

Guy de Maupassant's *A Cremation*: A Sociological Approach

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Abstract: Literature covers various issues, including social and cultural lives. A short story, "A Cremation" by Guy de Maupassant, deals with Indian social and cultural issues. This qualitative descriptive research concerns Indian social and cultural issues by applying a sociological approach. The research aims to identify and describe social and cultural issues in the short story. The results showed some sociological aspects related to Indian cultures, such as social facts, social history, social behavior, social events, and socio-cultural conditions consisting of jobs, residence, and customs. However, one aspect is not found in this short story, namely romance.

Keywords: cremation, Guy de Maupassant, Indian culture, sociological approach,

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Literature is a written work resulting from thoughts from the human imagination realized in literary works. "Literature is sounded, expressed, and created in writing or unwritten" (Marcus & Sollors, 2009). Not everyone can express and realize their imagination, feelings, and ideas into reality. Literary works are the focal point in literary studies, so every study dealing with the sociological and cultural issues, the artist/ author, the real world, and the audience must be connected to the literary work.

Many topics can be explored in literature; one is that related to sociology. Sociology is a science that studies social relationships, social conditions, ways of communicating, and human behavior in daily life. "Sociology is the study that delivers and clarifies the social behavior of one or a group of people" (Ringel, 2018). Therefore, sociology also studies culture, language, ways of communicating, etc., related to attitudes that pay attention to the public interest.

Sociology and literature have a relationship and attachment. The short story is one of the genres in literature that is a fictional story to tell the incidents, experiences, or events of one character in a short, compact, and brief related to social life. The difference between them is that sociology analyzes the behavior of society based on facts. At the same time, literature studies the way humans express their feelings, imagination, and ideas to others.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

A short story is one type of literary work in the form of fictional prose and can be read in a short time. Poe in Larasati and Irmawati (2022) asserts that a short story is beneficial to impress the readers. It is straightforward, brief, and easily understood by readers (Pratiwi et al., 2020). The short story under scrutinized in this study is "A Cremation" by Guy de Maupassant. Guy de <http://publikasi.dinus.ac.id/index.php/uncle>

Maupassant, in full Henry-Rene-Albert-Guy de Maupassant, was born in France on August 5, 1850, and died on July 6, 1893, in Paris. He was an author of the naturalist and realist schools of writing and is best known for his short stories, which are considered highly influential on much of modern literature. The work of Guy de Maupassant is fascinating because the meaning of short stories is dense and clear. In addition, Guy de Maupassant's works are characterized by long sentences, so readers are often confused and must read repeatedly to understand the meaning of the short story. This short story has many cultural and social issues. The author builds the characters, atmosphere, and manner thoroughly.

Larasati and Irmawati (2022) have conducted a study entitled "A sociological approach of literature in Leo N. Tolstoy's Short Story 'God Sees the Truth, But Waits'". They focused on the findings and description of the sociological issues in the short story "God Sees the Truth, But Waits." The second study was done by Mursalim (2019) entitled "A Sociological Approach of Literature in Short Story 'Senyum Yang Kekal' by Korrie Layun Rampan." He studied the relation between literature and sociology and found the elements of sociology of literature in Senyum Yang Kekal Short Story by Korrie Layun Rampan by using descriptive qualitative method.

Based on the above discussion, the problems can be formulated as follows:

1. What are the sociological aspects in the short story regarding social facts, history, behavior, and events?
2. What are the socio-cultural conditions in the short story dealing with jobs, residence, customs, and romance?

This study aims to discover and describe the elements of sociology in Guy de Maupassant's short story 'A Cremation.' The sociological aspects of literature deal with social facts, social history, social behavior, social events, the background of socio-cultural conditions, and the criteria, namely jobs, residence, customs, and romance.

METHOD

Type of Research

A descriptive qualitative method was applied in this study. This method is to describe the results qualitatively through sentences and paragraphs. The data collected were in sentences and paragraphs that support the analyses.

Data Source

The primary data were taken from Guy de Maupassant's short story "A Cremation." This story depicted the cremation carried out by Hindu nobles in India after the prince's death, while the secondary data comes from journal articles, books, and related websites.

Data Collection Technique

The data were collected by documentation technique, i.e., by taking notes while reading the story. Then, the data were categorized according to the objective of the study. Finally, the writer analyzed

and reviewed the relevant data related to the social aspects.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Social Facts

a. Facts of Place

Excerpt 1:

"Last Monday an Indian prince died **at Etretat**, Bapu Sahib Khanderao Ghatay, a relation of His Highness, the Maharajah Gaikwar, prince of Baroda, **in the province of Guzerat, Presidency of Bombay.**"

Context and analysis:

Concerning literary works, place refers to where the events occur in the story or where the events occur. In excerpt 1, the author explains where the Indian prince died in Etretat, France. Besides that, the author also informs that the Indian prince has relatives in his native land, India, in which "the province of Guzerat, Presidency of Bombay" was mentioned in the passage. These place names indicate the facts related to the places in the short stories.

b. Facts of the names of people

Excerpt 2:

"The other East Indians were called **Ganpatrao Shravanrao Gaikwar**, cousin of His Highness **Khasherao Gadhav**; **Vasudev Madhav Samarth**, interpreter and secretary; the slaves: **Ramchandra Bajaji**, **Ganu bin Pukiram Kokate**, **Rhambhaji bin Fabji.**"

Context and analysis:

In excerpt two above, there are Indian names such as "*Ganpatrao Shravanrao Gaikwar*." It is the name of East Indians and the cousin of the Highness "*Khasherao Gadhav*." In addition, the name "*Vasudev Madhav Samarth*," an interpreter and secretary of "*Ganpatrao Shravanrao Gaikwar*." The other Indian names were also mentioned for the slaves' names, i.e., "*Ramchandra Bajaji*, *Ganu bin Pukiram Kokate*, *Rhambhaji bin Fabji*". For Europeans, Indian names are not easy to pronounce due to India's diversity of languages and cultures.

c. Facts of objects/materials

Excerpt 3:

"This wood was piled up in a **cart** which went along through side streets as far as the beach, without arousing the suspicion of belated persons who might meet it."

Context and analysis:

From excerpt three above, the word "cart" is an object/material name used in the past until now. In the old times, carts were the main transportation for transporting goods, crops, and people. It is relevant to the story's setting, which took place long ago when cart was popular for transportation. At that time, sellers commonly used carts for selling and scavenging. Although, nowadays, carts are less popular.

Social History

Excerpt 4:

"In this way everything ends at once. Man expedites the slow work of nature, instead of delaying it by the hideous coffin in which one decomposes for months. The flesh is dead, the spirit has fled. Fire which purifies disperses in a few hours all that was a human being; it casts it to the winds, converting it into air and ashes, and not into ignominious corruption."

Context and analysis:

Excerpt four depicts the history of cremation. Based on the excerpt above, the cremation process aims to accelerate the body's return to its origin by burning the body on a pile of wood with a large fire. Then, the bones that have become ashes are washed into the sea and air. In addition, cremation can reduce costs and be environmentally friendly. Hindus usually carry out the cremation process, and the characters in the short story all come from India, where the population of India is mostly Hindu. Therefore, cremation is a culture of Indian society. Hindus must carry out cremation because it has become their culture and tradition.

Social Behavior

Excerpt 5:

"They then sent to ask the mayor, M. Boissaye, for a permit to burn the body that very day so as to fulfill the prescribed ceremonial of the Hindoo religion. The mayor hesitated, telegraphed to the prefecture to demand instructions, at the same time sending word that a failure to reply would be considered by him tantamount to a consent. As he had received no reply at 9 o'clock that evening, he decided, in view of the infectious character of the disease of which the East Indian had died, that the cremation of the body should take place that very night, beneath the cliff, on the beach, at ebb tide."

Context and analysis:

The social behavior in this context is related to the individual interaction with another character. From excerpt five above, there are interactions between the Ganpatrao Shraavanrao Gaikwar group and mayors. The decision-making in the Indian government must be done sequentially and following the position.

Social Events

Excerpt 6:

"Thus, I have seen a man cremated on a funeral pile, and it has given me a wish to disappear in the same manner."

Context and analysis:

Excerpt six above explains a man who wants to disappear by seeing the cremation process because, in cremation, a person will be released from all worldly problems. This tradition is so unique that everyone wants to feel the sensation.

a. Jobs related to the socio-cultural situation

Excerpt 7:

"For about three weeks there had been seen walking in the streets about ten young East Indians, small, lithe, with dark skins, dressed all in gray and wearing on their heads caps such as English grooms wear. They were men of high rank who had come to Europe to study the military institutions of the principal Western nations. The little band consisted of three princes, a nobleman, an interpreter and three servants."

Context and analysis:

In India, there is a caste system, especially within the kingdom. Therefore, many Indians work as royal servants, especially those with low castes. In addition, many Indians are weakly educated, and only nobles can pursue higher education, so the social gap is evident in India because of the caste system.

b. Residence

Excerpt 8:

"They came to spend the latter part of the summer at Etretat, and people would go out of curiosity every morning to see them taking their bath at the Establishment des Roches-Blanches."

Context and analysis:

Excerpt eight above explains that the Ganpatrao Shraavanrao Gaikwar group spent the summer in Etretat, France, where not every Indian could afford to travel abroad, especially in the past time. Only the nobility and high castes were able to do so.

c. Customs

Excerpt 9:

"These young princes and their servants, by the employment of the most inadequate appliances succeeded in carrying out the cremation of their relation in the most perfect manner, with singular skill and remarkable dignity. Everything was done according to ritual, according to the rigid ordinances of their religion. Their dead one rests in peace."

Context and analysis:

Excerpt nine above explains that cremation is still practiced until now because it has become a tradition, passed down from generation to generation, and it is considered a debt for the family if they have not done it. A person who has been cremated will rest in peace and reduce his family's debt. Religious and cultural rules require cremation rituals following the established religious rules. Therefore, cremation is very important for the deceased.

CONCLUSION

Based on the above discussion, it can be concluded that the elements of the sociology of literature are found in the short story "A Cremation." Sociological aspects found in this short story are social facts (facts of place, people's names, material), social history, social behavior, and social events (socio-cultural, residence, custom). Etretat, France, and province of Guzerat, Presidency of Bombay, India, as place facts that still exist nowadays. The names such as *Ganpatrao Shravanrao Gaikwar*, *Khasherao Gadhav*, *Vasudev Madhav Samarth*, *Ganpatrao Shravanrao Gaikwar*, *Ramchandra Bajaji*, *Ganu bin Pukiram Kokate*, *Rhambhaji bin Fabji* are the characters' names. These names are facts that belong to Indian cultures. Carts are the object facts that functioned as the main transportation for transporting goods, crops, and even people in the past and are still used until now. The other aspects can be seen in the story, such as jobs, residence, and customs. One aspect is not found in this short story, namely romance. In conclusion, the short story "A Cremation" by Guy de Maupassant teaches us that there is no eternal life; everyone will die in the time due. The writer hopes that this study contributes to the academic world.

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