

Exploration of Ethical Perceptions from the Story “The Gift of the Magi”: A Contemporary Study

Dr. AK. Gopi Krishna¹, Dr. P. Kousar Basha², Dr. S. Mahaboob Basha³, S. Mahammad Ishaq⁴

^{1,2} Asst. Professor, Dept. of English, RGM College of Engineering & Technology (AUTONOMOUS), Nandyal - 518501, AP. India.

³ Assoc. Professor in English, Dept. of H&S, Gouthami Institute of Technology and Management for Women (AUTONOMOUS), Proddatur., A.P. India.

⁴ Asst. Professor in English, SVR Engineering College(AUTONOMOUS), Nandyal., A.P. India.

Abstract:

The shorty ‘The Gift of the Magi’ (1905) was written by O. Henry was an American short-story writer. ‘The Gift of the Magi’ emphasis that how modern readers can interpret with ethical perceptions. This short story was highly enriched by ethical perceptions and best example for contemporary couple. In the current world the ethical relations in between husband and wife is become questionable. This story elevates the middle class wife and husband’s ethical perceptions of their life to this contemporary world. This article discusses the wife and husband’s ethical perceptions such as ethical love, ethical beliefs and ethical sacrifice of the story. This article attempts to elevate the ethical perceptions of wife and husband the contemporary couples.

Key words: The Gift of the Magi, ethical perceptions, ethical love, ethical beliefs and ethical sacrifice.

Introduction:

Literature has long served as a mirror reflecting of ethical values and moral quandaries from centuries. The short story ‘The Gift of the Magi’ is truly connected with this contemporary world. This is the time to reread and explore the 1905 written story which is rightly connected the current couples. In the current world the marital life is covered with unethical marital life. The story raises the ethical perceptions to this contemporary world, the story reveals the true wife and husband nature and their pure relation. The story is rightly connected with this contemporary world. The selected story enriches the values such as scarify, love, morality, emotion, belief and empathy. This story connected with societal relations of the current scenario. However, most of the contemporary couples forget the values and societal relations. The relation between wife and husband has taken on many forms throughout the history. This relation considered as most valued and sacred in all cultures. In every culture this relation has to follow the ethical perceptions. The story ‘The Gift of the Magi’ contains customs and values of wife and husband in a society. In fact, the relation in between couples is beyond the cultural aspects. In most of the cultures believed that this relation is created by the GOD.

When we look into the story the story describes the appreciable attitude and behaviour of wife and husband. In the story the husband and wife have a low quality of life, however, they have love, morality, belief, scarify and empathy towards each other. This leads to the happy and uncontroversial journey in their life.

Literature Review of the Study:

Numerous studies have explored the themes of love, sacrifice, and irony in *The Gift of the Magi* (Anderson, 2010; Kumar, 2015). However, a very few have focused on the ethical dimensions of the protagonists' perceptions. Ethical concepts were originating from the period of Aristotle and emphasize moral character over rules. This context fits well with the story's characters, Jim and Della, whose actions exemplify virtues like generosity, love, and humility.

The contemporary studies in ethics concepts (Gilligan, 1982) have highlighted the role of care and relational responsibility in moral reasoning, especially in personal relationships. This approach is relevant in interpreting Della and Jim's behaviour.

Ethical Perceptions of the Story:**Ethical Love:**

The ethical love appears in the form of Della's actions towards her husband. The actions denote Della's ethical love. The process what she thinks and try to purchase a gift to her husband on special occasion. The following action by Della reveals her ethical love:

"One dollar and eighty –seven cents. - Three times Della counted it"

"Della finished her cry and attended to her cheeks with the power rag"

The above sentences from the story reveals the innocence attitude and state of mind of Mrs. Della, the love which is can't expressed by her towards her husband, it is expressed in counting the same amount again and again. The unconditional and innocence love evidences of her Ethical love. Della prioritizes to save money to purchase a valuable gift on special occasion. Her actions in saving money reflect the ethical love towards her husband. There is no question of culture raises in love, it is immortal. The story strongly elevates the pure love of the couple in all the way. The ethical love was mostly degrading among couples in the contemporary world.

Ethical Beliefs:

The ethical beliefs of the story are highlighted by actions of Mr. Jim and Mrs. Jim. They have belief that their selected gifts are must be opted to each other. What they belief it is good and right in their concern. The following statements are proved the ethical beliefs among them:

"It was a platinum fob chain, simple and chaste in design, properly proclaiming its value....."

"Beautiful combs, pure tortoiseshell, with jewelled rims....."

Mr and Mrs Jim they believe that, what they selected for each other that gifts were suitable to each other, and they felt the gifts were required for each to gather. The gifts are very beautiful, special and expensive; however, they concern that to surprise each other individually. Their beliefs is explore that they are truly love without any condition.

Ethical Sacrifice:

The story 'The Gift of the Magi' stands for ethical sacrifices of couple. The couple ignore their own self. The following lines indicates the Mr and Mrs Jim sacrifice nature:

“Will you buy my hair? asked Della. ‘I buy hair’ said.....”

“Twenty dollars’, said Mademe.....”

“They were expensive combs.....”

The factual meaning of the sacrifice is visualized by the action of Mrs. Jim, as an unwaged and house wife; it is incredible to her to purchase a Twenty-one dollars fob chain to her. She has her only property that is her long rippling and shining like a cascade. However, she completely ignore value of her hair and she believed that the hair is a just a physical thing, and there is no value for hair in her concern. Without any hesitation Mrs Della sacrifice her hair.

Mr. Jim sold his precious watch which he was received from his ancestor parents. The amount which he received he purchased set of combs for Della to comb her hair. Mr. Jim Dillingham never reluctance in selling his precious watch for buying combs. The nature of sacrifices of couple for each other is unconditional. The contemporary world is indicated by money and self-interest.

Conclusion:

This paper presents the Ethical Perceptions of couple from the short story The Gift of the Magi with contemporary world. The ethical love, ethical beliefs and ethical sacrifice are visualized in this story by O. Henry. The ethical perceptions are highly unheeded in the contemporary society. The self-interest, individuality and unethical relations are taken place among couple relations. The cultural standards are also misplaced and the results are astonishing to the world. This short story represents the pure and heart full relation for current society. The author explored the morals, values and culture from this story. The contemporary world needs to rethink about ethical perceptions in their marital life.

Reference:

- https://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource_files/1-the_gift_of_the_magi_0.pdf
- Anderson, M. (2010). Sacrifice and Irony in American Literature. New York: Routledge.
- Gilligan, C. (1982). In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development. Harvard University Press.
- Henry,O. 1995. The Gift of the Magi. NewYork.Available:<https://ebookliterature.wordpress.com>
- Heni, H. (2022). Cultural Phenomenon And Moral Value In Short Story The Gift Of The Magi By O Henry. Jurnal Onoma: Pendidikan, Bahasa, Dan Sastra, 8(2), 760–766.