

Reflection On The Hussaini Alam House By Huma R.Kidwai

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The life and culture of old Hyderabad has been brought to life in the form of a first person narration by Ayman who had spent the formative years of her life in a house which was called Hussaini Alam House, which otherwise belonged to her maternal grandfather.

Though the story is full of male and female characters, the house in itself appears as the central character of the novel. The story revolves around the recollections of Ayman's childhood memories about three men and eight women characters and the house and its glory that influenced her sensibility. It is an artistically narrated story which makes use of many literary devices. When Ayman narrates the history of the house, the story also touches the social and political changes that were taking place during and after independence in Hyderabad, in particular, and in India, as a whole. The rise and decline of the house alongwith not only the inhabitants, but its rich culture and the glory, is drawn in an elegiac tone and the novel reads more like a memoir.

When I read the novel, I could relate to some of the characters with my grandparents and with the stories narrated by my mother and grandmother. The rise and the decline of the Hussain family could be related to all those mansions which are in a dilapidated condition now. With the physical wear and tear of a mansion, withers away the culture and lifestyles of all those who live in them. I often wonder that those who had spent their childhood in such houses would definitely be as nostalgic about these mansions as is the central character Ayman. To have an empire-like home and to have enjoyed its grandeur, and to eventually see it all diminishing to a debris of rich culture of which, once, one used to take pride in, is a painful thing to experience for anyone in his lifetime. The author's rich lifestyle seems now

to be reduced to the reminiscence of her memory. Witnessing a downfall of The Hussaini Alam House, left scars on the author's memory.

An interesting thing that I note in Ayman's narration is that when the men in the house had ceased to earn and the house was losing its grandeur, it were the women in the house who were sustaining the richness of the cultural life inside the home. Even the small girl Ayman could see this –

The two men in the house, Bawajaan and Khalubawa, were old and confined to their rooms almost all the time. Ours was a household of women. There were six women including Naiyan Dadi. What purpose would another man serve in this place other than being an appendage? To me, men seemed vestigial. They did not do the housework, did not balance the precarious budget, did not deal with neighbours and relatives, did not help with the school work, did not bargain with vegetable vendors and most certainly did not tell fairytales that made summer evenings seem cool and food taste good. They only demanded time and threw tantrums over unimportant issues. They were unable to look after their own deeds... (pp.85-86)

In such a condition, women became the sustaining force in the household. To nurture the age old culture and maintain a rich lifestyle that the family members had always enjoyed, the women of the house struggled. The story suggests me that if the seeds of a rich heritage have been sown, it is to be watered constantly, if not by the men, then by the women, but it can not be neglected, and if neglected, it dies a poignant death. I have often seen household where the house is being pulled along by the women but seldom have I seen the male running the internal housework. Amma, Ayman's grandmother, lived all her life for others and let her husband feel

that it was he who was the head of the family. She devoted her life in maintaining the standard of living her family was habitual of, but never let her husband feel that she was the one sustaining the family. In a way, she was pulling along with not only the burden of sustaining a rich lifestyle, but also upholding the patriarchy that prevails in our societies. Women of the house seem to me to be considerate to maintain their standard of lives and at the same time, being considerate enough towards the prestige of the men of the family. These were silent, unnoticed and unaccounted sacrifices by her and the same kind of sacrifices I can notice by the women around me in their lives.

It was only when her husband dies that Ayman realises that Amma was the real sustaining force of the house. There are many women like Amma in India who are the sustaining force behind the household which often goes unaccounted for. The silent sacrifices of Ayman's mother and her Khala are realised by Ayman quite late in her life when she herself undergoes the pangs of life.

Conclusion :

There are clear incidents of autobiographical shades in the narration although the author doesn't acknowledge it. It has given me an insight into the struggle of maintenance of a mansion and its rich culture and an eventual, silent death of grandeur of a lifestyle that a family once enjoyed. The picture of a journey from a glorious past to the present day left memories has been drawn beautifully. In the end, I would like to write that the novel has given me an understanding of the trajectories that the cities passed through in the course of time. The centre of human activity shifts from one location to the other in the life of a city making the elite dwellings look like the old city when the city sprawls towards the periphery.

पृष्ठ 36 का शेष नीलम राकेश की बालकहानियों.....

मच्छर मँडराते। पेड़ों की सिंचाई होती सो अलग।²⁰ यथार्थपरक ऐसे दृश्य कहानी को जीवन्ता प्रदान करने में सहायक सिद्ध हुए हैं; दृश्य वर्षा ऋतु में ही नहीं, जल बहाव की उचित व्यवस्था न होने पर हमें जहाँ-तहाँ दिखाई देते हैं।

नीलम राकेश के बालकहानी संग्रहों का अध्ययन करने के पश्चात् निष्कर्षतः कहा जा सकता है कि लेखिका ने कल्पना के पंखों पर बैठाकर, जिस तरह बच्चों को यथार्थलोक में पहुँचाया है, उससे कहानियाँ जीवन्त हो उठी हैं। कथानक एवं चरित्र-चित्रण की सजीवता के कारण, उनकी काल्पनिक कहानियाँ भी यथार्थ सी प्रतीत होती हैं; अतः उन्हें पढ़कर बच्चे आनन्दित होने के साथ ही प्रेरित भी होते हैं। लेखिका ने कल्पना की तूलिका से रंग भरकर कभी उन्हें क्रिकेट खेलते हुए तो कभी साइकिल चलाते हुए, आतंकवादियों का पदार्पाश करते दिखाया है तो कभी छुट्टियों का सदुपयोग करने के लिए मित्रमंडली के साथ मिलकर, सफाई अभियान चलाने की योजना बनाते। वर्तमान समय में हमारे देश में, सरकार द्वारा जिस तरह अनेक सामाजिक योजनाओं का प्रचार-प्रसार किया जा रहा है, ऐसी स्थिति में ये कहानियाँ बच्चों के मन में स्वच्छता और स्वास्थ्य-जागृति के प्रति ललक उत्पन्न करने में भी प्रेरक का कार्य करती दिखाई देती हैं। मनोरंजन की दृष्टि से ही नहीं, बच्चों में मानवीयमूल्यों का बीजारोपण करने तथा यथार्थ से परिचित कराकर, उन्हें कर्तव्य निर्वहन के लिए प्रेरित करने की दृष्टि से भी ये कहानियाँ उपयोगी एवं महत्त्वपूर्ण हैं। नीलम जी ने जिस तरह कल्पना के चटकीले रंग भरकर, बच्चों को यथार्थ से परिचित कराया है, उससे बच्चा भयभीत नहीं होता बल्कि विपरीत परिस्थितियों का सामना करने के लिए तत्पर हो उठता है। निःसंदेह नीलम राकेश की बालकहानियों में यथार्थ एवं कल्पना का संतुलित समन्वय है।



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