence made him feel uncomfortable so though a piece of furniture had been removed from his house. He called them as Bundu and Nuru after his two sons. There was now total transformation in his temperament and outlook on life. He even stopped shouting at the children. As stated by James S. House about social isolation, Rahim Khan's isolation had an adverse effect on his health.

The short story clearly captures the emotions of an isolated man and how denial of love and solace ruins his life. K.A.Abbas has woven this story with a powerful meaning that love and

consolation which is not given on time definitely goes squander. Rahim Khan notices their courage and their tenderness for one another. He is greatly moved by their gestures and virtually dies in an effort to save them from the angle of bringing out the evil effects of orthodoxy in matters of profession and marriage also the story has great social relevance.

Though nobody can deny the immense role of parents in shaping the lives of the younger people it is unwise to deny them little freedom they hope to exercise as they begin to understand their inner desires. He held them all responsible for the frustration of his life's dreams. The young man who would have been a responsible son, husband, and father turned into a rogue feared by everybody. But the brute turns out to be a benevolent being with the interference of sparrows. This story as such gives a wonderful message to the humanity.

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How to cite this article?

Dr.Ohm Shrivastava “ A story of dormant kindness and love: Explicating the metamorphosis of the brute to the benevolent in K A Abbas' "Sparrows"” Research Journal Of English (RJOE)8(4), PP:31-34,2023, DOI:10.36993/RJOE.2023.8.4.34