A Pair Of Silk Stockings: Social Issues Raised In A Story

Kate Chopin was one of those writers who gave birth to feminism. Her short stories dealt with issues relating to women's status of equality in the patriarchal society. She was unfortunate because her stories gained popularity after her death. However, today her stories are republished over and again to meet the public demand and worldwide popularity. With reference to Kate Chopin's short fiction's "A Pair of Silk Stockings" and "Desiree's Baby", this essay will compare the aspects that shaped my emotional response and helped me to appreciate the text.

The main character in the story "A Pair of Silk Stockings" is Mrs Sommers, a wife and a mother. Her family is very poor but she is too good at bargaining and saving money and she always looks for a good sale. On one particular day, Mrs. Sommers unexpectedly gets fifteen dollars. She was trying to pick a few items of clothing for her children when she looks at "A Pair of Silk Stockings" that she desires for herself .They looked good against her skin when she tried it on and immediately purchases them.

"How good was the touch of the raw silk to her flesh! She felt like lying back in the cushioned chair and reveling for a while in the luxury of it. She did for a little while. Then she replaced her shoes, rolled the cotton stockings together and thrust them into her bag". (Chopin, 1976: 4)

Instead of continuing to look and buy things for her family, she buys a pair of gloves for herself. On rare occasions she had bought a pair of gloves. But this day, Mrs. Sommers buys a pair of gloves without even giving a thought about anything else.

After getting the gloves, Mrs. Sommers fulfils her hunger as she treats herself to a lunch at a nearby restaurant. Initially as a mother, her first priority was to feed the children and by putting the family interest first, she would sacrifice her desires. Though women were so compassionate, loving and caring, the actions of Mrs. Sommers suggest that a woman's nature is not necessarily self-sacrificing. She further goes on to the theatre and watches a movie. Each time as she gives a treat to herself, the story suggests woman has to fulfil her personal satisfaction also.

The story depicts that even though women care about their children, motherhood in itself is not sufficient to wholly satisfy any woman as they have other needs as well. There are times when even the most dedicated mothers need time and material possessions for themselves just as Mrs. Sommers spends on herself. She explores her own self and yearns for an identity, at the same time trying to hold on to the details of being a woman or a mother. This illustrates that women need not lose their own identity when they are married and devote all their time to their family. They should occasionally cater for their own needs as well.

Moreover, the story "Desiree's Baby" identifies racial issues by allowing the readers to see that Armand is much a slave as the actual slaves that he controls. This makes the readers think about many issues of race in society today as well as racial issues of the past. Kate Chopin wrote this story "Desiree's Baby" with a general idea of what she wanted to say. She brings together two characters who are completely different and opposite to each other. Armand and

Desiree have many differences beginning with where they came from, their family background, and their overall personalities. The story gives an evidence of careful craftsmanship and one of the most successful Kate Chopin's works.

Irony plays a big part in the story. At the end of the story Kate Chopin leaves the reader with information regarding Armand in the form of a letter that his mother wrote. She wrote,

'night and day, I thank the good God for having so arranged our lives that our dear Armand will never know that his mother, who adores him, belongs to the race that is cursed with the brand of slavery.' (Chopin, 1976: 7)

This reveals the truth that Armand is the one who is black and not Desiree. It is also Ironic that Armand had destroyed Desiree's life he has also ruined his life by losing his wife and baby. Kate Chopin wanted the readers to understand that nothing good would come from making rash assumptions or being too quick to judge. Racism damages both, those who judge and those who are judging. She puts much concentration and emphasis on women's lives and their continual struggles to create an identity of their own within the boundaries of the patriarchy.

In conclusion, it can be said that the belief linked to the social system is that men are superior to women and that women should be controlled by men and are part of man's property. Kate Chopin was a conventional writer. She was bold enough to address issues that were regarded as taboos. Chopin dared to write of the private needs of women that the period tried to deny. She was a woman who took women extremely seriously and never doubted women's ability to be strong.

Reference

1. Chopin, K (1976). Analysis of 'A Pair of Silk Stockings'. Retrieved from http://www.katechopin.org.katechopin'spublication.html.4236// [Accessed on April 24th, 2019]
2. Gilbert. Textual, Contextual and Critical Surprises in Desiree's Baby. Retrieved from http://www.unituebingen.de/connotations/gilbert1413.htm. [Accessed on April 24th, 2019]