

Ecology

A K Ramanujan

The poem Ecology written by AK Ramanujan is about a son's devotion to her mother and her devotion to ecology that creates a kind of conflict between the two.

AK Ramanujan (1929-1933) is the most well known of Indian English poets who made Indian verse in English internationally popular. He belonged to Mysore in India and taught in many universities in the country. Then he migrated to America. He became a lecture in the University of Chicago where he worked till his death in 1993. Most of his works breathe Indian culture and tradition.

'Ecology' is Ramanujan's well known poem. It depicts the blind and innocent faith of an uneducated Indian woman. The woman is the poet's own mother. She has great love and respect for the champak trees in her yard. They have been there from the time she could remember and provided basket full of flowers to the women in the family to offer their gods. For a number of years, during every first rain, the poet finds his mother suffering from migraine because of three red champak trees which are a mile away from the poet's house.

During the summer season, the red champak tree's flowers bloom which then releases yellow pollen grains in the air which according to the poet spread like clouds throughout the streets. The pollen grains remain suspended in the air and thus do not allow the wind to get pure. It remains filled with their fragrance.

In the next line, the poet says that no door can prevent the pollens from entering into their black pillared house. According to the poet, his house walls had ears and eyes, scales, smells, like humans. The poet personifies the house saying that like us it is also suffering from the bombardment of pollen grains that are coming inside it through the holes which are like the pores of the human body.

The poet finally tells his mother that he is going to cut the trees which flashes rage and anger in her head which is full of sweat and pain due to migraines. The poet compares her anger with twisted silver which is shining because of the wet knickers of her mother's grand children. Thus, like the silver wire, his mother's head is also twisted due to severe pain.

She tells the poet that the tree is as old as she is. Its seed was seeded by a passing bird's providential droppings i.e. bird dropped the seeds of those plants. She believes that the bird seeded the plants so that a line of cousins or in other words each new generation may be able to offer its basketful of annual flower to God and their daughter. And for this reason, she is all prepared to bear the pain of migraines.

In this poem, poet has tried to show the difference in the views of people belonging to the old generation and those belonging to the new generation. The old people have emotions, memories, beliefs, etc attached to the ecology. For the poet, the red champak trees have no use. Their pollens pollute the air and thus the city. They cannot be prevented from entering the houses and the human body. The pollens are the cause of severe pain that his mother is

suffering. As the poet has no emotions attached to the ecology or the trees, he decides to cut them.

On the other hand, his mother's perspective is on contrary to his views. For her, the tree is not just a tree but a good omen for her and her house. It is the flowers of the Red Champak trees which she and other people offer to the Gods and to their daughters. This is what makes her consider her suffering a small sacrifice which she is giving to the tree.