

12 English ENA Flamingo

Poem: Keeping Quiet: Pablo Neruda

Now we will count to twelve
And we will all keep still.
For once on the face of the Earth 🌍
let's not speak in any language,
let's stop for one second,
and not move our arms so much.
It would be an exotic moment
without rush, without engines,
we would all be together
in sudden strangeness.
Fishermen in the cold sea
would not harm whales
and the man gathering salt
would look at his hurt hands.
Those who prepare green wars,
wars with gas, wars with fire,
victory with no survivors,
would put on clean clothes
and walk about with their brothers
in the shade, doing nothing.
What I want should not be confused
with total inactivity.
Life is what it is about;
I want no truck with death.
If we were not so single minded
About keeping our lives moving,

And for once could do nothing,
perhaps a huge silence
might interrupt this sadness
of never understanding ourselves
and of threatening ourselves with death.
Perhaps the ear Earth can teach us
As when everything seems dead
and later proved to be alive.
Now I'll count up to twelve
and you keep quiet and I will go.

-----Pablo Neruda

Word -meanings

Still – motionless/ निष्क्रिय exotic- unusual/ strange, अद्भुत

rush- hurry/ run/ हड़बड़ी sudden- incidental/ अचानक

gathering- collect /जमा या इकट्ठा करना hurt- damage/ चोट पहुंचना

victory- win/ जीत survivors- जीवित बचे हुए लोग

confused- भ्रम में होना inactivity- निष्क्रियता perhaps- शायद

truck- to associate/ सम्बंधित interrupt- रोकना threatening- धमकी

SUMMARY

The theme of this poem is the need for human introspection to understand the futility of war and violence. The poet asks to count up to twelve and become absolutely still. Nobody should talk or do any activity. The state of stillness will help us to collect our thoughts. This moment of absolute stillness without any noise or activity would be an unusual moment, nobody would be in a hurry, everybody would be together in that quiet and peaceful moment.

Humans are destroying nature and disturbing the ecological balance. Endangered species as whales are killed excessively for human consumption. Over production of commodities is depleting earth of its resources. Humans are now guided by greed, not need. It is high time that the fishermen and the salt gatherers introspect to realize that their actions are causing great harm to mother earth. The poet also

addresses the leaders of nations to give up war as a solution to existing problems, because war will leave no survivors, people will be killed on both sides. The metaphor of clean clothes is used for new thoughts. Humans are urged to walk hand in hand as brothers, to understand each other and not indulge in violence to have their way.

The poet clarifies that when he asks for everyone to be still and silent, he wants everyone to be mentally active and meditative. Humans should stop all activities in order to evaluate their own actions, not just keep doing what they are without thinking about the implications of their actions. The fishermen and the salt gatherers keep earning by harming others and themselves, there are enough food options available, and only a teaspoon of salt is enough for us. Yet the fishermen keep killing whales for livelihood and the salt gatherers keep gathering more and more salt. The war mongers to keep on killing people without thinking. All of us should pause and introspect about the implications of our actions. The poet feels sad that the humans fail to understand each other, thereby resorting to violence. He hopes that the silence created by keeping quiet and still, will bring about understanding and peace. He gives the message of universal brotherhood.

The poet gives us the message of regeneration of our thoughts and actions from the mother Earth. The rot set in during the rainy season and the falling leaves of autumn are taken care of by nature during harsh winter. During the spring season, new plants and flowers grow, similarly harmful, degenerative old practices should be replaced with useful regenerative newer ones. The poet ends by saying that he would count twelve and leave us with our thoughts, having provoked us to think.

सारांश

इस कविता का विषय है मानव अंतर्दृष्टि की आवश्यकता, युद्ध और हिंसा की निरर्थकता को समझने के लिए। कवि हमें 12 तक गिनती गिनने को कहते हैं, जिससे हम अपने मस्तिष्क को शांत करके आगे सोचने के लिए तैयार हो सकें। वह एक अद्भुत क्षण होगा जब कोई भी व्यक्ति हड़बड़ी में नहीं रहेगा और सारे लोग एक साथ चुपचाप आत्मावलोकन व चिंतन करेंगे। सर्द समुद्रों में व्हेल का शिकार करते मछुआरे भी रुक जाएंगे और नमक बटोरता व्यक्ति भी अपने आहत हुए हाथों की तरफ ध्यान देगा। मछुआरे ज्यादा कमाने के लालच में निरंतर व्हेलों की हत्या करते जा रहे हैं और नमक बनाने वाले रात दिन तरक्की के नाम पर अपने को खपाए जा रहे हैं। आज ज़रूरत का स्थान लालच ने ले लिया है। तरक्की के नाम पर पारिस्थितिकी तंत्र के संतुलन को पूरी तरह से मानव ने बिगाड़ दिया है। युद्ध के कारक नेतागण और आतंकी ऐसी विजय की ओर बढ़ रहे हैं जहां विजित और पराजित दोनों ही युद्ध की भेंट चढ़ चुके होंगे।

कवि सभी मनुष्य से आह्वान करते हुए कहते हैं जी अपनी विनाश कारक सोच को त्याग कर आपस में सद्भावना की स्थापना करें, एक साथ एक दूसरे का हाथ पकड़ कर भविष्य की ओर चलें। इस तरह कवि हमें वसुधैव कुटुंबकम का संदेश देते हैं। यदि मनुष्य एकाग्र चित्त होकर सिर्फ अपने जीविकोपार्जन के लिए ही सोचता रह जाए तब वह कभी भी किसी अन्य को नहीं समझ पाएगा। कवि मानव की इस आपसी

नासमझी से दुखी होकर कहते हैं कि हम सभी को एक दूसरे के बारे सोचना और समझना चाहिए, उसमें ही हमारा कल्याण है।

चिकिति और पृथ्वी से हमें संदेश ग्रहण करना चाहिए जो मृतप्राय पौधों को वसंत ऋतु में फिर से फलने फूलने का मौका देती है। इसी तरह मानव समाज को अपने विचारों और आचरण का पुनर्जागरण करने की आवश्यकता है। नवजीवन का संचार तभी संभव होगा।

Textual questions and answers

1. What will counting up to twelve and keeping still help us achieve?

Ans. Counting up to twelve and keeping still will help us to introspect and evaluate our own thoughts and actions, helping us to become better individuals.

2. Do you think the poet advocates total inactivity and death?

Ans. The poet does not advocate total inactivity and death. In fact, he is imploring us to keep our minds open and receptive of critical thought and action.

3. What is the **sadness** that the poet refers to in the poem?

Ans. The poet is immensely pained by the human inability to understand each other and hence their threat to harm and kill each other.

4. What symbol from nature does the poet invoke to say that there can be life under apparent stillness?

Ans. The poet invokes the seasonal changes in nature to inspire the humans to rejuvenate and regenerate. During the harsh winters the seeds lay dormant, buried under the soil. With the arrival of the spring season the seeds germinate and come to life.

Extra questions:

1. What is the significance of twelve in the poem?

Ans. The clock is divided into twelve parts and also the year is divided into twelve months. This signifies the cycle of time, which seems to be repetitive, but in fact is always moving ahead. While counting up to twelve our mind would get enough time to quieten itself in order to introspect.

2. Explain 'let's not speak in any language'?

Ans. Sometimes language becomes a barrier in developing human understanding instead of becoming a tool. The spoken word has often caused many misunderstandings, and hence the poet asks not to use any language.

3. What would happen if there is no rush or running of engines, how would that make us feel?

Ans. We would be enveloped in complete silence when there will be no rush and no running of the engines. It would indeed make us feel to be living in a strange and exotic moment.

4. What do the fishermen in the cold sea do?

Ans. The fishermen catch fish in the cold sea for human consumption. They are often led by the profit motive and hence kill the endangered species of fish like the whale, thus disturbing the ecological balance.

5. What should the salt gathering man be doing?

Ans. The salt gathering man should look at his hurt hands and take care of himself from the harm that this activity has caused him.

6. Explain the term 'green wars'?

Ans. Green wars are caused by modern methods of warfare involving poisonous gases and fire which apparently cause no bloodshed like the conventional swords or guns.

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