

"the gift of magi" by o. henry essay sample



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The definition of marriage in the oriental language Sanskrit corroborates the theme of the short story "The Gift of the Magi." The word 'vivaha' (marriage) is beautifully composed. 'vaha' means 'to flow.' 'vi' means 'harmoniously together.' Therefore, the word marriage means to flow together harmoniously. Two distinct individuals, two separate personalities, born, bred and brought up in two different sets of circumstances, try to come together from the day of marriage (unless they were courting each other earlier than the marriage date!) to find a common identity, a common goal and to be precise a common all. Ideally, both of them decide to live life in its trials, tribulations, duty and beauty! "In the short story "The Gift of the Magi" written by O. Henry, carefully renders the setting of the love, generosity, and the various definitions of wealth and poverty:"

Mostly, everybody buys gifts during the Christmas Eve. When one buys gifts for individuals, special gifts for intimate friends, relatives or acquaintances, a tender or not so tender thinking process goes on within the mind of the buyer. A quick evaluation of the relationship of the individual is carried out and the gift to be given judged accordingly. Therefore, one buys different kinds of gifts for different people. The first and foremost question that passes through the mind is, "What he or she will think of my gift? Will the gift be liked and appreciated?"-If we straightaway try to plunge in to the emotional depth of the gift-handing over situation in the story O Henry writes, "White fingers and nimble tore at the string and paper. And then an ecstatic scream of joy, and then, alas! A quick feminine change to hysterical tears and wails, necessitating the immediate employment of all the comforting powers of the lord of the flat."...for there lay The Combs—the set of combs, side and back,

that Della had worshipped long in a Broadway window. Beautiful combs, pure tortoise shell, with jeweled rims"—how cruelly destiny interfered to test the love between the two and made their Christmas celebration unforgettable! The gifts that they could not put into use immediately!

The poor simple folks, the have-nots, too wish to enjoy Christmas. "It is not surprising that 'The Gift of the Magi' still enjoys such widespread fame, for in this trite little tale of mutual self-sacrifice between husband and wife, O. Henry crystallized dramatically what the world in all its stored-up wisdom knows to be of fundamental value in ordinary family life. Unselfish love shared, regardless of the attendant difficulties or distractions—this is the idea repeatedly implied as a criterion in his fictional treatment of domestic affairs." (Current-Garcia 116) What is important in family life is the determination of the partners to keep the flame of love burning. Such stories can be authored by an individual who has the firsthand experience of living through poverty and the related human suffering.

The little joys are the willing, cementing and supporting bricks that take the load of the magnificent structure called a happy married life. Poverty and affluence, ups and downs are part of the married life. Howsoever powerful may the waves of the ocean, their essential nature is mere water! Nobody has ever taken the sea-bath, in a no-waves situation; and having gone for the sea bath, one should not be afraid of the oncoming waves; if the waves are powerful duck them; if the waves are friendly, dance with them; when the waves are normal, swim along. This sort of understanding and love is necessary between the partners. If such love is present, the day to day life becomes day to day happiness.

" In ' Gift of the Magi' the surprise ending comes when Jim reveals that he has sold his watch to buy Della her present; then O. Henry goes on to add that of all who give gifts, these are the wisest. (This added moral is a favorite device of his.) (Peel 11). This shows that both of them have some telepathic communication. Each one of them is willing to forgo their prized possessions, for the sake of seeing the lines of happiness in the face of the other by giving gift on the eve of Christmas. What a poignant moment in the story! " Della sells her beautiful long hair to buy the platinum chain for Jim's watch, only to discover that he has sold it to buy the jeweled tortoise-shell combs for her hair."(Voss 123-24) Among the vast multitudes of readers who have read the story, both men and women, not one could be there who has not missed a few beats of the heart at this turn of the events. " The magi, he reminds the reader, were wise men who brought gifts to the Christ child, and thus invented the giving of Christmas presents. As for Jim and Della, ' in a last word to the wise of these days let it be said that of all who give gifts these two were the wisest.... They are the magi'" (Voss 123-24).

Conclusion:

What a way to save the situation! 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. And now suppose you put the chops on."-True love goes on multiplying; and passion diminishes with time. When one's feelings and reverence is for the body, like the body, they have to perish. When the mutual contact and allegiance is with beauty of the soul, that state is immortal, like the soul!

References Cited:

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