

Old is Gold: Christie's Psychology Through Poirot's Character

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Abstract- Agatha Christie is best known as the “Queen of Crime” and the “Duchess of Death”. She chose the genre of detective stories with psychological perspective. According to her, by reading human psychology, crimes can be committed and detected as well. She introduced the character Hercule Poirot, the Belgian detective who appeared in most of her celebrated novels. Christie's writing is remarkable for her psychological analysis of human behaviour. The present paper has made an attempt to show how skilfully Agatha Christie went through the human psychology to hold her readers spellbound until the end of the story.

Keywords - Psychology; Altruism; Sadism; Detective.

Psychology and literature are interrelated. It is often said that artists sublimate their repressed thought into art and literature. Agatha Christie went a step ahead and solved many crimes by reading human psychology. One of her famous characters, Hercule Poirot is proud of his little grey cells and claims he possesses one of the finest qualities of it. Unlike conventional detectives, we seldom come across Christie's detectives taking magnifying glasses in hand searching for things meticulously. In one of the contexts of her works, Poirot is quite annoyed with his friend Hastings when the latter asks how can Poirot sit so aloof when the murders are continuously being committed? Poirot replies acrimoniously that he works with his brain not with his feet.

The different shades of human psychology can be seen in Christie's novels. According to her, money is the obvious cause of most of the murders, but not the only one. People do terrible things to satisfy their ego, envy, lust, arrogance, pompousness and hatred which could lead them to become murderers. For example, a woman could poison her daughter just for being jealous that the girl is younger and more beautiful than her. One can be a little peculiar in so many different ways.

By delving deep into the human mind psychoanalysts could find out the character flaw. Christie's works mainly deal with psychological elements around the murder. Whether it be Miss Marple or Poirot both are interested in dialogues with people to get things out of them. Poirot's experience of human psychology even led him to solve the murder case which took place sixteen years before. Just by reading the human mind and gesture, and without having any gadgets or technical assistance, Poirot could be able to find out whether people were telling the truth or not. Of course, it takes a lot of experience and hard work along with time, but the heart of the matter is reading and comprehending human psychology more and more.

As Poirot goes ahead with his cases, he assumes some of the basic traits that are common in all people. For example, altruism is one of the characteristics of common people. For no reason one helps an old man crossing the road or takes him to the hospital if he faints down. Most of the crimes take place in close association. If someone hurts one's pride, he/she should be alert in future for being avenged. Poirot himself points out this basic trait in human beings in one of his last cases—

“Danger, possibly... Everyone, my friend, demands a spice of danger in their lives. Some get it vicariously — as in bullfights. Some read about it. Some find it at the cinema. But I am sure of this too much safety is abhorrent to the nature of a human being. Men find danger in many ways women are reduced to finding their danger mostly in affairs of sex. That is why, perhaps welcome the hint of the tiger the sheathed claws, the treacherous spring. The excellent fellow who will make a good and kind husband they pass him by”.¹

There is another general perception that women, even the best of them, are a little catty about other women. Talking about murderers' true mentality: well, they firmly believe that they mustn't be caught. But a

murderer is safe so long as he\she is not suspected. Once the person has been suspected, proofs can be easily obtained.

Another aspect of psychology, very much involved in crime scenes is that of sadism. It acts like a catalyst used in a reaction catalysis a reaction between two substances that takes place only in the presence of a third substance which apparently takes no part in the reaction, itself remaining unchanged. Sadists are usually harmful for mankind. They spread hatred and incite people to commit crimes.

By understanding psychology and venting out repressed thoughts, one can achieve one's goal to distinguish between the innocent and the guilty. Here, one thing is imperative all these observations come with age and experience. Agatha Christie herself admitted that she realised her terrible mistake in creating Poirot so old and thought of abandoning him after a few books, but it was the stupendous success of Poirot which made him a household name only after Sherlock Holmes and proved Christie wrong. In fact, one should be proud of one's growing age because on the one hand, it is true that old age makes us physically weak but on the other hand, it makes us mentally sound, more observant, more methodical, more patient and most importantly more experienced and matured.

REFERENCE

- [1] Agatha Christie, Curtain Poirot's Last Case, ISBN- 978000752760-1, 1975, pg-59