



## PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN AND THE PHILOSOPHY THAT VICTORIAN WOMEN ARE EQUAL TO MEN AND SUPERIOR TO THEM AT TIMES IN SISTER CARRIE

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### ABSTRACT

*Sister Carrie is one of the famous novels among many and was written by the great novelist known as Theodore Dreiser. Sister Carrie was like a movement away from the stress on morals of the Victorian era and focused on realism. Sister Carrie is a story telling novel of a girl who has to move to the big city where she begins realizing her own American Dream, first as a mistress to men that she perceives as superior, and later becoming a famous actress. It is said that the “greatest of all American urban novels.” It has been said that the character of Carrie has been inspired by his real life sister Emma Dreiser. Sister Carrie is a novel about a girl and her dreams and she has made all the dreams successful at the end. Though, it also describes the fall of a successful man followed by his suicide. Thus, it is better to understand the above mentioned topic through further discussion. Let us try to do so.*

**Key words:** Delhi, Corruption, Politics, Murder, Society.

### INTRODUCTION

*Sister Carrie is one of the famous novels among many and was written by the great novelist known as Theodore Dreiser. He was not only a novelist but also the one whom people consider as one of the greatest naturalists and who is notable because of his writing that has been primarily at the early stages of the naturalist movement. Sister Carrie was like a movement away from the stress on morals of the Victorian era and focused on realism.*

It is said that *Sister Carrie* is a kind of mirror image of Dreiser’s own life as Dreiser has taken so many incidents from his personal life and uses them in this beautiful novel. Like

**KRISHNA V. BHARDA**

1Page



Carrie Dreiser also continues his life in a strange way as he leads his full of trials and struggle and changing jobs recurrently like Carrie.

It is also to be noted that the lives of his sisters has inspired him a great deal in so far as writing is concerned. He has told in his biography that he has been motivated to use the lives of his family and some of the incidents in his works. The image of his mother had always there in the mind of our novelist and that is the portrayal we can see in the character called Caroline Meeber in *Sister Carrie*. However, then we are told that the character of Carrie has been inspired by his real life sister Emma Dreiser. He has written a lot and most of his works have been honored.

*Sister Carrie* is a story telling novel of a girl who has to move to the big city where she begins realizing her own American Dream, first as a mistress to men that she perceives as superior, and later becoming a famous actress. It is said that the “greatest of all American urban novels.”

Sister Carrie goes against social as well as moral norms of the time and the novelist does not seem to try to judge his characters as he has presented his characters in a rebellious manner. Dreiser seems to rebel for Sister Carrie as she has been distracted and has brought herself engaged in affairs and other “illicit sexual relationships” without suffering any consequences. Established norms are broken by this that a good character need not practice such wicked behavior and if he/she does so, he/she should be punished in the course of the plot with a view to teach lesson. It has to be noted that Dreiser has often been critiqued for his writing style. It is said by Arnold Bennett criticized him by saying that “he does not know how to write”. On the other hand there were some critics who believed that his writing style seems vulgar, uneven, clumsy, awkward and careless. His plotlines were also described as unimaginative, and thus some critics says that it actually mentions his lack of education as he seems to be illiterate and they further claim that he lacks intellectualism as well. However, this novel has silenced almost all his critics. However, there are positive reviews as well for example, Alfred Kazin, who was once criticized Dreiser’s style and pointed out that Dreiser’s novels had survived and still appeared to be influential works only because they have contemporary values. Michael Lydon in defense of Dreiser stood for him and claimed that “Dreiser’s intent was to focus on the message of Sister Carrie, not on its writing style.”

Sister Carrie being opened in 1889 with eighteen year old Caroline Meeber on her way from her small hometown to the big city of Chicago. The novelist beautifully described this situation by saying that: “It was in August, 1889. She was eighteen years of age, bright, timid, and full of the illusions of ignorance and youth.” (1)



She is frightened to leave home, but she is determined and made her mind to make her way in the city. Here is a famous sentence of the novel occurs: and it is as following, “When a girl leaves her home at eighteen, she may do either one or two things may be she fall into saving hands or become better or she rapidly assumes the cosmopolitan standard of virtue and becomes worse.” (1)

But she got a company of Charles Drouet, who was a drummer or traveling salesman. Carrie used to live with her sister Minnie and her husband whose name was Sven Hanson, they had a small house and all the members lived together happily. It was a small apartment and they remained miserable as the apartment was not well furnished. After some years Carrie felt boredom and began searching a decent job which she got but she did not get good wages. The most disappointing thing was that the paid amount went to her sister at last end of the week. Without enough money in order to buy warm clothes, in the cold weather, she became sick and on account of her sickness she had to leave her job. By accident she hit into Drouet on the street and they began living together. His friend George Hurst wood was invited by Drouet at him home. George Hurst wood happened to be a Manager of famous saloon. The visit went well for both Hurst wood and Carrie. George Hurst wood had been unhappy with his home life but by this visit he seemed very pleased and happy as he met Carrie here. They appeared to be attracted to each other and Drouet is suffered by comparison with the older man. Carrie was convinced for leaving Drouet on a condition and it was that if Hurst wood would marry her and he agreed. But after some years saloon’s landlord had to sell the property and Hurst wood’s business partner expressed his intent to terminate the partnership. Too arrogant to accept most of the job opportunities were available to him, Hurst wood soon found out that his savings were running out and therefore he urged Carrie to help him economize, which she discovered awkward and repugnant. As Hurst wood considered what his next step would be, he found out that a large amount of money was there in the safe of saloon and he stole it. Carrie and Hurst wood married illegally under the assumed name of the Wheelers and move to New York City. But Carrie had grown more and more dissatisfied with her ragged clothes and simple lifestyle. In course of time Carrie visited Mrs. Vance’s cousin, Bob Ames, and he convinced her that wealth is not necessarily the meaning which brings all happiness. Carrie believed him to be the ideal man. Under the name Carrie Madenda, she got a job in a chorus line at the Casino Theater and was soon promoted and earning good money.

In the final chapter, Dreiser briefly visited his characters again. Carrie could be seen reading a serious novel which would have been recommended by Ames. Hurst wood ultimately came to join the homeless of New York, taking odds jobs, got unwell and ill with pneumonia and at the end became a beggar. Reduced to standing in line for basic needs like bread and charity, he committed suicide. Here was the appropriate situation of which the novelist said that,



“when a man, however passively, becomes an obstacle to the fulfillment of a woman’s desires, he becomes an odious thing in her eyes or will, given time enough.” (148)

Mean while, Carrie got stardom, still found that money and fame could not only the options which were able to satisfy her longings or to bring her everything. It could not give her happiness. Finally she had understood all the facts which were necessary for her and therefore she had not had everything which she wanted to have.

In short we can say that *Sister Carrie* is a novel about a girl and her dreams and she has made all the dreams successful at the end. Though, it also describes the fall of a successful man followed by his suicide.

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