Candelabra, a Souvenir of Magnum Opus: A symbol of Love in *A Work of Art* by

*Anton Chekhov*

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**Abstract**

The Russian writer, Anton Chekhov, who was born just a hundred years ago, his prose very likely evoke an immediate recollection of melancholy and gentle futility when we reminiscences. Pessimism is one of his armour. The works he produced in less than two decades were sufficient to place him as one of the greatest contributors to Russian and world literature. Outside his own country, his last four great plays, "The Seagull", "uncle Vanya", "The Three Sisters" and "The Cherry Orchard", are nearly always presented with a deliberate inflection on their minor key and inconclusive content. As a man of words and action Chekhov has ideals that are Truth, Integrity, and Human Dignity. In this prose *Work of Art* he also carries those ideal principles invariably.

Man can live as an individual physically but ultimately his living is measured by the society in which he thrown into. People those who are taking risks can able to survive in this world, because life begins only out of our comfort zone. Similarly, Art is a kind of fluid which lives around us like other organism, some of us are identify it and appreciate it; most of us are afraid of the Art just because we don’t understand them. People should have an aesthetic sense in order to understand the art. As Keats said the truth is beauty and beauty is truth. This paper is an analysis of life and perception with the object Chekhov used in this prose.
Candelabra, a Souvenir of Magnum Opus: A symbol of love in A Work of Art by Anton Chekhov

Chekhov was a renowned master of modern short stories, his role as a playwright produced four plays. But he was known for his short stories and fiction. Because it reached high esteem; the other writers and critics praised him. In his works he never failed to represent the Russian life. He gained prominence in the world of literature after Tolstoy. He reinterpreted on the essential bourgeois values stressing on their moral necessity. Chekhov was a medical doctor, he once said ‘medicine is my lawful wife’ and ‘literature is my mistress’ on the reflection of these appraisal we can clearly see the reflection of this profession often. As in this prose A Work of Art also started in the consulting room of Dr.Koshelkov. There he introduced the character Ivan Nikolaevitch, he was a doctor.

Chekhov handled several themes in this prose like Gratefulness, Poverty, Perception, and Morality. All these themes have been clearly sets forth before our eyes. In the beginning, Shasha Smirnov a poor man met Ivan and he shows his gratitude towards Ivan, since he saved his life. He was the only son of his mother they were from very poor background. So what Ivan did was something remarkable. Because if Shasha able to live he can take care of his mother for little more time. With this Chekhov on one hand projected his noble profession medicine as one of the greatest profession in the world. On the other hand he depicted that the real gratitude emerge only from the heart and mind of the poor people. They may have no money to offer, but they have kind heart. It is rare to see such kind of people from higher society.

When we look at the title the readers’ wonders what kind of work does Chekhov told. To the surprise of everyone that Magnum Opus- Candelabra comes from the poor family of Shasha. An object of great value, an antique bronze it is indeed a rare work of art.
people they won’t distinguish money and the relationship, to keep a healthy and lasting relationship they can sacrifice even the most valuable thing in the world. The image Candelabra has a strong symbol in this prose. That was the identity of the Shasha family, it was preserved by their ancestors, and it was the memory left by Shasha’s father, who died due to disease. In the bourgeois society the haves all possess the wealth. The poor people have not’s doesn’t get any wealth except beautiful objects like this. But the truth is that small objects are the real rich wealth of the world. The beauty and description of the Candelabra has given in the passages:

“Sasha undid the object and put it solemnly on the table. It was a not very tall candelabra of old bronze and artistic workmanship. It consisted of a group: on the pedestal stood two female figures in the costume of Eve and in attitudes for the description of which I have neither the courage nor the fitting temperament”.

Chekhov here provided the binary oppositions from the character Dr. Ivan, here we can see two kind of psychological change over with Ivan, that when he first saw the Candelabra he was puzzled and doesn’t really seems to have it, by the compulsion of Shasha’s mother he guiltily and sarcastically accept the gift.

But once Sasha left the place his mind started to think how to put candelabra aside without showing it to the eyes of others. According to the mother it was a priceless and a valuable gift but for the doctor it was good for nothing. It was really a pity thing to throw it away throwing it away was like disrespecting the valuable gratitude of Sasha and his gift.

At this point of time another character came in, he belonged to another profession Lawyer. That is Ivan’s best friend Uhov, he was also from well to do family and the bonding between the two was not only out of friendship but they have a business agreement each other. Modern society people were very Hippocrates at what stage they were in that doesn’t
matter; most of the Modern high standard people are very Hippocrates. All the characters in this prose are the same except Shasha. When Shasha left, Ivan plotted in his mind to throw away the devilish thing. He immediately reached Uhov’s house with the Candelabra. Now Uhov started to admire the gift, he was really moved by the sudden surprise of Ivan. Uhov recognize the candelabra for a minute and changed his mind of keeping it in. another modernistic attitude in this prose was people gave importance to the new and fashionable things and they go behind the artificiality they never actually pays respect to the art.

Since because it looks ugly it doesn’t mean that the Candelabra have not got any beauty or heritage, in fact it has nourished both in itself. The truth was that no human being in this prose would encourage it to have it. In other wordsthey don’t deserve it to have at all. Uhov has more consciousness upon his social status rather than himself, he believed that his standard was measured by how others view him. His heart wanted to keep the Candelabra in his home but his standard among the society stopped him. He replied to Ivan to take it back with him, but Ivan managed to put it in Uhov’s house and left.

“When he had gone away the lawyer examined the candelabra, fingered it all over and then, like the doctor, racked his brain over the question what to do with the present”

Then Uhov also thought of another person named Shashkin, the comedian. Uhov thought that his friend was in a field of films and pictures there may be a possibility for him to have it. He wrapped it very neatly and carefully and presented it in the dressing room of the comic actor. All the fellow actors started to visit his room and admired it also the room filled with laughter. This urged Shashkin to send Candelabra away, if one started to laugh or criticise us we should not feel disheartened all of a sudden, on the contrary we must have our own
independent thinking. But everyone was paralysed by the society and they put themselves down.

All three men, Ivan, Ulov and Shashkin had one thing in common. Their opinion on the candelabra was that it may be a work of art however it was more troublesome to keep than it was worth. So the society’s perception involved more in every individual’s doings. This is the point that Chekhov attempt to make that there is no body have their own voice or identity. Unless we have our own voice or thinking we will be marginalized, sometimes eliminated from the reality. There was no meaning in for us to claim ourselves as a rational being. Shashawa the only man though he was poor he can able to live the life of his own without the influence of others.

Another interesting element what Chekhov gave for us was, the setting of the place was either home or office, and both were sophisticated dwelling place. Even though they were in a comfortable zone they continued live in an exile, and a restless life. Home meant to be everything, but these men are in a homeless state within home. Another thing to consideration was the men are successful in their profession they need not to rely on others opinion. All of them have the equal intellectual power to take decisions separately and wisely, but when it comes to own an antique bronze candelabra, nobody chooses what their heart instructs. All of them divide some boundaries and social quality and then afraid to come out of the delusion. They remain under the influence of social opinion and as such none of the men will keep the candelabra. Their life being dictated to them by what society thinks. Rather than showing any independent thought all three men remain fixed in their beliefs. This again suggests that all three men are paralysed by society’s opinion.

The conclusion of the story was also interesting as Chekhov spray some humour to the story. Sasha believed he has found the match to the candelabra and wanted to present it to
doctor. His mother also searched to find another pair exactly as the Candelabra. Little does Sasha realise that it was the same candelabra that he was presenting to doctor for a second time. It was as though Chekhov, through humour, affording doctor the opportunity to think differently or change his mind about the candelabra. However it is clear to the reader that doctor has not changed his mind. We can see the different dimension in this end, that the doctor was put in a sense of realization and a dumbstruck moment. It ends in an open ended manner, the bourgeois and aristocrats will never change their mind and attitude towards the low class people. As this paper’s title concern the whole story navigated by an object Candelabra, the exquisite workmanship travelled to person to person place to place. But it never stays in a wrong person’s hand it comes to the owner itself, because it shows that no one can take care of it except Shasha.

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