

Study material. Class XI Eng. Character Sketch

Hasan – The Serang of Ranaganji

Hasan is the titular figure in the story 'The Serang of Ranaganji'. He is the quarter master of the ship which has white officers and native Indian crew. He speaks little in the story, but is a lot spoken about. The story begins with Miss Jope-Smith passing a racist comment on him as "an absurdly comic creature". Assigning him the responsibility to assist Dr. Cronin in dealing with small pox on board, Captain Hamble introduces him as the "finest man" he has.

The narrator, through the course of his joint work with Hasan, describes him as a man with "silent efficiency", brave and cool, indefatigable in service, "unmistakably sincere" and with seated contentment at his present life.

In addition to the lavish words of the narrator, the way Hasan leads from the front their battle against small pox speaks itself for him. He is firm, quick-witted and has realistic operational imagination. He doesn't falter in braving the deadly disease when even the young doctor does. It is he who finds solution to the problem of lack of space to isolate patients. His unshaken anchoring gives solace to the doctor and moves him with inspiration. Hasan's courage, like small pox itself, is contagious. It spreads and makes the doctor braver and more compassionate.

Hasan is a Muslim by his faith, but is generous enough to read lines from Ramayana for the deceased. He doesn't pursue money or any alien goals. He is happy with the way he is.

The plot of the story reaches back at Miss Jope-Smith at the end, but with a fully exposed dramatic irony. By this time readers are well aware who the absurdly comic creature on board. It is not Hasan as she said, but, ironically, she herself with his crude assertiveness and judgmental shallowness.

When Jope Smith makes that final remark, it sounds supremely ridiculous to the reader who knows the real story that was taking place behind the scene. The last line of the story resounds in the mind of the reader giving us a warning, never to be judgmental.