

Is justice served in punishment



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Is justice served in punishment? There are many factors that should be considered as to whether or not justice is being served by the punishment given. The short story “ Punishment” written by Rabindranath Tagore is about two brothers and their wives. The story begins when the two brothers return home from work and hear that their wives have been screaming and yelling at each other again. The elder brother Dukhiram demands that his wife Radha get his food. Radha responds to her husband by telling him there is no food in the house and asks him if she should go out and earn it.

Dukhiram is angered by his wife’s reply, grabs a farm knife and lunges at her hitting her in the head with it. Radha dies a within minutes of being struck by the knife. Within a short time after the incident the landlord Ramlochan shows up at the house to collect the rent the family is behind on and sees Radha lying on the floor dead. Chidham (Dukhiram younger brother) immediately began stating that his wife killed Radha. Chidham, in order to save the life of his brother placed the blame on his wife and began begging Ramlochan to help him.

Chidham and his wife Chandara both passionately loved each other.

Chandara could not believe what her husband had just done. In the end Chandara choses to be found guilty and is punished by death for a crime she did not commit. Chandara was unwilling to participate in the lies that her husband was asking of her and the lies of the corrupt and unjust system that surrounded her. Even after Chidham offers Chandara an alibi she refuses by keeping her silence. In the story “ Punishment” it is made very clear that women are not equal to men when it comes to freedom and nature.

The question of “ is justice served by the punishment given” is dependent on the situation at hand, the crime committed and the feelings of those who feel they are victims. The short story “ Punishment” is centered on living in an oppressive society. Chidham was punished far more harshly than his wife or his brother. Chidham asked his wife to admit to the murder of Radha and then came up with an alibi for his wife to save the life of his brother; while he loved his wife, his concern was to save his brother.

When Chidham told Dukhiram of his plan to lay the blame on Chandara, Dukhiram replied “ But what will happen to her? ” Chidham then told Dukhiram “ I’ll save her” and Dukhiram was content with the plan. (Tagore, pg. 1697) After Chidham asked Chandara to take the blame on herself for the murder of Radha she was “ dumbfounded” as he tried to reassure her by telling her “ if you do what I tell you, you’ll be quite safe. ” When Chidham was called to the witness-box he immediately began saying “ I swear to you, sir, my wife is innocent” as he was weeping and clasping his hands. Tagore, pg. 1697) This was after his wife had just been questioned in the witness-box stating that she killed Radha “ Yes, I killed her. ” When Chandara was questioned by the police she told them she killed Radha because “ I couldn’t stand her anymore” that there was no brawl between the two of them, that Radha did not attack her first, and Radha did not ill-treat her. (Tagore, pg. 1697) While Chidham was in the witness-box the truth came out piece by piece but by this time it was too late and the magistrate did not trust what was being said.

Chandara who was an “ ordinary, harmless, flirtatious, fun-loving village wife” was arrested. Dukhiram was then called to the witness-box. Dukhiram

answered “ Sir, I killed her” after coming to from fainting. Dukhiram then told the police the reason for killing Radha was “ I wanted a meal and she didn’t give it to me. ” Dukhiram’s punishment is that he now has to live with the fact he killed his wife and his brother’s wife was punished by hanging for the crime he committed. The lawful punishment of Dukhiram through the justice system, there was no punishment served.

Dukhiram’s punishment in a sense is much harsher than the punishment that Chandara received on many levels. Chandara chose to hold firm to her silence and take the guilty plea instead of going along with the lies that were built around her. Chandara’s punishment in her mind would have been far more harsh if she would have admitted to the murder as her husband was asking her to do than be punished lawfully by death. Dukhiram in the end is a free man living with the guilt of killing his wife and knowing his brother’s wife paid for the crime with her life.

The judge came to the conclusion that the brothers confessed to the crime to save the life of Chandara. Chandara held firm to her story from the investigation right down to sitting in the witness-box in front of the judge. Chandara was asked prior to her hanging if there was anyone she wanted to see and Chandara replied with “ I’d like to see my mother. ” Chandara said it all when she stated her mother was the last person she wanted to see before her death. The hurt and pain that Chandara was feeling from her husband must have been unbearable. In Chandara’s mind justice was served through her punishment of death.

It was easier for Chandara to face death than to face the fact that her husband asked her to admit to the murder of her sister-in-law and continuing to be married to him. Chidham has paid the greatest punishment of all of them. Justice was served through the punishment that he will receive the rest of his life. Chidham now has no wife and has to live with the guilt of placing the life of his wife lower than the life of his brother. This was the example of an oppressed society and goes to show that there are countries where the men are in fact held up higher than the women where freedom and nature are concerned.

In this short story punishment was served on many levels. When people think of punishment for a crime such as this we also think about it as a lawful punishment. After reading this short story; punishment does not have to be served lawful for justice to be served. Is justice served through “Punishment?” It goes back to the individual’s that are involved. Dukhiram was not punished lawfully for killing his wife; but the guilt he has to deal with in the end is much harsher than being punished by death.