

RESOLUTION

Anna, a young boy, had just returned to his village from the college hostel during his summer vacation. As he trudged towards his home, he saw the sun going below the horizon and the western skies flashed with the orange-russet streaks of light.

The scene of the setting sun always put him in low spirits. He himself didn't know, why ?

The land was dry and parched. At places it appeared as if futile attempts had been made at ploughing, the ploughed ridges had hardened. Here and there, cactii of different shapes grew. A solitary crow perched on the old *babul* tree.

Anna was struck by the unusual tranquillity all around, which was pierced by the collective twittering of the birds soaring high in the skies. The jovial fields where the farmers ploughed, enjoyed and sang, the meadows where the cattle grazed - why were they deserted ?

He missed the chirpy, little faces plucking berries from the thorny *ber* trees or playing cricket with their battered bats and small, stiff stems of trees as wickets.

Anna watched the fallow land spread across the distant horizon with eyes wide open, but did not perceive a human soul. He was unable to comprehend what the matter was. Strange thoughts crossed his mind. Has something inauspicious happened in his little village ?

He treaded with quick steps, but his luggage slackened his pace.

He passed by the village *paathshaala*, where the evening classes were held for the children and the youth. The silence of this familiar place jarred on his ears - no students sitting on the sack-mats, no reprimanding by the *master-saab*, no nodding heads memorizing tables - '*do ekam do, do duni chaar*', no heads bent low over their slates, no writing boards propped up against the wall to dry in the air.

Anna moved ahead. The village *chaupaal* was empty. As he came close to the houses, he thought of the pleasant aroma of the evening food being cooked, which used to make him ravenous, but this familiar smell, too, was missing. the village dog barked at him. Has he become a stranger in his own village ?

Suddenly, he caught a glimpse of the *chowkidaar*, a frail man, with milk-white beard, wearing a shabby *dhoti-kurta*.

Anna asked, "Baba. what's the matter ? Where have the villagers gone ?"

The old man answered, "All the villagers have gone to the village temple to offer special midnight prayers to appease God, as there is a severe drought in the village. Although, there was sufficient rainfall this year, yet all the sources of water have dried up. To them it is indicative of the fury of God."

The *chowkidaar* heaved a deep sigh and said, “The villagers are starving and their existence is in peril. They have nothing to look forward to. A few villagers have already migrated to the cities in search of jobs, thinking that this village is cursed.”

Anna decided that he will not join the villagers in the temple.

He thought that the village folk do not endeavour to find a solution to any grave problem because of the lack of proper education. If things become unbearable, they need God to descend on earth to fight their battle. They hopefully wait for an *avatar*. In the hour of crisis, they do not realize that “God helps those who help themselves.”

Evening gave way to twilight and twilight sank into darkness. He was alone in his hut. He turned up the wick of the lantern. Its sooty chimney became bright.

Anna’s thoughts flew back to the past. He remembered how his parents, inspite of the stringent financial conditions, sent him to a prestigious science college in the city. His strong will to prove himself, won him the award of the best student of the college.

Anna was firmly determined that after completing his education, he would return to his small village and work for its upliftment. He always thought of employing modern methods of farming in his village and educating the villagers on environment, water management and other issues.

He was totally different from his other classmates, who always dreamt of earning in dollars and leading a luxurious life in a foreign country.

As he was reflecting on the goal of his life, his eyelids became heavy and he went off to sleep.

Anna, then saw a macabre vision. There were “Bombs, bombs, everywhere and not a place to hide.” He could clearly see the blazing homes, dilapidated buildings, charred, mangled bodies and mounds of corpses. The entire atmosphere was resounding with the whining sounds, cries of lamentation and agony.

He heard a pathetic voice, “My throat is parched. Can someone give me a drop of water ?” and within a few moments the feeble voice became silent. Leaks of blood sprang from the lines of the old, wrinkled face.

On the other side, a heart-rending shriek of a woman was audible to him. She had gone insane, because she had lost everything. She was holding the dead body of her child in her arms and staring at the body with vacant eyes. Another explosion and she attained eternal peace.

Anna, then saw an incredible sight. The waters of all the rivers and oceans had turned red. He wondered, why ? Is it the blood of the human-beings ?

There was a tormenting pain within him and a deep horror in his eyes. He shrieked, “No, it can not be true.”

However, it was true. The Third World War had started and the reason for this tragic event was “Water Crisis”. The countries with huge stores of pure water were being attacked by other countries to capture their water-pockets. Will the entire humanity perish ?

He woke up trembling and then realized that it was just a dream. He thought that his dreadful nightmare could turn into a reality if no steps were taken for the proper management of water. He was now firmly determined to impart training to the youth of the village on water management techniques, who in turn would train the entire village.

It was three o’ clock. The temple prayers were over. All the villagers were returning with a solemn expression on their faces. Women were holding the drowsy children in their arms.

The young village boys, great pals of Anna, were very keen to meet him. Within no time, they reached his house. Warm hugs were exchanged. Anna narrated his terrible dream to them and they realized that only ‘*pooja-paath*’ will not solve this grave water problem.

They discussed the importance of trees in conserving water. In the forests, water seeps gently into the ground as vegetation breaks the fall. This ground water in turn, feeds wells, lakes and rivers. Protecting forests means protecting water ‘catchments’. They resolved that they will motivate everyone to plant and take care of at least one tree and prevent the indiscriminate cutting of trees.

Mahesh, a vibrant boy, with glowing eyes said, “I know that over the years, rising population, growing industrialization and expanding agriculture have pushed up the demand for water.”

He further said that people should develop a habit of saving water in their day-to-day lives because, “every drop matters.”

Ramuda, a bright chap with calm, meditative face made his presence felt and said, “In urban areas, the construction of houses, footpaths and roads has left little exposed earth for water to soak in. In parts of the rural areas of India, flood water quickly flows to the rivers, which then dry up soon after the rains stop. If this water can be held back, it can seep into the ground and recharge the groundwater supply.”

Mahesh looked at Anna with questioning eyes, “*Bhaiya*, I have heard of rain-water harvesting. What is it ?”

“Rain water harvesting essentially means collecting rain water on the roofs of the buildings and storing it underground for later use. Not only does this recharging stop ground water depletion, it also raises the declining water level and can help increase water supply. It is

necessary to stop the decline in groundwater levels, prevent sea-water from moving landward and conserve surface water run-off during the rainy season”, explained Anna.

They realized that there is enough water and the need of the hour is to manage the available resources properly.

All of them made a very strong resolution that they would start a movement for the conservation of the most precious thing on earth, that is, water. They pledged, “We will start this noble work from today, only.”

Their faces lit up, along with the landscape. The glorious sun was rising in the crimsoned east. Anna was elated to see this beautiful sight. The rising sun always kindled optimistic feelings in his heart.

The rising sun became a symbol of hope for the young, enthusiastic villagers. It seemed to beckon a brighter future for mankind. The boys knew that every morning the first rays of the rising sun will remind them of their firm resolution.

- MANEESH GOYAL

About the Author :

Maneesh Goyal is born and educated in Rajasthan. He is a dedicated social worker, great philanthropist and a successful administrator. He teaches modern methods of farming and water conservation techniques to the villagers. He writes stories on issues concerning social responsibilities, social welfare and environmental protection.

About the Story :

The story, "Resolution", lays stress on the importance of water, which is the most precious natural resource in present scenario. This story is very inspiring and thought provoking. Though written in a very simple style, it succeeds in leaving a great impact on the heart of the reader. It ends with a resolution of Anna and other villagers to plant trees and conserve water to save the future of mankind.

Glossary

resolution	-	firm determination
trudged	-	walked laboriously
solitary	-	alone, single
parched	-	dried up due to heat or sunlight
tranquility	-	peace, calm
battered	-	broken, beaten up
inauspicious	-	ill omened or unlucky
slackened	-	slowed
reprimanding	-	scolding, chiding
aroma	-	a pleasant smell
ravenous	-	extremely hungry
appease	-	to make less angry by satisfying demand, to gain the good will of
sooty	-	covered with black smoke
dilapidated	-	in very bad condition because of age or neglect
charred	-	burnt
whining	-	uttering pitiful cries
lamentation	-	an expression of grief or sorrow
agony	-	great mental or bodily suffering

incredible	-	unbelievable, beyond understanding
tormenting	-	causing severe mental or physical suffering
perish	-	suffer destruction; rot / decay / die
catchments	-	an area from which rainfall drains into a river
depletion	-	the act of decreasing something
elated	-	felt very pleased.

COMPREHENSION

(A) Tick the correct alternative :

- Who had returned to his village from the college hostel ?
 (a) Ramuda (b) Mahesh
 (c) Anna (d) Chowkidaar
- Which scene put Anna in low spirits ?
 (a) the rising sun (b) the old babul tree
 (c) the setting sun (d) the village
- They discussed the importance of _____.
 in conserving water :
 (a) temples (b) birds
 (c) trees (d) villagers
- The Third World War had started and the reason for this tragic event was --
 (a) food crisis (b) oil crisis
 (c) water crisis (d) money crisis

(B) State whether the statements given below are True (T) or False (F) :

- Anna had just returned to college. []
- The village Chaupaal was empty. []
- All the sources of water have a lot of water. []
- Anna saw a pleasant dream. []
- Rain water harvesting essentially means collecting rain water. []
- The need of the hour is to waste the available resources. []

7. The rising sun became a symbol of hope for the young villagers. []

(C) Answer the following questions in 20-25 words each :

1. Why did Anna return to his village ?
2. What did Anna miss on his way home ?
3. Describe the Chowkidar's appearance.
4. What did Anna want to do after completing his education ?
5. What did Anna's classmate dream of ?
6. What incredible sight did Anna see in his nightmare ?
7. What was the reason of the Third World War in Anna's dream ?

(D) Answer the following questions in to 30-40 words each :

1. What did Anna see when he returned to his home ?
2. Why did Anna think that he had become a stranger in his own village ?
3. What did Anna determine to do after the nightmare ?
4. Describe the scene at the Pathshala ?
5. What was the Chowkidar's reply to Anna's question ?
6. How did the rising sun become the symbol of hope ?

(E) Answer the following questions in 60-80 words each :

1. What is the message of the story ? Discuss.
2. What is the role of trees in conserving water ?
3. What is rain water harvesting ?
4. What was the resolution of the villagers ?

ACTIVITY :

Working in group of four, make a list of the various methods of water conservation.
Write an article on water conservation.
