

Theme of Universality and Timelessness in The Short Stories of Guy De Maupassant: A Critical Study with Reference to The Selected Short Stories

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Abstract: Divided by the nations but united by the Literature we are. We are now globalized. The message that classic writers want to give to society remains relevant to all sections of society irrespective of nationality. Guy de Maupassant is one such classic writer. This paper aims to discuss selected short stories of his to discuss this point. The first part of the paper introduces Guy de Maupassant as a naturalist. The second part of the paper, three selected short stories of Guy de Maupassant are chosen to specifically discuss the timeless themes of his short stories. Through the story "*The Necklace*", the problem of being materialistic has been discussed. The short story "*The Regret*" aims to discuss the need for communication to maintain good relationships and the need for being proactive to avoid regrets at the end of life. The short story "*The Farewell*" is chosen to highlight the fact that beauty is just a skin deep and what we achieve in life remains permanent. The last part of paper concludes by reiterating the fact that works of the unsung authors such as Guy de Maupassant are to be discussed with the youngsters of this generation to make them learn the lessons of life.

Key Words: Globalization, Short story, Guy de Maupassant, French, Universality

Introduction:

Guy de Maupassant is one of the naturalistic short story writers, who have brought out the universal reality through the characters in his short stories. When we talk about the literature and Globalization, he is the one author we need to discuss about. Guy de Maupassant, a French writer who has written on the themes of universality and perennial values. Globalization has slowly got a negative connotation over the last few years as it has an impact on the cultural and traditional living of human beings. People of Third World nations see the people of the western countries through the eyes of film and electronic media, because of which many of us tend to think that the characters that are shown in the films represent the typical mind set of the people of the western countries. As a result of this, the youngsters are trying to imitate the characters depicted in western films in terms of the various things like lifestyle, culture etc.

The moment France comes into the minds of the people of rest of the world, they think that France and Paris are nothing but fashion and life style forgetting the fact that Human beings are human beings everywhere and they have all the human emotions: love, anger, greed, impatience, attachment and detachment etc. the situations and the characters in the short stories of Guy de Maupassant represent not only the French but all the human beings all around the world. The short stories of Guy de Maupassant deserve to be translated into any language and every human being who reads or listens to it can relate to him or her. To bring home the point, the researchers have selected the stories to discuss.

The Necklace:

"I'm utterly miserable at not having any jewels, not a single stone, to wear," she replied. "I shall look absolutely no one. I would almost rather not go to the party."

"Wear flowers," he said.

"They're very smart at this time of the year. For ten francs you could get two or three gorgeous roses."

She was not convinced. "No . . . there's nothing so humiliating as looking poor in the middle of a lot of rich women."

(Maupussant 1884)

If we read the sentences in the short story "The Necklace", we are pretty sure that the discussion that any husband and wife can relate themselves to. How often it happens in a middle-class family! A wife from a middle-class family nags her husband to procure jewelry. The husband tries to convince her to be contented with the minimum resources that they have.

The character of Madame Loisel represents showy nature of many people in the world. They have unrealistic expectations, which are universal these days. She is unhappy with her middle-class status. When she receives an invitation to attend a party, she does not want to attend it without wearing costly jewelry. She borrows it from her friend Madame Forestier. Her husband Monsieur borrows thousands of Francs to buy the substitution to the jewelry. They work for ten years to repay the debts. She loses her beauty and charm. Just to show off in one single party. After ten years, one day she runs into Madame Forestier and confesses the whole thing.

"Madame Forestier, deeply moved, took her two hands." Oh, my poor Mathilde! But mine was imitation. It was worth at the very most five hundred francs! . . . "

(Maupussant 1884)

The endings of all the short stories of Maupussant are often surprising but worth remembering the message that the surprising end brings us.

Douglas Mattus (2017) says "Maupussant, whose career paralleled the 19th-century rise of socialism in France, was a writer deeply engaged with the problem of class conflict. In "The Necklace," Maupussant investigates the problem of material desire in a consumer culture. Mathilde suffers in the want for the luxury she observes in upper-class dinners and balls. Her attempt to mimic this lifestyle results in the story's climax and denouement, when a piece of costume jewelry leads to her ruin and ironically reduces her to the impoverished state she sought to overcome".

This short story has a message to whole mankind all across the world not to be materialistic and showy.

The Regret:

The population of the world is growing in leaps and bounds. Technology has improved, connecting to people anywhere in the world has become so easy. Yet the human beings in the world feel lonely and depressed. Every human being in the world wants to have human relationships. It is the tendency of human beings to wait for the other person to make a move. They don't take any action for the friendship to blossom. They want the other person to take initiative although deep down their heart they want to make friends with the people.

"The Regret" was written by Guy de Mapussant in the year 1883. The theme of the story is still universal and timeless. Inaction of the character in the story results in tragic and dull life by the lead character Savel. The following lines describe how he feels about his life after leading sixty-two dull and lonely life:

"If, however, his life had been complete! If he had done something; if he had had adventures, grand pleasures, successes, satisfaction of some kind or another. But now, nothing. He had done nothing, never anything

but rise from bed, eat, at the same hours, and go to bed again. And he has gone on like that, to the age of sixty-two years. He had not even taken unto himself a wife, as other men do. Why? Yes, why was it that he was not married? He might have been, for he possessed considerable means. Was it an opportunity which had failed him? Perhaps! But one can create opportunities. He was indifferent; that was all. Indifference had been his greatest drawback, his defect, his vice. Have some men missed their lives through indifference!"

(Maupussant 1883)

Savel fails to express his love to Madame Sandres at a young age. He came to know that she would have accepted his love, had he proposed to her thirty years back. Apart from the love life, it is evident through the above lines that Savel hadn't had a purposeful life. He has just lived his life and regretted it on the verge of life. The same happens with many people across the world. They live in paralysis. Hence the story is more relevant to 21st century and it has universal in the theme.

Farewell:

One of the effects of Globalization is to give a lot of importance to external beauty. The people who are successful in life do not consider themselves successful as they don't look beautiful externally. These days, there are people who want to look beautiful to post pictures on social media like Facebook, Instagram etc. They use technology to filter the picture with so many effects to make those pictures look good. De Maupassant wrote this short story in 1893 and is still relevant to present-day society.

In the short story titled "Farwell", Carnier feels inferior at growing bald and stout because of the growing age. He happens to meet Madame Julie Lefevre, his ex-lover in Train after twelve years. He doesn't recognize her. He admired her beauty in his youthful days. He was mad at her beauty. She recognizes him and says:

"I am greatly changed, am I not? What can you expect--everything has its time! You see, I have become a mother, nothing but a good mother. Farewell to the rest, that is over. Oh! I never expected you to recognize me if we met. You, too, have changed. It took me quite a while to be sure that I was not mistaken. Your hair is all white. Just think! Twelve years ago! Twelve years! My oldest girl is already ten."

(Maupussant 1893)

The short story "*Farewell*" carries a message that we all must bid farewell to the physical beauty. The impact that we create through our deeds is permanent. Youngsters of this age must read this short story to understand this fact.

Conclusion:

Guy de Maupassant is not as popular as William Sydney Porter (O.Henry). He is a French writer. His works are translated into English. His short stories are hardly prescribed for the students of any grade. Through the discussion in this research paper, it is understood that his works are worth discussing to make the youngsters of 21st century know very important lessons of life. His short stories are perennial in message and universal in terms of application.

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