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THE CHARACTERISTIC OF THE CHARACTERS IN THE NOVEL APNE-APNE AJANABEE

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ABSTRACT

In this piece of work we have gone elaborately into the characteristic of the characters that we witnessed in the novel Apne-Apne Ajanabee authored by one of the prolific novelists Sachchidananda Hirananda Vatsyayan Ajneya, who can be considered as one of the major contributors in every domain of Hindi literature in his era. Without any doubt one can accept this great personality as an institution rather than a human being. It is to be admitted that character is the primary ingredient of a novel which in true sense act as the major role in the form of catalysis towards the progress of the plotline till its' culmination. The smooth progress of the plotline can never be imagined without having some characters suitably chosen by the author wherein readers witnesses the spit intention and the inner philosophy as well the outlook of the author concerned. The characteristics of the characters portrayed by the author must suit the environment that they confront during their day to day business within the journey of their lifeline simultaneously with the progress of the plotline till the end. The plotline of the novel Apne-Apne Ajanabee, progresses on a single line agenda of the author in question, wherein we witnessed a confrontation in between Theism and Atheism in the form of the characters Selma and Yoke; a common reader will be thrilled because of the way that he presented the confrontation to take place between both of these isms as desired under his canvass of creations within a neutral environment that to entirely in a foreign background.

KEYWORDS: Neutral Environment, Confrontation between isms, Theist and Atheist, Jagannathan the replica of the holy place Jagannath.

INTRODUCTION

It is a common feature known to everyone that Atheism has always an extra mileage over Theism during day-light. On the counter part Theism always enjoys an extra mileage over Atheism during darkness of the night. The conflict between Theism and Atheism will never be justified if it will take place either in day-light or in the darkness of the night. What really strikes us that in the novel Apne-Apne Ajanabee the author has allowed to have a conflict in between Theism and Atheism in such an environment within which any one of these isms cannot have an extra advantage over the other. For a common man it will be very difficult to

imagine about an environment wherein none of these two can have advantage over the other, what we would like to name as a **Neutral Environment**. The author Ajneya has elegantly created an environment of an ice-laden house wherein Yoke (The character representing Atheism) and Selma (The character representing Theism) were forced to live under such circumstances wherein both of them could not feel the difference of day-light and darkness of the night. Through such environments Ajneya wanted to bring the triumph card between theism and atheism and he wanted to show which side has the maximum possibility and capability to win over the other. Ajneya can definitely be credited for bringing such a unique conception of two philosophical perceptions with extra-ordinary innovation of two conflicting ideologies pushing each one to win over the other in such a neutral environment. As an author Ajneya earned his fame for his exceptional and extraordinary innovative concepts in applying the opportunities at hand to give shape and colour to the environments that he picked-up for adequate and proper use of as those streams of environments came to his mind as amazing pieces of ideas which can be kept for comparison at par with the best and world renowned novels. Among his much sought-after novels, especially in Apne-Apne Ajanabee the concept of neutral environment is unique and it establishes the fact that Ajneya had immense potentialities to go to that arena of thoughts even where the world famous authors could not have thrown a ray of light into for which Ajneya could definitely carve a place of his own in the world literature in spite of the fact that open novels just started appearing as a form of art in Hindi literature during the period concerned. His role as a novelist during the period when he began to write was courageous but on the other hand its effects were tremendous; because the then society was bound by so many social rites and rituals, so-called ethical values and some unwanted superstitious beliefs which restricted the thinking of the upcoming generations by slamming the door behind for letting fresh air of some innovative creations; but in spite of such odds Ajneya could break the ice and inscribed a record as a pioneer of open novels in Hindi literature.

FINDINGS

The plot or the subject-matter of a novel is very prominent in the development of the sequences of its other essences such as the characters, dialogues, the graphical pictorization of the philosophy of the author etc. No doubt, the simplest form of prose fiction is the history which records a successful events and the author is considered to be successful when he can artistically handle the fragmentations of the plotline that he applies in his creative work. The subject matter should be chosen in such a way that curiosity in the readers' mind can be created to know what is going to happen next and if that story bears a universal appeal then the work of that author is highly estimated in the domain of the world literature.

Here, the novelist himself takes the role of narrator which begins with the environment of sudden earthquake due to which there occurs severe icefall. Due to the continuous and incessant icefall last night, silence prevails everywhere, all the ice from the hill slides down into the wooden house where Yoke and Selma are living in, all on a sudden both of them become trapped under a huge pile of snow. While Yoke roaming in the hilly place with her boyfriend Pal Soren, she is getting attracted towards the wooden house of Selma, as a result of which she proposes to stay there; Yoke has come to that room built on the hilly region leaving her boyfriend, who do not show any interest in that wooden house and move away to some other place with a commitment that he will come back soon. Thus Yoke is forced to live an imprisoned life with an unfamiliar woman Selma in that snow-covered wooden house. There is zero possibility to leave that snow covered house resembling a coffin before the month of March. The novelist Ajneya succeeds in representing the aesthetic conflict between point of views of faithful Selma and atheist Yoke in such an environment of imprisonment. In her life full of struggle, Selma has faced a direct confrontation with death as she is suffering from disease like cancer. Being familiar with such experiences, Selma learns to accept such an adverse situation lightly with a very calm mind. But Yoke is not acquainted with an environment like this as a result we witness the fear of death in the pale face of atheist Yoke, who has a firm belief that death is the ultimate end of life; although she is trying to console herself by claiming that she has already climbed up huge rocks in the past in the Alps amidst snow, she hurt her legs and hands, once while slipping from an icy river, therefore there is no question of being scared. The irony is that within the behaviour of Yoke and Selma one can witness a picture between the isms concerned here as if it has been displayed in a distorting mirror. This is how the author allows the

confrontation between Theist and Atheist to take place without any interruption from outside so that none of these isms can enjoy extra advantage over the other. Yoke is terrified with the fear of death and her fear is clearly reflected in the following write-up in her diary:

‘Ek antahin, paribartanhein dhundhli roshni, Jo na din ki hain, na rat ki hain, na sandhya ke kisi kshan ki hain, ek aparthiv roshni jo ki shayad roshni bhi nahi hain, itna hi hain ki us-se andhkar nahi kaha ja sakta’¹

As time passes, Selma, who is suffering from cancer, but she is not burning with the fear of death, she is welcoming death for the sake of her fulfillment of life, as she believes that from the point of death the ultimate journey towards the lap of God actually begin because of which one can have a clear idea regarding the future road map to reach the ultimate destiny what he or she aimed at. Such cool and calm behaviour of Selma at the point of culmination of her life acts as a catalyst in Yoke’s mind. The feelings of disgust and anger of Yoke towards Selma clearly reflects in the write-up in her diary:

‘Kabhi-kabhi mujhe lagta hai ki woh-tashtari bhi uthati hae, ya ki aag ki aur bhi hath barhati hae, to mano in nirjiw chijon ko bhi dularti aur asisti hae. Aag ko asisti hae-who, jise aag ko dekhkar ririyana chahiye kiyonki abi uske bhitr ki aag bujh jayegi aur woh ho jayegi- kiya? Rakh-rakh se bhi kam. Use dekhte-dekhte mera mon hota hae ki jor se chikhun, ki jalti hui lakdi uthakar uski kalayiun par de marun jisse uska aag ko asisne ka dursahas karnewala hath nishhe gir jaye- ekaek jiske sadme se uski hridgati bandh ho jaye.’²

The mark of old age is clearly seen in the face of Selma whereas she spent Christmas in a normal way as if nothing had happened in the near past. On 6th January’s diary Pgs, Yoke writes about a question regarding Selma that with whose help, even near her death, Selma is spending her times without any fear! In reply, Selma says that death is not nullifier of life, God can be known through death only. Therefore, ‘*death*’ is the basic thing of life which will definitely appear in order to culminate the lifeline; the only point how one can accept the same. In this regard Selma speaks in her own words:

‘Kya sachmuch aisa hain? Mujhe kiska sahara hain, main nahin janti hu. Ishwar kaha hain, Yah bhi kis muh se keh sakti hu?Walki shayad mon se Ishwar ko tab tak pehchan nahi sakte jabtak ki mrityu me hi use na pehchaan le’.³

On the diary entry of the month of January, Yoke speaks about her own mind. Expressing a philosophical opinion regarding life and death, Yoke has accepted that death as a nullifier of life, according to her own philosophy no roadmap or nothing is left after death. The argument of Yoke regarding Selma’s thoughts, who has accepted death as another name of God, one can capture through words such as:

‘Mritu ek juth hain, kiyonki woh jivan ka khandan hain aur me hu aur janti hu ki me jiti hu, kabhi eyisa hoga ki jiti na rahungi lekin jab nahi rahungi tab jannewala bhi kaun rahega ki me jiwit nahi hu-ki me mar chuki hu? Maut dusro ki hi ho sakti hain, jinka hona aur na hona dono hi ham jan sakte hain-ya mante hain! lekin apni mritu ka kya matlab hain? Woh kewal dusre ko dekhkar lagaya huwa ek anuman hain-ki dusre ke sath aisa huwa isliye hamare sath bhi hoga!’⁴

What really strikes us that we confront two different characteristics in the same character in the form of Selma which are quite opposite in nature. In fact the characteristic of Selma was quite different in her early life when we meet her as a selfish shopkeeper who used to run after profit in her business by any means, even the death of one of her nearby shopkeeper could not imprint a single spot in her heart whereas in some sense Selma was responsible for the death of the Photographer. In the town where Selma lived in, the lifestyle of the people was orthodox and backward. There was an old garden, always green with trees and plants, in front of

¹ Ajneya, Sachchinanada Hirananda Vatsyaya. Apne-Apne Ajanabee, Bharatiya Jnyaanpith, 1961, Pg.-15

² Ajneya, Sachchinanada Hirananda Vatsyayan. Apne-Apne Ajanabee, Bharatiya Jnyaanpith, 1961, Pg.-31

³ Ajneya, Sachchinanada Hirananda Vatsyayan. Apne-Apne Ajanabee, Bharatiya Jnyaanpith, 1961. Pg.-40

⁴ Ajneya, Sachchinanada Hirananda Vatsyayan. Apne-Apne Ajanabee, Bharatiya Jnyaanpith, 1961, Pg.- 41

the plain field of the town. Other than a river and a road beside the garden, there was a curved bridge. Beside the bridge Selma, a Photographer and Yan had their shops. Selma had a tea shop there. Every year flood fills the river with water, but after a few days everything becomes as before. The dangerous flood in the year 1906 resulted in huge piles of destruction. Around that time, the biggest of all accidents were caused by that horrific flood and the incident of the collapse of bridges occur due to the earthquake. In this destructive wave, Selma, Yan and the photographer succeed in surviving the dangerous situation of life and death. Due to terrible natural disaster she doubles the price of goods. One day Yan comes to buy wheat and beef but Selma sells them at an excessive price. All the drinking water, the photographer has stored becomes polluted as some broken bottles of medicine fall into the drum of water. So on the second day the photographer comes to Selma, asking her for drinking water, but ruthless Selma refuses to give him any drinking water and she says so:

‘Pani mere pas shayad chay banane layak bhar hoga, maine abhi chay bhi nahi banayi hain, kaho to wohi pani tumhe de du, yaa ki yehi ek piyala chay pi lo’⁵

Because of drinking unhygienic water, the body of the Photographer has already turned yellow and he becomes sick. One night out of desperation, he is forced to kill himself by burning his shop and jumping in the stream of the river. Although, for a moment, the photographer’s landlord keeps on staring at the incident of self-immolation but they could not save him and his death makes Selma anxious. Out of emotions and to console herself she states:

‘Mano photographer ki woh unmtta mudra usne fir dekhi, woh pagal chikh fir suni, aur fir pani ki budbudahat aur fir woh ek swar ghargharahat, jise ghare huye use na jane kitne din ho gaye the.’⁶

Yan comes to buy beef from Selma, who always thinks of gathering profit, which is the only motto of her business. As Yan could not give the required sum of money, Selma gives him only the half part of the piece of the beef. There must be a reason behind Selma’s such an act; but this attitude of Selma only expresses her immoral as well as inhuman identity. Later at night, Yan comes to Selma’s house to share with her, the last meal he cooked himself, but being suspicious of his advent at the hour of the night, Selma refuses to open the door. But a little later, to ensure her security, she opens the door with a rod in her hand, which gives us a clear picture of insecurity in her mind. Actually, Yan came to Selma with a plan to have the last meal of his life, by cooking the beef that he bought from Selma, with the final fund of his life as Yan has already become bankrupt:

‘Isliye sajha karne aya hu, apni antim punji dekar yeh antim bhojan maine kharida hain, ise akele nahi kha sakunga!..... aur ise pakana bhi kuch asan nahin tha-Photographer ki jali hui dukan ki anch par hi yeh paka hain, ise jarur hi bahut suwadu hona chahiye-mere jiwan ke mol yeha kharida gaya aur Photographer ke jiwan ke mol pak saka , lo -’⁷

Proud, selfish and self-centric Selma becomes more sympathetic with Yan’s behaviour and Selma feels guilty for her inhuman attitude, as a result she has decided to bow down in front of the simplicity of Yan. A deep understanding of life transforms her character, internally. Selma starts searching for the actual meaning of life in a fresh manner. To sacrifice herself to Yan, Selma puts forward marriage proposal to him and she leaves all her property to Yan in her will. Though Yan is bankrupt still he has the courage to ignore her marriage proposal and sets her will on fire tearing into pieces. The main reason for which Yan refuses to accept all the wealth offered by Selma, which she gathered by wicked ways. But there is a new turn of events as Yan accepts Selma as his life partner, starting a new chapter of their married life which results in Selma being mother of three children and one day Yan takes his last breath. Even after the untimely demise of Yan, the memories of profound values of life which she learnt from his company, makes Selma a deeply bereaved woman and she

⁵ Ajneya, Sachchinanada Hirananda Vatsyayan. Apne-Apne Ajanabee, Bharatiya Jnyaanpith, 1961, Pg.- 57

⁶ Ajneya, Sachchinanada Hirananda Vatsyayan. Apne-Apne Ajanabee, Bharatiya Jnyaanpith, 1961, Pg.- 63

⁷ Ajneya, Sachchinanada Hirananda Vatsyayan. Apne-Apne Ajanabee, Bharatiya Jnyaanpith, 1961, Pg.-67

transform herself into a firm theist. As a result she could gather the courage to accept the ultimate truth of life which is inevitable to appear in the form of death to culminate the life line in a very cool and calm mind.

Coming back to Yoke, she did not realize the universal truth prevailing everywhere when Selma was alive but after her death the philosophical thoughts of Selma penetrated into her heart about the ultimate truth of the omnipresence of the Almighty. She could feel the smell of death, nearing death and facing death etc. and all those thoughts made Yoke feel extremely lonely and under such circumstances she confessed that such situations of extreme loneliness is similar to death. In this connection she makes a categorical comment:

‘Mujhe itna akela karke-akela hona mrityu ke sath akela hona-mrityu ke sanmukh akela hona-mrityu me akela hona-is charam akelapan aur swam mirtiye me kya antar hain? kya huwa agar Ishwar chori se dekh raha hain us akeli mirtiye ko-kya Ishwar bhi mara huwa nahi hain?’⁸

Finally Yoke digs a hole in ice and puts the dead body of Selma there and covering her corpse by snow, finishes her last rites. Though, Yoke is extremely lonely after the demise of Selma, in her mind the feeling of forgiveness rises; but to console herself quickly to establish reasons for God on forgiving Selma, quoting herself. Yoke ponders over her thoughts. As Selma has already died, there is no need to ask for forgiveness of Selma and if being lonely is similar to death, then God, we believe in, is actually a lonely, sick and rotten dead self as God is the loneliest identity in the Universe, that is why non-believer Yoke feels no need to apologize God, who smells of death. Unfamiliar environment and feeling of loneliness make Yoke de-arranged. The lone good news is that snow has started to melt and amidst silence everywhere-Yoke feels that her boyfriend Pal Soren is calling her, waving his hand, but she has no capacity to recognizing her boyfriend due to mental imbalance. As soon as Yoke is able to come out from the captivity of the ice laden house, the German soldier take her into their custody and they starts to use her as a prostitute within their barricade. After getting raped by German soldiers somehow she succeed to escape from their captivity under the dark shadow; erratic Yoke goes into the crowd gathered in front of a ration shop. There she puts out her cigarette in a piece of paneer, purchased by a person named Jagannathan and throwing the piece of cheese on the floor, she escapes by running away. Jagannathan runs after her, following her but Yoke stops ahead as the road is closed and to receive punishment from Jagannathan, she sits on the stairs. However instead of giving punishment Jagannathan shows sympathy towards her, as a result it makes her benign to Jagannathan. Yoke brings out a bottle of poison from her pocket to end her life in front of benevolent Jagannathan, whom she thought to be a decent person.

‘Kah dungi ki maine chuna, swecha se chuna, sab kuch kah dungi, sari harami duniya ko bata dungi ki ekbar maine apne man se jo chuna wohi kya, harami-harami duniya, Nathan-ache admi-mujhe maf kar do!’⁹

CONCLUSION

Without any doubt in the novel *Apne-Apne Ajanabee* through the character Yoke the novelist expressed brilliantly her vehemently-grown atheistic views on the very existence of God. What we believe that in the entire period of life, nobody gets freedom to choose or accept anything independently; whatever will come to our life we must accept it as because it is coming as per the will of the Almighty. On the contrary, just before her last breath Yoke choosing this symbol of hope Jagannathan, on her own will, non-believer Yoke embraces death in faithful lap of Jagannathan, gaining everlasting freedom as she believe.

What we witness here that all the characters portrayed by Ajneya are of foreign origin except one who happens to be Jagannathan by name is of Indian origin, what we can infer from their names itself. More surprisingly atheist Yoke takes her last breath on the lap of an Indian that to in a foreign environment wherein all the citizens were terrified because of the terror of German soldiers; more interestingly why the lone Indian Jagannathan present there in such an odd environment. Till the end of the plotline the author never unfold his own views towards the answer of the questions raise in the mind of a common reader. All of we know that

⁸ Ajneya, Sachchinanada Hirananda Vatsyayan. *Apne-Apne Ajanabee*, Bharatiya Jnyaanpith, 1961Pg.-77

⁹ Ajneya, Sachchinanada Hirananda Vatsyayan. *Apne-Apne Ajanabee*, Bharatiya Jnyaanpith, 1961, Pg.- 86

Jagannath is a holy place in India and every Indian has a firm perception that one will receive the grace of God if he or she can visit Jagannath. May be the author use Jagannathan as the replica of the holy place Jagannath and he would like to show how ultimately the Atheism has to bow down in front of Theism symbolically through the last breath of atheist Yoke on the lap of Jagannathan. Here we can point out one more interesting aspects of the novel in question; as we know that the background of all other novels except the novel in question, created by Ajneya under his canvass of creations lies within the periphery of India. Our million worth question is why Ajneya has chosen a completely foreign background for the novel Apne-Apne Ajanabee? What was his spit intention behind this sort of exceptional choice of the background as well characters? As we have already mentioned that Ajneya has created a neutral environment wherein he has allowed the conflict between the two isms to take place so that none of these two can enjoy advantage over other, as a result of which nobody will have any doubt in their mind on the ultimate consequence of the conflict in question. We know that almost all Indians are follower of Theism, had there been an Indian background of the novel in question someone might argue that Theism has enjoyed home advantage during the conflict and therefore Atheism has to bow down in front of Theism. In order to avoid such a situation Ajneya might have chosen a completely foreign background for the novel in question. Considering all these aspects we can draw a bold line of conclusion that the ultimate consequence what we witness is really perfect in true test and colour and the farsighted novelist Sachchidananda Hirananda Vatsyayan Ajneya will remain as a magician, an icon in the heart of every Indian forever.

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