

THE THIRD CUP

A Sci-Fi/High-Concept 3-Character Screenplay in Hinglish

Genre: Sci-Fi/High-Concept	Format: 3-Character Short Film (Trio Cast)	Runtime: 6 - 9 Minutes
Cast: FORMAT: 3-Character Short Film (Trio Cast) Character 1: Professor Iqbal (46)	Language: Hinglish	Credit: Story Dil Se Team

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University cafeteria ka shutter aadha band hai. Ek tube light dheere-dheere buzz kar rahi hai. Metal tables par kettle ki bhaap aur khali cups ki reflections hil rahi hain. Professor Iqbal, chalk dust se bhare sleeves ke saath, ek chhote chalkboard par equations likh rahe hain. Rohan laptop khol ke baitha hai, energy drink ko baar-baar dekh raha hai jaise woh bhi experiment ka part ho. Asha counter ke paas apni plain apron mein khadi hai, watchful aankhon se dono ko dekh rahi hai.

Iqbal ka kehna hai ki tea sirf tea nahi hoti—jab time anomaly pass se guzarti hai, cup ke surface par steam ka pattern thoda sa alag behave karta hai. Rohan, jo is project ko apna career banane ka chance samajh raha hai, har second pe desperate hota ja raha hai. Use proof chahiye, aur woh bhi morning se pehle, jab dean lab shut karne wala hai. Asha un dono ki baaton ko sunte-sunte practical sawaal puchti rehti hai: “Tea ka temperature kitna? Cup same hai? Time anomaly ka meter kahan hai?” Dono uske sawaalon ko pehle annoyance, phir curiosity se dekhte hain. Iqbal uski simplicity ko underestimate karta hai, aur Rohan uski calmness ko.

Experiment start hota hai. Three cups table par rakhe jaate hain. Iqbal ek cup ko “baseline” kehta hai, dusre ko “control,” aur teesre ko “anomaly cup.” Rohan laptop pe readings note karta hai, kettle se tea pour hoti hai, aur steam tube light ke neeche ajeeb sa pattern banati hai. Kuch seconds ke liye sab kuch normal lagta hai. Phir Asha quietly ek cup ko thoda sa rotate karti hai. Iqbal notice karta hai—steam ka swirl exactly us angle pe shift hota hai jahan uske equations predict karte hain. Rohan ka excitement spike ho jata hai. “Sir, yeh toh match kar raha hai!” woh almost chilla deta hai.

Lekin Asha unhe rok deti hai. Woh puchti hai, “Aap log anomaly dhoondh rahe ho ya khud usko invite kar rahe ho?” Dono confused. Iqbal usse keh hai ki woh bas cups ko touch na kare. Asha ek dry smile deti hai: “Main touch nahi kar rahi, main dekh rahi hoon.” Uski watch ka second hand ek pal ko atak jata hai. Rohan notice nahi karta, par Asha ki aankhon mein ek familiar thakaan flash karti hai—jaise yeh raat uske liye pehli baar nahi hai.

Iqbal third cup ko uthata hai aur uske rim pe chalk se ek chhota mark banata hai. “Agar tea anomaly detect karegi, to is cup mein steam ka collapse alag hoga,” woh bolta hai. Rohan recording start karta hai. Asha suddenly bolti hai,

“Aur agar collapse na ho, to aap dono kal phir yahin aake wahi lecture doge?” Silence. Iqbal uski taraf dekhta hai. “Aapko kaise pata?” Asha cup ko table par rakh deti hai. “Kyuki main is night ko teen baar jee chuki hoon.”

Pehle dono hans dete hain—nervous, disbelieving. Phir Asha detail se batati hai: same tube light, same kettle ka whistle, same energy drink ka can table ke edge se girna, same line jo Iqbal har baar bolta hai: “Science ko patience chahiye.” Har loop mein Rohan zyada panic karta hai, aur har loop mein experiment morning se just pehle fail hota hai. Is baar, Asha ne decide kiya hai ki outcome badlega. Woh professor ko interrupt karne ke liye nahi, guide karne ke liye aayi hai.

Rohan ka face pale pad jata hai. “Aap serious ho?” Asha ek cup uthati hai—third cup. “Main serious hoon. Aur is baar aap log meri baat sunoge.” Woh Iqbal se kehti hai ki chalkboard ko table ke parallel angle par rakho, Rohan se kehti hai laptop ka camera off karo kyunki screen reflection steam pattern ko distort kar raha hai, aur kettle ko do second pehle band kar do. Iqbal pehli baar chup chaap uski instructions follow karta hai. Steam ek clean, impossible spiral banati hai—phir cup ke andar se ek tiny ring of condensation reverse direction mein move karti hai. Rohan ka mouth khul jata hai. On laptop, readings spike. Time anomaly real hai.

Lekin twist yahin nahi khatam hota. Asha third cup ko dheere se apni taraf slide karti hai aur bolti hai, “Anomaly detect karna important nahi tha. Choose karna important tha.” Iqbal aur Rohan samajhne ki koshish karte hain. Asha reveal karti hai ki har loop mein woh dekh rahi thi kaun is discovery ko apne ego ke liye use karega, aur kaun sach mein samjhega. Iqbal ka science brilliant hai, par woh control chhodne se darta hai. Rohan ka ambition genuine hai, par woh validation ke liye jaldi mein hai. Is baar Asha decide karti hai ki discovery ka credit un dono ko nahi, us system ko mile jo time ke saath imandaar raha—kisi paper, kisi press conference ke bina.

Woh third cup ko ulta kar deti hai. Tea table par failti hai, aur uske saath tube light ek baar flicker karti hai. For a split second, time freeze jaisa lagta hai. Jab light normal hoti hai, chalkboard par ek naya line likha hota hai—Asha ke haath ka. Iqbal padh hai: “Anomaly is not in the tea. It is in the choice.” Rohan usse dekhta rehta hai. Asha bas itna bolti hai, “Subah se pehle agar proof chahiye, to pehle trust dikhao.”

Aur jab cafeteria ke door ke bahar dawn ki pehli halki roshni aati hai, teen cups mein se ek ab bhi steam kar raha hota hai—magar is baar koi usse prove karne ke liye nahi, samajhne ke liye dekh raha hota hai.