

# Critical analysis of andre dubu's the curse



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The Curse by Andre Dubus Order No. 323856 October ' 09 The Curse by Andre Dubus The Curse is a story from the Selected Stories by Andre Dubus. The author in this story like in many of his other short stories and essays raises questions about the nature of man's action and inaction. The Curse is about Mitchell Hayes, a forty-nine year old bartender, who witnesses five motorcyclists forcibly rape a woman in his bar. Mitchell is unable to do anything to stop the rape. After the rape, Mitchell is distressed by the fact that he did not make a strong attempt to help the girl. Family, friends and the police comfort Mitchell by assuring him that he made the right decision. However, he continues to be remorseful and is overcome by self-doubt. He keeps thinking that he should have done something to stop the rape. His words, " I should have stopped it. I think I could have stopped it" highlight his feelings at that time. The central idea of the story is that man himself has to define what is right and honorable. One cannot always make the right choice between right and wrong. Sometimes one ends up making a safe decision in the name of right decision and this choice may become difficult to live with. This is exactly what happens to Mitchell in this story. The story revolves round the struggle the hero goes through as he tries to perceive the difference between doing the right thing, not being able to do the right thing and not doing anything.

Andre Dubus uses an unconventional plot and places his characters in real life situations to explore his theme.. In this story like many of his other stories all his characters are well-meaning characters. They face situations that challenge their beliefs and face ethical questions such as self-interest, duty, truth, etc. The main character of the story is Mitchell. The story revolves around him and at the end of the story he is transformed from a

carefree man into a man consumed by remorse and guilt. He feels old at the end of it all. Dubus describes his condition thus: " He did not know what it was like to be very old ... but he assumed it was like this: fatigue beyond relieving by rest, by sleep." (Andre Dubus). Was Mitchell right in not doing anything? There are many factors to be taken into consideration if one had to decide whether Mitchell was right or wrong in not doing anything to stop the rape. Factors such as moral values of a person, the element of risk and one's natural instincts have to be considered. But in the end it is the given situation which determines how we act. In Mitchell's case the situation was such that " doing the right thing" was possibly not to do anything. Most other characters also felt that he had done the right thing. If he had tried to stop the rape the motorcyclists could have harmed him. But again the fact remains that had Mitchell done something to stop these men than he would not have to live with the girls curse. The struggle that goes on in Mitchell's mind about ' not doing anything' and ' could have done something' evokes sympathy in the readers. The last line of The Curse, " He wished he were alone so he could kneel to receive it" where " it" means the curse, shows that Mitchell is ready to receive the curse of the woman and that he feels he deserves it. This is in line with the tone of the story which is that of sadness. The hero here will always regret the decision he has made.

Andre Dubus in The Curse effectively creates a situation that is believable. All of us at some time or the other have faced situations where one has to make a choice between right and wrong and most of us end up making a safe decision. In conclusion it can be said that Dubus succeeds in providing us with a story that challenges us to think.

## References

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1. Dubus, Andre, (1988), *The Curse*, *New American Short Stories*, 2. Ed Gloria Norris, New York; NAL, 1989. 271-79