

Sacrificion of Beloved Things for the Sake of True and Pure Love with the Special Reference of the Gift of Magi by O. Henry

Hassin ur Rehman¹

Muhammad Arsalan Siddique²

Suhail Ahmed³

Shahzad ur Rehman⁴

^{1,2,3,4}M.Phil Scholars, Department of English,
Benazir Bhutto Shaheed University Lyari, Karachi, Pakistan.

Abstract: *O. Henry was an American short story writer. He received fame from his short stories around the world. One of his famous stories is 'The Gift of Magi'. He includes many things in this story such as working class characters, real life people, sacrifice of love, devotion and incredulous ending. In this story, Husband and wife (Jim and Della) have valuable belongings. They sacrifice their belongings for sake of expressing true and pure love on Christmas' Eve, ultimately their actions have a sharp similarity with Magi, and therefore they also come to be called Magi. Exchanging gifts are very common around the world on special occasions, these gifts show generosity and care for one another. It is obvious that generosity comes with act of sacrifice. The sacrifice becomes more valuable when a person is poor or at a despair situation and he sacrifices his only valuable thing which he has. The researcher will analyze various research articles as well as the content of the story to find out the theme of sacrifice for the sake of pure love.*

Key Word: *Sacrificion¹, Incredulous ending², belongings³, Magi⁴, pure love⁵*

Introduction

O. Henry (1862 - 1910) was born under the name *William Sydney Porter* in North Carolina. He was American short story writer. His short stories are very famous around the world. The Gift of the Magi (1906)" is one of his most famous stories. The story has been anthologized numerous times since then. The story includes several elements for which O. Henry is broadly known, including poor, working class characters, realistic features, and an astonished ending as well as sacrifice of love. The main motive known for its lasting appeal is its confirmation of generous love. Such love is like the gifts given by the wise men, called Magi, who brought gold and myrrh to the newborn Jesus.

It is usual all around the world to exchange gifts on special occasions such as birthdays, Christmas, Eid, weddings or even on recovery from poor health. The purpose of these gifts is to strengthen the relationship with one another. People also exchange gifts when someone has fallen in love in order to increase love, gifts are very helpful in this regard. But when people sacrifice their beloved things for the sake of true love then the love takes the shape of divine and holiness.

When poor people sacrifice their only things in that case this becomes extreme love or true love. Sacrificion of something for love shows pure affection and devotion. Jim and Della they are the couple and they sacrifice their most valuable things for the sake of each other's love. They were supposed as Magi due to this sacrificion.

The story starts with Delia and Jim who are a young married couple with very little money. A day before Christmas, Delia calculates the money which she has conscientiously been putting aside for months. She is disappointed to discover that she has 1.87\$, barely sufficient to purchase a gift. Della wants to purchase a gift for Jim at any cost. She stares into a mirror and then the idea comes in her mind. She trades her hair to Mme. Sofronie for twenty dollars. After getting money, she goes shop to shop to find the gift for Jim and finally she finds a gold chain for Jim's watch. Della prepares herself to look presentable and makes dinner. When Jim enters and looks at her and doesn't say anything. His face shows no irritation, shock or displeasure. Della goes near him and starts explaining that she sells her hair to buy a gift for him. Jim takes something out from his pocket. She unwraps it and uncovers a set of combs for her hair. She now comprehends why Jim was so astonished. Delia offers Jim his gift, but he does not take out his watch to put to the chain because he has already sold the watch to buy a gift for Della.

Review of Literature

In Frederick Douglass's Narrative and Ernest Gaines's A Lesson Before Dying, gifts set up knots between separated black men and their society. (Gibson. P. 31) According to Gibson, gifts are the only source which establishes relationship between men and community. Gifts make a bridge between people and society. Jim and Della sell their most esteemed possessions; a pocket watch and long, smooth hair, respectively. So they can buy objects which they enthusiastically and sacrificially offer, expecting nothing in return. Both Jim and Della present graciously to give pleasure to each other, but they sarcastically give items; a comb and a watch to harmonize the belongings that the other had sold.

O. Henry proposes that the worth of gifts is indefinable. In this example, gift exchange turns into ritualistic and spiritual as well as mutual sacrifice and generosity. (Gibson. P. 47) Gifts exchange often makes people close who love each other a lot. This love becomes divine. Those who sacrifice things for the sake of love always find a path of the true love and devotion. Generosity is a key theme in Gift of the Magi. Obviously, any story that spotlights on gift-giving as its main plot-line must compact with the notion of generosity. (Bilal. p. 687) Generosity comes with sacrificion. In the story, Jim sacrifices his watch to buy a gift for Della and Della sacrifices her brown beautiful hair to buy a gift for Jim. This act shows the sacrificion of their beloved things which leads to the generosity. In an attempt to purchase Jim a gift, Della goes into town and sells her hair to Madam Sofronie. Della takes 20 dollars for this sacrifice. Della goes to a different shop in town and buys a great chain precious of Jim's watch. When Jim enters home, he observed that she cut all of her hair off. Della assumes he is displeased about what she has done

but after that Della notices why he is so upset. Jim offers Della her gift and she astonishes to see the set of beautiful combs. Now Della gives Jim her gift. He unwraps it and finds the gold chain for watch. But he has sold the watch to get money to buy a gift for Della. (Bilal. P. 686) True love wants sacrification. Jim sacrifices his watch for Della and Della sales her hair for Jim. They sacrifice their beloved and valuable things to buy gifts for each other. Though, Jim's comment is also a remark on the worth of the gifts. They are too kind not only because of the money they symbolize but also because of the sacrificial love they signify. Self-sacrifice in the name of love is the wisest gift. "(Bilal. P. 687) According to Bilal, the wisest things for the sake of love is sacrifice of valuable belongings. Sacrifice becomes a symbol for love. Jim and Della are the symbol of love because they also sacrifice their precious things for the sake of pure love which is the wisest act for the writers.

O. Henry notifies that they were wise. They were wise because they had each sacrificed their most precious and valuable belongings for the person they loved. They were similar to the three wise men the Magi—who brought gifts for Jesus Christ after he was born. Keep in mind that this is why Christians still give gifts on Christmas Day: to memorize the gifts the Magi brought Christ on that very first Christmas. (Taschner and Morgan. P.1) On the Christmas day people exchange gifts. This tradition comes way back from Christ time when Magi brought gifts for Christ after his birth. So Jim and Della, they also reinvigorate this tradition on Christmas day. Jim and Della sacrifice their precious belongings for the person they love. They are poor and they don't have money for buying gifts for each other. After contemplation, they have only one way to buy the gifts and that is to sell their valuable items watch and hair respectively.

"The Gift of the Magi" (1906) the main characters are bond to each other with the undetectable relationship of love, compassion, concern and reciprocation. Whereas Love, care, companionship and sacrifices are playing against poverty. (Banerjee. p. 515 and 516) Sacrifice means to go beyond limitation for the sake of someone. Jim and Della show this sacrifice from their actions of selling their most valuable things for the sake of love.

"The Gift of The Magi" describes the tale of Jim and Della who sacrifice their most excellent possessions for each other. Their belongings are, one was Jim's gold watch that had been his father's and his grandfather's. The other was Della's hair. (Banerjee. p. 517) The story tells about the sacrification of most beloved things of two lovers Jim and Della. Jim wants to give Della a Christmas gift so he sells his gold watch and buys a comb for Della. On the other hand, Della sales her long hair to buy a gift of gold chain for Jim's watch. But they sale their precious things for each other.

Factually 'magi' means wise men. In the story, Jim and Della are similar with them because of their sacrificial and pure love for each other. (Banerjee. p. 520) Jim and Della are regarded 'Magi' due to their sacrification of belongings for the sake of devotion towards each other. This sacrification increases nothing except pure love.

It gives the impression that the opening of the story is describing about Della's puzzlement to get gift for Jim until she sacrifices her hair in order to be able to buy a pleasant gift. (Sarashita.p. 6) Della and Jim they are poor and they don't have much money to buy gifts for each other. But they have their beloved things only. They sacrifice their beloved belongings to be able to purchase gifts for each other. In other words, the gifts come from their sacrification of valuable things.

Jim and Della sacrificed their beloved things to pass smile on the faces of each other. These will be unpredicted surprise for both Jim and Della. (Hooti . p. 5181) For the sake of love, Jim and Della they sold their beloved things to get gifts. This sacrification shows their love for each other.

Content Analysis

There were two possessions of the Jim Dillingham Youngs in which both of them took a mighty pride. One was Jim's gold watch that had been his father's and his grandfather's. The other was Della's hair. Had the Queen of Sheba lived in the flat across the airshaft, Della would have let her hair hang out the window someday to dry just to depreciate Her Majesty's jewels and gifts. (p. 04)

In fact, Jim and Della have two valuable belongings; these things are everything for them. Jim received gold watch from his father, which came from his father's father and so on. On the other hand, Della has long beautiful brown hair. If the Queen lived near her flat she would show her hair to Queen daily. But on the Christmas season they don't have money and therefore, they sacrifice their valuable things for sake of true love.

Once she faltered for a minute and stood still while a tear or two splashed on the worn red carpet. On went her old brown jacket; on went her old brown hat. With a whirl of skirts and with the brilliant sparkle still in her eyes, she fluttered out the door and down the stairs to

the street. (p.05)

When she finds that she doesn't have enough money to buy a gift, she gets an idea while looking into the mirror. She loves Jim a lot and this love forces her to sacrifice her hair, the only valuable thing, to buy gift for her beloved husband.

She stopped the sign read: "Mme. Sofronie. Hair Goods of All Kinds"... hardly

looked the "Sofronie." "Will you buy my hair?" asked Della. "I buy hair," said Madame. "Take ye'r hat off and let's have a sight at the looks of it." Down rippled the brown cascade.

"Twenty dollars," said Madame, lifting the mass with a practiced hand. "Give it to me quick," said Della. (p.05)

She develops the idea to sacrifice her hair to get money. She rushes toward Mme. Sofronie's shop and asks her to buy her hair and give her some money. Sofronie checks her hair and offers her 20\$. At last she sacrifices her hair for the devotion and pure love of her husband.

The next two hours tripped by on rosy wings... She was ransacking the stores for Jim's present. She found it at last. It surely had been made for Jim and no one else. There was no other like it in any of the stores, and she had turned all of them inside out.(p.05)

After getting money, she wanders for gift shop to shop. She wants a unique gift for her beloved husband. Finally she gets a gold chain for Jim's watch. She thinks that Jim will love this gold chain and Jim will be very happy to see and fix it on his watch.

She had a habit of saying little silent prayers about the simplest everyday things, and now she whispered: "Please God, make him think I am still pretty." (p.06)

When she manages to get the gift and comes home, she excitingly prepares food and prays that oh God! Help me to be pretty as usual. She thinks that if Jim comes and doesn't like her, then her sacrifice for Jim would be futile. She wants Jim to find her pretty as before. This act shows devotion of the extreme and true love.

"Jim, darling," she cried, "don't look at me that way. I had my hair cut off and sold it because I couldn't have lived through Christmas without giving you a present. It'll grow out again.(07)

However, when Jim comes home, he doesn't comment on Della's hair which worries Della; she says almost in cry that she has sacrificed her hair to buy a Christmas gift. She also says that don't worry about the hair it will grow again and my hair grows faster.

But if you'll unwrap that package you may see why you had me going a while at first.....
For there lay The Combs—the set of combs, side and back...Beautiful combs, pure tortoise shell, with jeweled rims.....They were expensive combs, she knew, and her heart had simply craved and yearned over them without the least hope of possession.(p. 08)

Della likes a set of combs for her hair. For Christmas, Jim sacrifices his beloved watch to buy comb for Della. Eventually Della and Jim sacrifice their valuable things for the sake of each other but these gifts are useless because neither Jim has a watch to fix the chain nor Della has hair to comb it.

Give me your watch. I want to see how it looks on it." Instead of obeying, Jim tumbled down on the couch and put his hands under the back of his head and smiled.(p.09)

When Jim sees Della, he doesn't say anything. Now Della asks him for the watch to put the gold chain. Rather giving her the watch he lays on couch and smiles because he doesn't have the watch. He sacrificed the watch for Della, this is both irony and love.

“Dell,” said he, “let’s put our Christmas presents away and keep ’em a while. They’re too nice to use just at present. I sold the watch to get the money to buy your combs”(p.09)

When they realize that they sacrifice their most valuable things for the sake of true love then they describe the entire incident to each other. Both gifts are nice and beautiful. They put their gifts aside and start praising each other’s gifts.

Conclusion

O. Henry was one of the famous short story writers. He wrote many short stories from which he got recognition around the world. He incorporated numerous aspect of the society in his writings such as real life characters, working class people, sacrification for true love and devotion. The Gift of Magi is a story of a couple Jim and Della. They sale their valuable belongings for the sake of each other to buy gift for Christmas. Due to this generous act, they are also called Magi. They are poor and they live hand to mouth. But to get the spirit of pure love and affection, they sacrifice their only belongings to strengthen their love.

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