

**KATHERINE MANSFIELD'S "A CUP OF TEA" – POSSESSION OF LOVE MAY KILL
ALTRUISM AND BRAGGADOCIO**

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Abstract:

Katherine Mansfield was an outstanding English short story writer of the twentieth century. She was born in New Zealand in 1888 and died in 1923. At the age of eighteen, she started her writing career. Her short stories appeared in Melbourne in 1907. Her famous work was "*In a German Pension*". She took a great interest in Russian literature, particularly in the works of Anton Chekhov.

This story holds class consciousness and materialism. Upper class people making themselves hypocritically pious to upgrade their social status and gain praise from society. Their true intentions are not assisting them rather manipulating them. The author also highlights jealousy and insecurity of Rosemary. At first, she is cheerful for helping Miss. Smith though she doesn't respect her. However, when her husband praises Miss. Smith's beauty, she got jealous. This possessiveness kills her altruistic activity.

Key words:

Altruism, Braggadocio, Materialism, Insecurity, Possessiveness, Class difference.

Introduction:

"A Cup of Tea" is a story of young upper class woman Rosemary Fell. She has a materialistic mindset, because she is more concerned on material possessions rather than intellectual and spiritual things. This story is stunningly well characterized and magnificently portrayed against its plain title. . This story is narrated by the unknown third person. It denotes the class difference and hypocrisy in New Zealand during the early twentieth century. Katherine Mansfield shows that whatever the status, a woman of Rosemary's type is after all, frail and jealous. Her jealousy kills her altruistic activity.

Rosemary Fell was a pretty, brilliant and extremely modern. One winter evening she went to the little antique shop in Curzon street. The shopkeeper was fond of serving her. He showed her a enamel box, which was very beautiful. She wanted to buy the box, but the price was twenty eight guineas. She decided not to buy the box and asked the shopkeeper to save the box for her. Always she goes for shopping at high-end shops and buy anything she desires. She come out from the shop and met an young poor girl, who asked some money to buy a cup of tea. Rosemary's this activities showed her materialistic mindset.

Destruction of Altruism by the possessiveness

Rosemary wanted to show the poor girl that rich people feel empathy for her kind. So, she has decided to take her to her home. Rosemary takes the girl to her bedroom and make her sit. Rosemary's husband Philip Fell entered into the room and he looked at the young girl. When Rosemary introduced the young girl, she told her name as Miss. Smith. Philip takes Rosemary into another room, where he first expresses disapproval of what his wife has done. Philip says that it's absurd to keep a stranger in the house like this. But Rosemary is keen on her mission.

Philip Fell praises that Miss. Smith is pretty and lovely. It makes Rosemary insecure and it stimulates her jealousy and possessive. Her heart beats like a heavy bell. She opened her drawer, took out five pounds, but put two back and give it to Miss. Smith and immediately sends her from the house.

After Miss. Smith leaves, Rosemary dressed beautifully and make her hair nice and she wear her pearl necklace. Then she joins her husband back in the library and lies Miss. Smith insisted on leaving. Then she sits on Philip's knees and asks whether she looks pretty or not.

At the beginning of the story, she has selfish intention, but Rosemary wanted to make Miss. Smith's life better and smooth. But at the end of the story voluntarily she sent off Miss. Smith. This shows that her possessiveness killed her altruism.

Class difference

Class distinction is also explicit in the story. Miss. Smith belongs to the lower class; she even didn't have enough money for a cup of tea. For this, she begs Rosemary. In contrast, Rosemary is a rich woman having every luxury of life. She appears well dressed while Miss. Smith is in a miserable situation.

This draws a comparison between both classes. On one hand, the wealthy are enjoying everything in their life. On the other hand, lower classes are exposed to hunger and disrespect at the hands of the upper classes.

Altruism:

Altruism is when we act to promote someone else's welfare, even at a risk or cost to ourselves. In this story Rosemary also wanted to make Miss. Smith's life better and she didn't care about financial problems or anything. This does not mean that humans are more altruistic than selfish; instead, evidence suggests we have deeply ingrained tendencies to act in either direction. Our challenge lies in finding ways to evoke the better angels of our nature. Rosemary also wanted to show herself as a esteemed woman to her friends and society. Rosemary took advantage of Miss. Smith helpless condition. Her intentions were never to help her out. Rather she tries to use her as a medium to propagate her fame and upgrade social status. She thinks that this act can provide her a chance to boast in her social circle.

Possession of Love may kill Altruism and Braggadocio

The themes of "A Cup of Tea" are 'Class difference', 'Materialism', and 'Jealousy and Insecurity'. But Rosemary's possessive love towards her husband is hidden. Every woman needs her man's attention, whether she looks pretty or not. In this story Rosemary destroyed her altruistic activity and boast because of her possessiveness towards her husband. When Philip praised the beauty of the young girl, Rosemary started feeling insecure and jealousy. Her insecurity stops her from offering her pretentious help; she makes the girl leave by giving her some money. At first, she picks up five pounds but then keeps two and only gives three to the girl. She can help but she chooses to not help that girl. She's too concerned about her own feelings. That feeling kills her kindness and boasting. She just wanted to have an adventure; it was like a play to her but when it came to her own interests she decides to stop her little game.

Conclusion:

The story is about human relationships particularly between husband and wife and how they react to certain situations in life. You have come across the character of Rosemary Fell as a complex human character with conflicting emotions. Though belonging to the well-to-do and the fashionable class, she is compassionate to the plight of the poor and therefore takes the poor girl to her house. She treats her as humanely as possible but she is also a woman vulnerable to the emotions of jealousy. So she abandons the girl when her own marital happiness was thought to be in danger. There are actually people who like being possessive and people who like being possessed by the other. Jealousy comes along in fear. Everyone fears of being replaced. Possessiveness comes along after jealousy. People become possessive because of certain reasons and fears. It's not just insecurities and trust issues. People become possessive

because of fear of not being loved. Some might say it's not true love. But being possessive and feeling jealousy is because you don't want to let go. You don't want to let go of the person.

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