



INDIAN SCHOOL MUSCAT

SENIOR SECTION

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

CLASS IX

ON KILLING A TREE - GIEVE PATEL



DATE:

SUMMARY

This poem works on several levels. On the literal level, the poem talks about the act of cutting down trees. The poet here hints towards rampant deforestation and through this very visual representation wishes to communicate to the readers the dangers of deforestation. He never directly advises the readers to stop cutting down trees. Instead, he goes on explaining with painstaking details as to how a tree should be cut down. He uses the trick of reverse psychology to make the readers realize the pain inflicted on trees. On another level, it is a social critique. It not only puts deforestation in a negative light, but it also exposes the violent nature of humans. It taps into the primal nature of human beings where survival of the fittest is the guiding mantra. On yet another level, it talks about human beings in general. In this sense, the tree is symbolic of a human being. An individual is made up his/her roots (birth, upbringing and social surroundings). He/she acquires nourishment in the form of love, care and education from parents, teachers, peers. And when an individual is properly nourished on these, it becomes difficult to destroy him/her. Here, death is also symbolic: as in, it represents spiritual death. But when the source of an individual's nourishment, by which his soul is made alive, is maimed, it becomes easy to kill the individual. The poem is not only talking of keeping trees safe from harm, for the sake of our ecosystem, our earth; but it is also talking of protecting the spiritual lives of human beings for our society to be wholesome.

LITERARY DEVICES

Alliteration is the repetition of sounds at close intervals. It is used to lend a lyrical or musical element to the poem.

- he bleeding bark will heal.
(Here the poet has repeated ' b' and 'l' sounds.)
- The source, white and wet.
(In this line 'w' sound is repeated.)

Metaphor

The metaphor is a comparison between two unlike objects, but the word of comparison 'like' or 'as' is not used. Instead of stating that one thing is like another, the poet identifies one with the other.

Examples:

- The bleeding bark

Here the word 'bleeding' is a metaphor. The poet compares the sap oozing out of the bark of a hacked tree trunk to the blood of a human being or a living creature but does not use the word of comparison.

▪ leprous hide

Here the uneven, discoloured bark of a tree is compared to the discoloured and gnarled skin of a person suffering from leprosy. But the poet does not use 'like' or 'as'.

I. Read the extracts below and answer the questions that follow:

1. It takes much time to kill a tree,
Not a simple jab of the knife
Will do it. It has grown
Slowly consuming the earth,
(a) **Can we kill a tree just with a simple jab of the knife?**
(b) **How does a tree grow up?**
(c) **What does a tree symbolize in this poem?**
2. No,
The root is to be pulled out –
Out of the anchoring earth;
It is to be roped, tied,
(a) **What shall one have to do to kill the tree?**
(b) **Where does the strength of a tree lie?**
(c) **Name the poetic device used in the last line here.**
3. Then the matter
Of scorching and choking
In sun and air,
Browning, hardening,
Twisting, withering,
And then it is done.
(a) **Name the poem and the poet.**
(b) **What is scorching done by?**
(c) **What is choking done by?**
(d) **'And then it is done'. What is done?**

II. Answer in Short

1. **In the phrase 'consuming the earth', who consumes the earth and how?**

Ans:- It is the tree that consumes the earth by drawing its nourishment from the soil through its root. The diet required by the tree lies deep inside the earth and the root sucks and absorbs nutrients and nourishes the tree.

2. **Why has the tree's 'hide' been called leprous?**

Ans:-The bark of the tree is uneven in texture and colour. Leprosy also robs the skin of the leper of its colour and evenness. Hence, the poet has drawn a metaphorical comparison between the discoloured bark of a tree and the diseased skin.

3. What is the meaning of ‘anchoring earth’?

Ans:- “Anchoring earth” means the earth which gives a firm grip to the tree and keeps it from falling. Just as a ship anchored in the sea stays in its place securely and steadily, similarly the tree stands secure and stable with the support of the earth.

4. What does the poet mean by ‘The strength of the tree exposed’? (Textual)

Ans:-The expression means the root of the tree is pulled out of the earth and thrown open at the mercy of harsh weather. Root is the source of tree’s power. Once exposed to the scorching and choking sun and air, it wither away and the tree finally dies.

5. What message is conveyed by the poem ‘On Killing a Tree’?

Ans:-The poem conveys the message that human beings have destructive temperament towards nature, but Mother nature has regenerative powers and cannot be destroyed easily. The tree teaches us that mere physical assaults cannot ruin us. As long as our root, our soul, is intact we can rise again.

III. Diary Entry.

1. Suppose you are a tree. Write a diary entry in about 120-150 words describing how you were hacked and chopped and your root was pulled out and how you are inching towards your end.

(Day _____ and
Date) _____

(Time)

Dear Diary,

Today my heart is crying and I suffer due to the pain inflicted upon me by cruel men. Two days ago, I was enjoying the fresh air and warm sunlight when suddenly I felt a blow of an axe on my trunk. I noticed that a man was hitting me hard, giving one blow after another. My bark was wounded, the sap was oozing and my leaves and branches were falling off lifelessly. I could feel a sharp pain that I found hard to tolerate. I was certain that my wound would heal and new branches would grow after some time. I wish these ignorant people had realized that I was serving them selflessly with fresh oxygen and dense shade. Sadly, I will have to say goodbye to this beautiful world because of the insensitivity of some people in future.

Banyan