



Q5. While hatred against a member of the enemy race is justifiable, especially during wartime, what makes a human being rise above narrow prejudices?

Ans: It is the consciousness of the demands of one's calling that make a sensitive soul respond to the call of his duty as a professional doctor to attend to the wounded human being regardless of his being an enemy.

In the story 'The Enemy' Dr Sadao Hoki finds a prisoner of war washed ashore and in a dying state thrown to his doorstep. As a patriot, it is his duty to hand him over to the police. If he does not want to be entangled, the next best thing is to put him back to the sea.

However, the surgeon in him instinctively inspires him to operate upon the dying man and save him from the jaws of death. First, he packs the wound with sea-moss to stanch the fearful bleeding. Then he brings him home with the help of his wife. In spite of stiff opposition and open defiance of the servants, he operates upon the man and harbours him till he is able to leave. He knows fully well the risk of sheltering a white man—a prisoner of war—in his house. But his sentimentality for the suffering and wounded person help him rise above narrow national prejudices and extend his help and services even to an enemy.

Q6. Do you think the doctor's final solution to the problem was the best possible one in the circumstances?

Ans: Yes, I think the doctor's final solution to the problem was the best possible one in the circumstances. Initially, the doctor as well as his wife thought that the best as well as kindest thing would be to put him back into the sea. But neither of them was able to put him back into the sea.

Sadao explained that if the man was whole he could turn him over to the police without difficulty, but since he was wounded, the doctor could not throw him back to the sea. He could not kill the man whom he had saved from the jaws of death.

The General promised to send his private assassins to kill the man and remove his dead body. Sadao waited for three nights for their arrival, but they never came as the General being preoccupied with his own suffering, forgot everything else.

Meanwhile the fear of Hana, the doctor's wife, that he would be arrested on the charge of harbouring an enemy kept on mounting. Dr Sadao made up his mind to get rid of the man as it was not only inconvenient but also dangerous for them to have him there any longer. He, therefore, quietly devised the plan of letting the prisoner escape by using his own boat and Japanese clothes.

As soon as the enemy left, the servants returned and life became normal once again. Dr Sadao informed the General that "the man" had escaped. The General admitted that he had forgotten his promise as he thought of nothing but himself as he was suffering a great deal. He confessed that it was careless of him but it was not his lack of patriotism or dereliction of duty. In short, the doctor's strategy to let the prisoner escape was the best possible solution to the problem under the prevailing circumstances.

Q7. Does the story remind you of 'Birth' by A. J. Cronin that you read in 'Snapshots' last year? What are the similarities?

Ans: Yes, the story 'The Enemy' by Pearl S. Buck certainly reminds us of the story 'Birth' by A. J. Cronin. Both the stories have certain obvious similarities. Both the stories revolve around the protagonist who is a doctor. Both of them focus on the doctor's devotion and dedication to his duty and his concern for the well-being of his patient. The doctor sacrifices his own rest and comfort while attending to the patient. In the story 'Birth', Dr Sadao Hoki performs no less a miracle. He saves an almost dying man from the jaws of death by skilfully extracting the bullet from his body and giving him medicines and injections for quick relief.

Dr Sadao runs a greater risk than Dr Andrew Mason. While the former could be arrested on the charge of harbouring an enemy and condemned to death, the latter (Dr Andrew) was foregoing rest and staking his reputation as a medical practitioner. He had had a disappointing evening with Christine, the girl he loves, but he forgets his personal feelings and concentrates on the safe delivery of child and then of reviving the middle-aged mother and the still-born child. Similarly, Dr Sadao is dedicated to his patient and his problems. He forgets everything while concentrating on the operation. His servants have defied him for sheltering an enemy and run away. His wife, Hana, has to do menial jobs while attending to the patient and her retching disturbs him. Her distress and his inability to attend to her make him impatient and irritable, but he does not desert the man who is under his knife. To conclude, we may say that the zeal, dedication and efforts of both the doctors are similar. There is difference of degree in the risk factor, but their devotion to suffering humanity is undoubtedly of the same kind.

Q8. Is there any film you have seen or novel you have read with a similar theme?

Ans: I remember an old Hindi film 'Dr Kotnis ki Amar Kahani' that deals with a similar theme. The eminent doctor gives up his practice and goes to the war front to look after the wounded and ailing soldiers and render them medical help. He spares no pain in performing his duties. He ignores the demands of his own body that is sleep, rest and comfort. Service to suffering humanity is his sole motivation and in his zeal to restore the maximum number of victims back to health, the doctor suffers from physical and mental exhaustion and ultimately dies.

The film based on the life of Florence Nightingale, the lady with the lamp, also glorifies the spirit of service and sacrifice of a member of the medical profession. It is through her sheer hard work and dedication to duty that Florence Nightingale raises the job of a nurse to a high pedestal.

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