

By D.H. Lawrence

## INTRODUCTION

This poem by D.H. Lawrence gives rise to both horror and fascination at the sight of a snake. The poem presents a conflict between civilised social education and natural human instincts. D.H. Lawrence developed a personal philosophy that instincts are superior to the reasoning of the mind. He was essentially a moralist, who believed that man was becoming divorced from natural feelings. He points out in the poem how our feelings of affections are crushed by society and we are misled to the path of ignorance, cruelty and barbarity. But we have no right to deprive others of the right to live. Mexican mythology and Bible treat snakes as evil. So the poem represents the poet's desire to free himself from sinful behaviour. The poem arouses sympathy for all creations of God and respects their right to exist, on a symbolic level the snake could also represent the conflicts in our mind. There is a constant debate between what man wants and what society wants. So the poem represents the instability of man's mind but champions the fact that it is our instinctive behaviour that generally prompts us to do good.

## PARAPHRASE

*A snake ..... stone bottom.*

A snake visited the poet's water trough on a very hot afternoon to quench his thirst. The water trough was under the shade of a red flowery tree, which let out a strange kind of scent. The poet who had also gone to the trough to fill water in a pitcher waited for the snake to finish, since he had come to the trough earlier than the poet. The poet is very particular regarding protocol, so he believes that he must wait for his turn to take the water.

*And ware ..... waiting.*

The snake had come from a crack in the wall made of earth and from the darkness, it comes out to the edge of the water trough. The snake is yellow brown in colour, with a soft belly, it must have come slowly to the water trough. The snake rested his throat upon the stone-bottom and sipped the water into his slack long body. The snake did this very silently. The poet waited for his turn, since he had come after the snake's arrival.

*He lifted ..... Etna smoking.*

The snake relaxed in between and lifted his head after drinking water like cattle. He appeared to be looking in the poet's direction and the poet could see his forked tongue. The snake appeared to think for a few moments then again bent down and drank some more water. The snake was brown like the earth and he had come out from the burning bottom of the earth. It was a very very hot day in Sicily,

in the month of July, and Mount Etna, an active volcano, was also sending out fumes, making the day hotter.

*The voice ..... him off.*

Education and social conventions make the poet think that the golden brown snakes were poisonous, so they must be killed. Black snakes were considered harmless but brown ones were dangerous. As a brave man, he must undertake the task of killing the snake.

*But must ..... this earth?*

The poet makes a frank confession that he really liked the snake so he didn't feel like killing him. The snake had come like a guest to drink water from the poet's water trough and was going to depart in a peaceful and satisfied manner. The snake would eventually go back in the hot and scorching bowels of the earth.

*Was it ..... secret earth.*

The voices of education in the poet told him that it was the fear of the snake that made him refrain from killing him. However the poet felt that though he was quite afraid of the snake, he did actually feel honoured that a snake had come to seek his hospitality from the deep recesses of the earth

*He drank ..... wall-face.*

The snake drank enough water to his satisfaction and then raised his head dreamily and flickered his tongue. He seemed to lick his lips. He looked around like a God and

then slowly proceeded to curve round and move away from the water trough. The snake moved so slowly as if he was dreaming or was asleep and again went back to climb the wall with the crack, from where he had come.

*And as he ..... was turned.*

The snake put his head inside the crack and then easing his shoulders, entered deep inside the hole. The poet disliked the retreat of the snake into the dark and deep horrible hole. A sort of protest rose in the poet's mind and he became quite agitated, the moment the snake turned his back.

*I looked ..... with fascination.*

The poet put down his pitcher, picked up a log and hurled it at the snake. The snake twisted violently and with great agility vanished into the hole in the wall. The tail of the snake which had been left also vanished in great haste like lightning. The snake had entered the crack in the wall. All the poet could do was to stare with fascination at the manner in which the snake had disappeared.

*And immediately ..... education.*

The poet was full of guilt and felt that he must atone for the meanness of his action of throwing a log at the snake. He really hated himself for such a mean act and cursed the voice of education that had always taught him to kill snakes, without any reason. Just as the Ancient Mariner had killed the albatross without any reason the poet had also tried to strike at the snake for no reason. He really prayed and wished for the snake to come back.

*And I thought ..... crowned again.*

The poet felt that the snake had behaved in a dignified manner like a king and he was also the king of the underworld. The snake was inside the earth, like a king in exile. Now enough was enough and the poet wished to give due respect to the snake that was befitting of a king.

*And so, ..... a pettiness.*

The poet deeply regretted his mean act of trying to kill the snake. He had really missed the chance of treating the snake well, of giving him respect that is due to a king. Now he would have to make amends for his petty and mean act.

## सारांश

A snake - - - - - stone bottom.

एक तेज गरम दोपहर को एक साँप उसी नाँद पर प्यास बुझाने आया जहाँ से कवि पानी लेता था। वह नाँद एक लाल फूलों वाले पेड़ के नीचे था जिसमें से अजीब सी सुगंध आती थी। कवि जो पानी भरने गया था, रुक गया और साँप के पानी पीने का इंतजार करने लगा। कवि

सभ्य व्यवहार में विश्वास रखता है इसलिए उसने अपनी बारी का इन्तजार करने का निर्णय लिया।

And was - - - - - waiting.

साँप दीवार में बनी एक दरार में से बाहर आया था और अँधेरे में से निकलकर नाँद के किनारे तक पहुँचा। साँप का रंग पीला-भूरा और पेट नरम है, वह जरूर धीरे-धीरे नाँद तक आया होगा। साँप ने अपना गला पत्थर की शिला पर रखा और धीरे-धीरे पानी पीने लगा। साँप ने यह सब चुपचाप किया। कवि अपनी बारी का इन्तजार करता रहा क्योंकि वह साँप के बाद आया था।

He lifted - - - - - Etna smoking.

बीच-बीच में साँप आराम करता और गाय-बैलों की तरह पानी पीकर सिर उठाता। लग रहा था कवि की ओर देख रहा है। और कवि उसकी चिरी हुई जीभ देख सकता था। कुछ पल के लिए मानों वह विचारामग्न हो गया और फिर झुक कर पीने लगा। साँप धरती की तरह भूरे रंग का था। और वह जलती धरती के अन्दर से बाहर आया था। सिसिली द्वीप का एक बहुत गर्म दिन था - महीना जुलाई का और स्थान एटना ज्वालामुखी पर्वत जो चालू था। वह भी गरम फुँकार फेंक-फेंक कर दिन को और भी गरम बना रहा था।

The voice - - - - - him off.

शिक्षा और सामाजिक रीतिरिवाज कवि को मजबूर करते हैं यह मानने के लिए कि साँप जहरीला है - जैसे कि सुनहरे - भूरे साँप होते हैं। इसलिए उन्हें मार ही देना चाहिए। काले साँपों को खतरनाक नहीं समझा जाता था परन्तु भूरे साँप खतरनाक माने जाते थे। एक बहादुर व्यक्ति की तरह उसे साँप को मारने का काम करना ही चाहिए।

But must - - - - - this earth?

कवि एक निष्कपट पाप स्वीकार करता है कि वह वास्तव में साँप को पसन्द करता है और इसीलिए उसे मरने का उसका कोई इरादा नहीं है। एक मेहमान की तरह साँप उसकी नाँद पर पानी पीने आया था और इसलिए उसे वहाँ से सुरक्षित और संतोषपूर्ण वापिस लौटना चाहिए। साँप अंत में धरती के उबलते जलते पेट के अंदर चला जायेगा।

Was it - - - - - secret earth.

सामाजिक शिक्षा की आवाजें कवि से कह रही थीं कि वह साँप से डरता है इसलिए उसे मारने की हिम्मत न कर सका। कवि का विचार था कि यह सही है कि वह साँप से डरता है परन्तु साँप का पानी पीने के लिए उसी की नाँद पर आना और धरती की गहराइयों में से निकल कर उसका आतिथ्य स्वीकार करना उसके लिए गौरव की बात थी।

He drank - - - - - wall-face.

साँप ने अपनी संतुष्टि के अनुसार काफ़ी पानी पिया और फिर सिर उठाकर स्वप्निल अंदाज़ में जुबान फेरी। वह अपने आँठों को चाटता प्रतीत हो रहा था। परमात्मा की तरह उसने चारों ओर देखा और फिर धीरे-धीरे मुड़कर नाँद से दूर हटने लगा। साँप इतना धीरे चल रहा था मानो वह स्वप्न का आनंद ले रहा हो या फिर सो रहा हो और उस

दीवार पर चढ़ गया जिसमें दरार थी, जहाँ से वह बाहर आया था।

And as he ----- was turned.

साँप ने झिरी के अंदर सिर डाला और कंधों को ढीला करता हुआ छिद्र के अन्दर गहराई में घुस गया। कवि को उसका यूँ जाना, और एक अँधेरे, गहरे गड्ढे में गायब हो जाना बहुत बुरा लगा।

I looked ----- with fascination.

कवि ने पानी का जग नीचे रख दिया, लकड़ी का लट्ठा उठा लिया और साँप के ऊपर जोर से फेंका। साँप उग्रता से मुड़ा और फुर्ती के साथ दीवार के छिद्र में घुस कर गायब हो गया। साँप की दुम जो बाहर रह गई थी वह भी फुर्ती से लुप्त हो गई। बिजली की तड़प की तरह! साँप दीवार की झिरी में जा चुका था। कवि मंत्रमुग्ध होकर साँप के गायब होने के तरीके को देखता ही रह गया।

And immediately ----- education.

कवि दोष-भाव से दबा सोच रहा था – अपनी संकुचित मनोवृत्ति और किए हुए कर्म के बारे में; साँप के ऊपर लकड़ी का लट्ठा मारने का कर्म। उसे अपने से घृणा होने लगी अपने दुष्कर्म पर और वह उन सामान्य विश्वासों को जो सिखाते रहे कि साँप को मार देना चाहिए, कोसने लगा, बिल्कुल उस नाविक की तरह जिसने अकारण Albatross को मार दिया था। उसी तरह कवि ने भी बिना किसी कारण साँप पर हमला किया। उसने दिल से प्रार्थना की, कि किसी तरह साँप फिर से आ जाए।

And thought ----- crowned again.

कवि के विचार में साँप का व्यवहार प्रतिष्ठापूर्ण था; एक राजा की तरह। और वह तो पाताल का राजा भी था। साँप धरती के अंदर था एक निर्वासित राजा की तरह, अब काफ़ी कुछ हो गया था कवि साँप को एक राजा के तुल्य सम्मान देना चाहता था।

And so ----- a pettiness.

कवि वास्तव में अपने घटिया काम – साँप को मारने के प्रयास पर कुंठित था। साँप के साथ अच्छा व्यवहार करने का अवसर वह गंवा चुका था – वह व्यवहार जो एक राजा के साथ किया जाता है अब उसे अपने घटिया व्यवहार के लिए भुगतान करना होगा।

### WORDS-MEANINGS

- **trough** : a tub • **gloom** : darkness • **slackness** : relaxed and lazy manner • **vaguely** : this suggests that although the snake was looking in the poet's direction, he did not notice the poet, • **cattle** : a subtle suggestion that the snake was harmless like the cattle. • **stooped** : bent down • **Sicily** : an island in the Mediterranean
- **Mount Etna** : is an active volcano in East Sicily
- **smoking** : sending out fumes • **voice of education** : General beliefs that we develop in the process of acquiring social education. • **venomous** : poisonous • **paci-**

**fied** : satisfied • **thankless** : water is a natural resources and it must be available to everyone. So there is no need to thank anyone for water. • **flickered** : moved • **God** : surveying the world around like a powerful God • **unseeing** : not seeing anything in particular • **proceeded** : continued • **dreadful** : horrible • **deliberating** : willfully • **log** : piece of wood • **clatter** : loud noise • **despised** : hated • **accursed** : cursed • **exile** : banishment • **crowned** : given respect due to a king • **pettiness** : mean act

### LITERARY DEVICES

#### REPETITION

The poet has used Repetition liberally to highlight certain features and draw attention. Some expressions are constantly repeated for emphasis.

**Examples** : – hot day, hot day, – must wait, must stand and wait, – before me, – earth brown, earth golden, – to feel so honoured, I felt so honoured, – I was afraid, I was most afraid, – slowly, slowly, very slowly

#### ALLITERATION

There is a repetition of sounds in words, generally the first sound.

**Example** : – slackness, soft – bellied, – strange, scented shade, – sipped, straight mouth, – mused, moment, – softly, silently, – stone trough, stone bottom

#### SIMILES

**Example** : – “looked at me vaguely as cattle do”  
“looked around as God”, “writhed like lightning”, “like a king”

#### ONOMATOPOEIA

**Example** : Sipped with his Straight mouth, Softly, Silently, Slackness, Soft-bellied

#### SYMBOLS

- The snake is a very important part of American mythology and what Lawrence learnt of snakes in Mexico is the opposite of what his education has told him. The poet has been told that snakes are evil and even Bible corroborates that. So snake becomes a symbol of evil.
- On another symbolic level the snake could also represent the conflicts in our mind. There is a perpetual debate in our mind about what we want and what society wants. So snake could be taken to represent the instability of our mind.

# SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT

## TEXTBOOK QUESTIONS (SOLVED)

### 6. Answer the following questions briefly.

(a) *Why does the poet decide to stand and wait till the snake has finished drinking water?*

**Ans.** The poet is a stickler for protocol and since the snake has come to the water trough before the arrival of the poet, the snake must have his fill first.

(b) *In stanza 2 and 3 the poet gives a vivid description of the snake by using suggestive expressions. What picture of the snake do you form on the basis of this description?*

**Ans.** The snake has a long body, he is earth brown in colour with slow movements. He is as harmless as cattle and drinks water in a very unhurried manner. He seems to enjoy drinking water, savouring each drop and licking his lips.

(c) *How does the poet describe the day and the atmosphere when he saw the snake?*

**Ans.** It was a very hot day in Sicily, in the summer month of July. The earth was parched and dry and Mount Etna was sending out fumes, which made the day even more hot. But the water trough was under the scented Carob-tree.

(d) *What does the poet want to convey by saying that the snake emerges from the 'burning bowels of the earth'?*

**Ans.** Since the snake emerges from the burning and scorching earth, it evokes the poet's sympathy. The poet feels that the snake is distressed due to extreme heat, so it should be peacefully allowed to drink water.

(e) *Do you think the snake was conscious of the poet's presence? How do you know?*

**Ans.** No, the snake was not conscious of the poet's presence. He looked around vaguely but did not notice the poet. If he had been conscious, then the snake would not have mused in between drinking water nor would have taken so much time in drinking water. It would have vanished very quickly.

(f) *How do we know that the snake's thirst was satiated. Pick out the expression that conveys this.* [C.B.S.E. 2012 (T-2)]

**Ans.** 'He stopped and drank a little more', 'He drank enough' 'flickered his tongue' tell us that the snake had his fill and his thirst was satiated.

(g) *The poet had a dual attitude towards the snake? Why does he experience conflicting emotions on seeing the snake?*

**Ans.** The poet is both afraid of the snake and is also fascinated by it. Social education had taught the poet that all snakes are poisonous so they must be struck down, whereas the snake's dignified manner evokes the poet's admiration. These dual responses were like two voices that make the poet strike at the snake, much against his wishes.

(h) *The poet is filled with horror and protest when the snake prepared to retreat and bury itself in the 'horrid black' and 'dreadful hole'. In the light of this statement, bring out the irony of his act of throwing a log at the snake.*

**Ans.** The poet had appeared most protective and concerned regarding the snake. He never disturbed the snake while drinking water. It is ironical that the poet is the one who tries to kill it and that too when the snake had turned its back.

(i) *The poet seems to be full of admiration and respect for the snake. He almost regards him like a God. Pick out four expressions that reflect these emotions.*

**Ans.** 'And looked around like a god', "seemed to me like a king", "a king in exile," "due to be crowned again."

(j) *What is the difference between the snake's movement at the beginning of the poem and later when the poet strikes it with a log of wood?*

**Ans.** The snake's movement at the beginning is 'slack' and relaxed. He takes a lot of time to drink water and sips and enjoys it by licking his lips. After drinking water, he moves as 'dreamily, as one who is drunk' and very slowly goes back to the crack in the wall. When the poet throws a log at his tail, he vanishes very quickly, with the speed of lightning, in an undignified manner.

(k) *The poet experiences feelings of self-derision, guilt and regret after hitting the snake. Pick out expressions that suggest this. Why does he feel like this?* [C.B.S.E. 2012 (T-2)]

**Ans.** The poet deeply regrets hitting the snake. He calls his behaviour "mean, vulgar, paltry and petty." He curses his social education and feels that he must make amends for his wrong behaviour. The poet curses his behaviour because he had no reason to strike at the snake, when it had not tried to harm the poet and had only come to quench his thirst. The poet feels that the snake behaved in a dignified manner, whereas he behaved in a petty manner. Moreover, hitting someone from behind is an act of cowardice.

(l) Why does the poet make an allusion to the 'Ancient Mariner' and the 'albatross'?

**Ans.** The Ancient Mariner had also killed the albatross for no reason and here also the snake had proved to be harmless, yet the poet tried to kill it. Later on both the mariner and the poet regret their decision. The Mariner has to make amends by being punished and here also the poet is already thinking of compensating for the crime committed.

(m) "I have something to expiate." Explain.

**Ans.** The poet regrets his decision of striking at the snake. The snake had been harmless, dignified and was too thirsty. Trying to kill it was a mean act and the poet wishes to make amends for his violent approach. He wishes to give due honour to the snake, that it deserves.

**Q.7. The encounter with the snake and the dual response of the poet to his presence at the water trough reflect a conflict between civilized social education and natural human instincts. The poet writes a diary entry highlighting how he was torn between the two voices. Write his diary.**

**Ans.** Dear Diary,

Today's entry is based upon my incidental meeting with a snake, yellow-brown in colour, who had come to drink water at the water-trough outside my house. To my surprise, I felt no fear, no aversion but a strange kind of bonding and fascination took possession of me. The snake was drinking water in a very relaxed manner and his majestic movements cast a spell on me. I stood there, with an empty pitcher, with no desire to disturb him. Since it was a very very hot day, I wanted the snake to have his fill, since he had come from a dark and horrible crack in the wall.

The reasoning of my mind, my rational and social belief told me to kill the snake, but my natural instincts told me not to. I don't know why, but my social education prompted me to kill the snake. I picked up a log and tried to strike the snake. The snake vanished at once, but a guilt, a void remained in my heart. I don't know why we submit before our egoism, ignorance, barbarity. O God! how I curse myself. What reason do we have to deprive others of their right to live? We preach of love and sympathy, yet we get misguided by our social beliefs and not natural instincts. I know snakes are poisonous but that snake had not harmed me and yet I behaved like a coward. Yes, I will have to make amends somehow. How! I wonder!

D.H. Lawrence

## REFERENCE TO CONTEXT – MCQs

Read the following extracts and choose the best option :

1. "I come down the steps with my pitcher  
And must wait, must stand and wait, for he was at  
the trough before me."
- (i) The poet was there at the water trough  
(a) to see the snake  
(b) to fill his pitcher  
(c) to sit under the carob tree  
(d) to enjoy being outside
- (ii) The poet decides to wait because  
(a) he liked to watch the snake  
(b) he was afraid of it  
(c) he wished to kill it from behind  
(d) he had come there after the snake
- (iii) The words are repeated in the second line to  
(a) remind the reader  
(b) remind the snake  
(c) to highlight the importance of coming first  
(d) to look courteous

**Answer :** (i) (b) (ii) (d) (iii) (c)

2. "He sipped with his straight mouth  
Softly drank through his straight gums, into his  
slack body"
- (i) The snake drank water "softly" as  
(a) the water looked soft  
(b) he drank slowly  
(c) his manner of drinking water was unhurried  
(d) he drank in a lazy manner
- (ii) The snake's body is 'slack' because  
(a) he has come from inside the earth  
(b) he is lazy  
(c) the manner in which he stretches looks lazy  
(d) he is very relaxed
- (iii) The poet's observation of the snake proves that  
(a) he loves the snake  
(b) he is protective about him  
(c) he is a keen observer  
(d) the snake sparks his interest

**Answer :** (i) (c) (ii) (c) (iii) (d)

3. *“Being earth-brown, earth-golden  
from the burning bowels of the earth”*
- (i) The snake is earth brown because
- (a) he has come from the inside depth of the earth  
(b) the fallen dust on him makes him look earthy  
(c) he is lying on the earth so he looks earth brown  
(d) The shadow of the tree is falling on him
- (ii) The snake has come from
- (a) the fissure in the wall  
(b) under the hole of the water trough  
(c) near the Mount Etna  
(d) behind the wall
- (iii) The bowels of the earth are burning because
- (a) the place is near Mount Etna  
(b) It is the month of July  
(c) It is in Sicily  
(d) all the above

**Answer :** (i) (a) (ii) (a) (iii) (d)

4. *“The voice of my education said to me  
He must be killed  
For in Sicily the black, black snakes are innocent,  
the gold are venomous” [C.B.S.E. 2012 (T-2)]*
- (i) The voice of education means
- (a) knowledge after education  
(b) confidence that one acquires after education  
(c) social views  
(d) voice of your interest
- (ii) Black snakes are innocent means
- (a) they do not bite  
(b) they are not poisonous  
(c) they are afraid of men  
(d) They run away at sight
- (iii) The gold are venomous means
- (a) they are poisonous  
(b) they attack  
(c) they are golden in colour  
(d) they are not brown in colour

**Answer :** (i) (c) (ii) (b) (iii) (a)

5. *“How glad I was that he had come like a guest  
quiet, to drink at my water trough  
And depart peaceful, pacified, and thankless”*
- (i) The snake had come to the poet’s house as a
- (a) intruder (b) stranger  
(c) danger (d) guest
- (ii) The poet wanted the snake to be ‘pacified’ that he should be
- (a) attacked (b) driven away  
(c) satisfied after drinking water  
(d) grateful

- (iii) Thankless means
- (a) the snake should be obliged  
(b) the snake is bad-mannered  
(c) the snake doesn’t know how to thank  
(d) the snake has no need to thank for water, as it is natural resource

**Answer :** (i) (d) (ii) (c) (iii) (d)

6. *“And flickered his tongue like a forked night on  
the air, so black  
Seeming to lick his lips  
And looked around like a god”*
- (i) The poetic device in the above stanza is (like a god)
- (a) Metaphor (b) Simile  
(c) Personification (d) Alliteration
- (ii) The snake appeared to lick his lips because
- (a) he is still thirsty  
(b) it is his habit  
(c) he has enjoyed drinking water  
(d) he does it after seeing the poet
- (iii) The snake looks like god because
- (a) he is huge  
(b) his manner is very majestic and royal like god  
(c) he looks powerful  
(d) he considers life and death like a god

**Answer :** (i) (b) (ii) (c) (iii) (b)

7. *But suddenly that part of him that was left behind  
convulsed in undignified haste  
Writhed like lightning, was gone*
- (i) The departure of the snake was
- (a) quick (b) noisy  
(c) not majestic (d) clumsy
- (ii) “writhed like lightning” is a
- (a) Simile (b) Onomatopoeia  
(c) Metaphor (d) Imagery
- (iii) The snake disappeared quickly because
- (a) it was afraid (b) it was hit  
(c) it was sleepy (d) it wanted to go home

**Answer :** (i) (a) (ii) (a) (iii) (a)

8. *And I thought of the albatross  
And I wished he would come back, my snake*
- (i) The reference to the albatross is because
- (a) both the snake and the albatross are black  
(b) the poet is fond of Coleridge  
(c) both the albatross and the snake were going to be killed for no reason  
(d) the comparison is incidental

- (ii) The poet wants the snake to come back because  
 (a) he liked him  
 (b) he felt hurt that the snake vanished so quickly  
 (c) he wanted to give him more water to drink  
 (d) he felt guilty of hurting him
- (iii) The word which the poet uses to describe his action  
 (a) cowardice (b) pettiness  
 (c) meanness (d) guilty

**Answer :** (i) (c) (ii) (d) (iii) (b)

9. "For he seemed to me again like a king,  
 Like a king in exile, uncrowned in the underworld,  
 Now due to be crowned again  
 And so, I missed my chance with one of the lords  
 of life. [C.B.S.E. 2012 (T-2)]

- (i) Which literary device does the poet use in the first line?  
 (a) Alliteration (b) Simile  
 (c) Metaphor (d) Refrain
- (ii) The snake appears to the poet like  
 (a) a king in exile  
 (b) a king  
 (c) a god  
 (d) uncrowned in the world
- (iii) "One of the lords of life" refers to

- (a) The king (b) The poet  
 (c) The God (d) The snake

**Answer :** (i) (c) (ii) (a) (iii) (d)

10. *A snake came to my water trough  
 On a hot, hot day, and I in Pyjamas for the heat,  
 To drink there.  
 In the deep, strange-scented shade of the great  
 dark carob-tree.. [C.B.S.E. 2012 (T-2)]*

- (i) The poet came to the water trough to  
 (a) bathe  
 (b) take water  
 (c) enjoy the scent of carob tree  
 (d) to see the snake
- (ii) What made the snake come to the poet's water trough?  
 (a) to cool itself  
 (b) to quench the thirst  
 (c) to chase the frog  
 (d) to go to its hole
- (iii) The poet had to wait for his turn because  
 (a) he was afraid of the snake  
 (b) he was second and must wait  
 (c) the snake was already there  
 (d) he wanted to give priority to the snake

**Answer :** (i) (b) (ii) (b) (iii) (b)

## REFERENCE TO CONTEXT – NON-MCQs

Read the following extracts and answer the question that follow.

1. *To drink there  
 In the deep, strange-scented shade of the great  
 carob-tree*

(a) Name the poet and the person.

**Ans :** The poet is D.H. Lawrence and the poem is the Snake.

(b) Who has come to drink and what has he come for?

**Ans :** The poet has come to collect water in the pitcher and the snake has come for drinking water.

(c) Describe the surroundings of the water-trough?

**Ans :** The water-trough is in the open, under the shade of the sweet-scented carob tree.

2. *He reached down from a fissure in the earth-wall  
 in the gloom  
 And trailed his yellow-brown slackness soft-  
 bellied down, over the edge of the stone-trough*

(a) From where had the snake appeared?

**Ans :** The snake had come from the inside portion of the earth-wall

(b) Identify the poetic device in 'slackness, soft-bellied'.

**Ans :** Alliteration

(c) Describe the path the snake took to reach the water.

**Ans :** The snake came out from the crack in the wall and came trailing on the ground to reach the edge of the water trough.

3. *and mused a moment  
 And stooped and drank a little more*

(a) Explain 'mused a moment'.

**Ans :** It means 'it appeared to be thinking for sometime'.

(b) What does the manner of the snake suggest?

**Ans :** The snake appears very relaxed and 'unhurried and takes his time to drink water.

(c) **Why is the poet watching every action of the snake?**

**Ans :** The snake has fascinated the poet with his majestic behaviour.

4. *And voices in me said, if you were a man  
You would take a stick and break him now and  
finish him off*

(a) **What are ‘voices’?**

**Ans :** The voices refer to the beliefs that are ingrained in one’s mind due to society.

(b) **What do the voices suggest? Why?**

**Ans :** They suggest that the snake should be killed as he is poisonous.

(c) **Do you think it would be cowardice or manly for the poet to kill the snake? Why/Why not?**

**Ans :** It was cowardice because the snake had not harmed the poet — to strike the snake behind its back is not ethical.

5. *And so, I missed my chance with one of the lords  
of life  
And I have something to expiate  
A pettiness*

(a) **Why is the poet’s action called ‘a pettiness’?**

**Ans :** It was a mean act to hit the snake behind his

back.

(b) **What is there for the poet to ‘expiate’?**

**Ans :** The poet wishes to compensate for his mean act.

(c) **Why is the snake called the lord of life? Which poetic device is used here?**

**Ans :** It is used as a metaphor for the reason is not given.

6. *But I must confess how I liked him,  
How glad I was he had come like a guest,  
To drink at the water-trough  
And depart peaceful, pacified and thankless,  
Into the burning bowels of this earth?*

(a) **Who had come as a guest?**

**Ans :** A snake had come as a guest to the poet's water trough to quench his thirst.

(b) **How do we know that the guest's thirst was quenched?**

**Ans :** The way the snake raised his head dreamily after drinking water and slowly moved away from the water trough shows that his thirst was quenched.

(c) **Where would it go?**

**Ans :** After taking water, the snake climbed the wall with the crack and entered deep inside the hole.

## SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. **Why does the poet repeat “hot”, “must wait” twice? What purpose does it serve?**

**Ans :** These words are used repeatedly because the poet wishes to emphasise on them. ‘Hot’ means very hot as there are many reasons like the month of July, Etna volcano etc. ‘Must wait’ means compulsion. The poet believes that anyone who comes first, must be served first.

2. **From where had the snake emerged? What do you think was the reason for the snake to come out in the open?**

**Ans :** The snake had come out from the crack in the wall. It was very hot and scorching inside due to July month, active volcano etc. The snake wanted to drink water and satisfy his thirst.

3. **Describe the relaxed manner in which the snake makes his way to the water trough and the manner in which he drinks water.**

**Ans :** The movement of the snake is described as

‘slack’ ‘soft-bellied’, most relaxed and unhurried. He appeared out of a crack in the wall and very languorously stretched himself and slow crawled to the edge of the water-trough. One reason could be that he had not seen the poet.

4. **Why is the snake compared to cattle?**

**Ans :** The relaxed manner in which the snake drinks water reminds the poet of cattle. Even the cattle drink water, then look up, muse a moment and continue. The snake also behaves similarly.

5. **How were the poet’s beliefs regarding snakes conditioned by society? [C.B.S.E. 2012 (T-2)]**

**Ans :** Society ingrains certain preconceived notions in our mind and due to that we don’t judge situations by instinct — The poet was fascinated by the snake. He appreciated the snake’s majestic and harmless nature but the earlier instincts drilled in him by society force him to strike at the snake. He had been taught to kill snakes.

**6. Explain – ‘And depart peaceful, pacified and thankful’.**

**Ans :** The snake appeared to be pacified and satisfied, for he had taken water generously. He was not the harmless kind, neither had the poet given him any reason, so there was no confrontation. The poet believes that the snake has no reason to thank the poet for a natural resource like water which is God’s gift for all.

**7. Why does the poet feel honoured by the presence of the snake?**

**Ans :** The poet feels obliged that the snake had come all the way from the inner depths of the earth to his water trough and this was a kind of honour. Moreover, the snake is so regal and majestic in his bearing that the poet feels honoured to have him as his guest.

**8. The poet is too impressed with the majestic manner in which the snake conducts himself. What comparisons does the poet make to highlight this behaviour of the snake?**

**Ans :** The manner in which the snake drinks water is

like the cattle. He appears to muse a bit, drink with intervals. The snake is called ‘lord of life’ because life and death is in his hands. He is also compared to ‘a king’ for his majestic style and when he quickly disappears he is compared to lightening.

**9. Why did the poet have a sudden urge to hit the snake? Do you think he was justified in trying to hit the snake, when its back was turned?**

[C.B.S.E. 2012 (T-2)]

**Ans :** When the snake’s back is turned, the ‘voices of education’ that were troubling the poet, overtake him. He hits the snake with a stick which was quite unjustified. The snake had not troubled the poet and one must behave with one’s instincts than preconceived notions.

**10. Why did the poet despise himself? Mention the three words that he uses to describe his action.**

**Ans :** The poet feels very guilty of trying to hit at the snake. He calls his act ‘mean’ ‘petty’ and feels like making amends. The poet believes that he must compensate for his unreasonable and undignified act. He uses the words ‘to expiate’, which express his feelings.

## LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS

**1. Describe the manner in which the snake arrived and departed.**

**Ans :** The snake had come from the crack in the wall made of earth, from the darkness, from the scorching inside portion of the earth. The snake did not feel the threat of the poet’s presence, so its movement is very languid, very relaxed and unhurried. It stretched its long and slack body, drank water with great spells of flavour and enjoyment. It licked its lips, it mused and put his head on the edge of the water-trough. Its departure was exactly the opposite—quick, clumsy, abrupt like the speed of lightning.

**2. You have read the poem ‘Snake’ and you understand the dilemma faced by the poet. Suppose you had been there instead of the poet, how would you have behaved? Write a letter to your friends Prateek, expressing this situation and how did you resolve it.**

**Ans :** 92, G.P. Road

ABC City

12 July, 2010

Dear Prateek,

I wish to recount a strange experience that I

underwent recently. One day as I had come to fill my pitcher with water from a open water-trough, I saw a snake drinking water there. My first instinct was fright and then I felt like killing him, because that is what we do generally. Nevertheless, I hid behind the door and watched the snake. The snake was very relaxed, very slack and had great style of moving about. After drinking water, the snake went back into the hole. I felt happy that I had not hit him. I am happy I followed the voice of my instincts.

Mohan.

**3. Write a short note on the literary devices used by the poet. Discuss their effectiveness in the context of the poem.**

**Ans :** D.H. Lawrence has made use of many literary devices liberally. He begins the poem by using some words expressions repeatedly, to reinforce and highlight certain ideas. There is a great use of alliteration in words like ‘slackness’, ‘soft-bellied’ etc. Lot of similes have been used to describe the snake. The snake is compared to ‘cattle’, ‘like a king’, ‘lord’ etc. The snake disappears into the hole with the speed of lightening. Moreover, the snake is symbolic of some strange forces and it represents power and sophistication that impress the poet.

**4. What ideas and thoughts come to the poet's mind when he finds a poisonous snake drinking water at his water trough?**

**Ans :** After reaching his water trough on a very hot day, the poet finds a snake drinking water from his water trough. He waits for the snake to finish drinking water first since he is very particular regarding protocol. The snake was brown in colour. The poet makes a frank confession that he really liked the snake but educational and social conventions make the poet think that the golden brown snakes were poisonous, so they must be killed. The inner instinct of the poet makes him feel honoured that a snake

had come to seek his hospitality from the deep recesses of the earth.

When the snake started to retreat back into the dark hole, the poet disliked it and hurled a log at the snake. The snake vanished into the hole in great haste. The poet was full of guilt. He really hated himself for such a mean act and cursed the voice of education that had always taught him to kill snakes, without any reason.

The poem represents the instability of man's mind but champions the fact that it is our instinctive behaviour that prompts us to do good..

## FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

1. A colourful butterfly has perched on a tree in your garden. Compose a poem on its activities and appearance.
2. A cat stole into your house unawares. Conduct an imaginary dialogue with the cat. Give it a name.
3. Ramu has managed to catch a very big fish after a long spell. He is poor and feels delighted at the prospect of earning a lot of money by selling such a big fish. He is taken by surprise when the fish relates her tragic tale and requests Ramu to free her. Write the fish's story. Also decide what Ramu's decision will be.

