

EMPATHY IS THE

GREATEST HUMAN TRAIT

1. Introduction

Empathy indeed is one of greatest characteristics of human beings.

2. Empathy is the greatest human trait due to various reasons including

- i- Empathy is the sign of healthy nervous system.
- ii- Empathy strengthens personal relationships
- iii- Empathy promotes social cohesion
- iv- Empathy fosters inclusivity.
- v- Empathy guides moral behaviours.
- vi Empathy is independent of age.
- vii Empathy drives significant business results.
- viii Empathy promotes diplomacy and conflict

resolution.

- ix. Empathy addresses global challenges.
- x. Empathy prevents harmful behaviours.
- xi. Empathy enforces resilience
- xii. Empathy pushes individuals towards noble pursuits.
- xiii. Empathy enhances emotional quotient.

3. Empathy is an emotional burden on humans : a misconception :

- i. Empathy can lead to bias decision.
- ii. Empathy might result into an emotional burnout.

4. Conclusion :

Essay

"We have two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we speak," Epictetus aptly remarked. Human beings are gifted with tremendous traits that not only differentiate them among other species but also put them on a higher pedestal. One of such great traits is empathy. Empathy is defined as a feeling or emotional state that enables a man to understand and share the mental state of another individual. In simple terminology it is putting foot in someone else's shoes. Like many other traits of humans, empathy has also evolved over time and

turned out to be the greatest human trait. It is independent of age and represents a healthy juncture of neurons in the body. Empathy, an emotion, a feeling, is capable to strengthening personal relationships and fostering social cohesion in the society. Empathy is also the driving force of conflict resolution, diplomacy and a fight against global monsters. The emotion of empathy has often been criticized for putting emotional burden upon humans. It is nothing more than a mere misconception. Empathy has potential to resolve dilemmas that even weapons can not. Therefore, it is need of the time to put our priorities right and move towards a more empathic world.

One of virtues of empathy that makes it the greatest human trait is its ability to represent a healthy brain and a healthy nervous system. Brain is the central control unit of human body and works in coordination with spinal cord and neurons. Emotional empathy has a biological component. In a healthy nervous system, mirror neurons fire when someone observes and experiences an emotion. This reaction of mirror neurons make us feel empathy towards the other person. Thus, feeling empathy symbolizes a well-functioning nervous system.

Another characteristic that makes empathy the prominent human feature is its role in

strengthening personal relationships. Human beings are labelled as social animals. It is important for healthy human existence to make bonds with fellows and have relations. The feeling of empathy enables a person to understand another person's perspective and communicate accordingly. It relates to the cognitive abilities of individual. Understanding how someone else is feeling and where he/she is coming from enable a person to better deal with disagreements, and conflicts. According to Gottman Institute research on social psychology, empathic individuals have stronger and long-lasting relationships. Thus, empathy indicates healthier relations and happy life.

Furthermore, fellow-feeling promotes social connectivity that strengthens the society. Society's peace and stability relies heavily on cohesion among members. The feeling of empathy enables one to understand and feel the joy or anger in another person's system. Thus, in a society where people can relate and understand others pain, it forces them to take action. In this way empathy takes the form of collective empathy and stimulates action of brotherhood. Volunteer initiatives during the out-break of COVID-19 is the best examples of brotherhood derived by collective empathy.

Empathy also is the source of fostering inclusivity. Inclusivity refers to the phenomenon of including everyone. In the fast age of growing, moving faster, people are drowning in loneliness. Mental health crisis is worsening day and night. By way of empathy one individual feels for others, which further leads to action in the right direction.

According to Brenne Brown, New York's best-selling author, empathy has no script. It is an incredible healing message that "you are not alone". Therefore, empathy fosters a sense of belonging and inclusivity that makes it a great blessing.

Moreover, it is pertinent to notice that empathy

guides moral behaviours. Human beings are different from other species because they are capable of differentiating between moral and immoral attitudes. The trait enabling humans to pursue noble pursuits is empathy. Therapists and doctors who are empathic can better help patients to face traumas. When one can feel how another person is feeling, we tend to take the right steps that we would have loved for ourselves. Thus many of ethical and moral values have empathy in their roots. Paul Bloom research also suggests that empathy play a role in moral institutions and ethical actions. Thus, it is a clear thesis that empathy guides human moral behaviour.

In addition to these, another factor that distinguishes empathy from other human traits is its independence from age. Most of the human traits depends upon age such as love, attachment, and endurance to pain. Contrarily, the level of empathy is mostly immune to age. This means a child, even of 12-months- can feel the distress of another. Jean Decety in the article, 'The Neurodevelopment of Empathy in Humans' argued that there is compelling evidence that pro-social behaviours such as empathy emerge as early as in childhood. This means that empathy can neither be faded nor birthed which render it a special status, among other human traits.

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Not only these but also empathy drives significant economic ~~challenges~~ benefits. Business results and financial gains, along with overall success of the company or body depends upon leader(s). One the critical skill of leadership is empathy. Empathy enables leaders to manage their sub-ordinates efficiently. It assist the managers to respond more effectively by imagining themselves in other persons position. Also Forbes reinstates that having empathic leaders can drive better business results by contributing in creativity and retention. In a nut shell, having empathic leaders ultimately leads to improved business results. Furthermore, empathy promotes diplomacy and conflict resolution.

In international relations, the dealings of diplomats often dictate the foreign policy of a country. A diplomat who is able to understand the emotional state of another diplomat, will be able to better deal with him. Many times ego of world leaders stop them from finding a common ground. In such scenario the natural force of empathy pushes them to come to terms with inner conflicts. Empathy enables these conflicted leaders and diplomats to sympathise and feel for the individuals to whom their decisions impacts. Camp David Accords is such fine example of diplomacies having empathy, for suffering individuals, at roots. Thus there is no doubt in the fact that the emotion of empathy dictates

world decisions, which makes it a unique human trait.

Moreover, empathy is also the force behind so many global movements. These movements raise voice for addressal of global challenges. When the World War - II ended, it was feeling of empathy that united the whole world. As a result, in 1945 the world witnessed the birth of the United Nations. Many rights movements exist in today world and the participants contribute mostly because of feeling empathy for the one being oppressed. In movements of women rights, men also participate representing the underlying motivation of empathic joy. Thus, empathy contributes in addressing global challenges that

makes

it a great humanistic trait.

It is pertinent to ponder what will be the result of lack of empathy. In a world where no one can understand and feel what other person is going through life would be miserable. No one will be able to connect, the society will be torn apart and satisfaction in personal relationships will become fairytale. Lack of empathy in individual will lead to anti-social behaviours. According to a neuroscientific study by Simone Baron Cohen, the lack of empathy is indication of conditions like personality disorders, autism, and narcissism. Without empathy the world will be cold world and a colorless one, metaphorically.

In addition, empathy fosters resilience and self-awareness. It allows individuals to connect deeply with the experiences of others, helping them gain insights into their own lives. This connection fosters resilience by encouraging a broader perspective and the strength to endure challenges. It also enhances self-awareness, as understanding others' struggles often leads to a deeper comprehension of one's own emotions, values, and motivations. Viktor Frankl, a Holocaust survivor, in a book "Man's Search for Meaning" emphasized that human capacity for resilience is amplified when we connect with other's struggles and find purpose in mutual support. Thus, empathy not only connects us to others but also strengthens our inner resolve.

Additionally, empathy motivates individuals towards noble pursuits. Noble pursuits are the actions, tasks or purpose that have nobility as the foundational block. It is feeling of oneness, the ability to feel for others that pushes us to take action to relieve our fellow being from pain. This feeling unites the whole world and motivates empathic individuals to stand on behalf for others. All fights of noble pursuit, have this mutual feeling. Greta Thunberg's empathic appeal for climate activism has moved millions. Therefore, empathy constitutes the driving force of noble pursuits.

Last but not the least, empathy enhances emotional quotient. Emotional quotient represents emotional

intelligence. It is ability to understand one's own mental state and also of others and responding aptly.

The understanding to emotional quotient points that it is strongly linked to empathy. The individual having high emotional quotient are more social and successful in personal and professional lives. High emotional quotient leads to healthy social circles and long-lasting relationships.

A study by Shandong Normal University, department of psychology, revealed that smarter individuals are prosocial.

It is linked with the role of empathy and moral identity. Therefore, empathy indicates higher emotional intelligence which also makes it the greatest human characteristic.

Moving forward, there

is a growing discussion on, that empathy may lead to bias decisions. For example, if the judges start empathizing with the person being prosecuted, there is a chance that rationality goes to the back seat. But this argument is countered, and lacks solid ~~so~~ foundation. Decision-making requires rationality and a balance between what ought to be done and what is done.

A balanced empathic behaviour at work places eases the work and assists in getting the job done. Empathy helps in understanding the perspective, needs, and intentions of others, as per the Greater Good Science Center. Thus a balanced approach can lead to better decisions rather than biased

ones.

Another argument advanced against empathy that it might lead to an emotional burnout is also without pillars. Emotional drainage on another person is the major source of emotional burnout. Empathy if not balanced with keeping ourselves ground to reality might lead to emotional burnout but this does not mean feeling empathy is the problem. It indicates that one should have a balanced approach and after understanding another's pain, despite of drowning in sorrow, one should take step, as small as going for a walk, to make things better. For example, when Lady Diana shook the hands of AIDS patients

and broke the negative stigma around such people. Despite of being over-whelemed by someone's misery, one can always do something to help others and if not, then to help one's own selve.

In a nut shell, there is no doubt in the fact that empathy indeed is the greatest of all human traits. Empathy defines a persons identity, shapes personal relations, and transform societies. Empathy is the emotion that guides moral behaviours. It is independent of age. It is the power that can bring peoples, countries and continents together. Furthermore, it also drives significant economic gains.

Empathy moves the world to rise above their individual differences and protest for collective right. Lower levels of empathy or absence of empathy leads to harmful actions or behaviours.

It is often argued that empathy is an emotional burden upon humans. It is source of emotional burnout and bias decisions. But this is just not the case. As if balanced properly, empathy has potential to borne precious fruits.

Today the world is suffering from multiple conflicts and wars.

Innocent lives are just being labeled as 'collateral damage' on daily basis. Therefore there is need to move towards more empathic approaches and promotes the culture where empathy

becomes a real norm. Barack Obama rightly remarked in this context:

“The biggest problem we have in our society and the world right now is lack of empathy.”