

KEEPING QUIET

Summary

This poem advocates the importance of silence and self- introspection. It can transform not only the life of an individual but also the face of the earth. The poet says that it does not need much time to look within and examine oneself. It will take only as long as it will take to count to twelve. During this time of introspection (self-examination), one should keep quiet and say nothing at all. It will give him a strange feeling of togetherness with all others.

Although it may seem a little strange in the beginning, it will eventually bring us all together. This silence will be free from 'the disturbing sounds of engines and people rushing to get their work done' for some time. He feels contented imagining the change that will be brought about in those moments. The men who hurt their hands while collecting salt will get a little rest. Even the people who seek fresh wars, using fatal gas and weapons, will put on clean clothes and get a chance to walk among their brothers. They will lead a hatred-free and calm life, giving a halt to their destructive activities.

The poet clarifies that his wish should not be considered as a case for “total inactivity”. He only wants to interrupt the sad, cruel and baleful activities of the world for a few moments and make the people introspect their actions. In fact what he says is connected with life, not with death. Activity is very essence of life. Inactivity is death but for a fresh, better and useful activity, a little stillness is essential.

The poet uses the image of the earth to show how life exists in seemingly dormant things. In winter, the earth becomes so still and silent that it seems to be dead. But later in spring, it seems to be lively again. It has new beauties and colours added to it. Similarly, after a little quietness and silence, man can resume his activities in a fresh and better manner.

Main points

1. The poem talks about the necessity of quiet introspection.
2. It will help people to understand themselves & will create the feeling of mutual love & relationship.
3. By quiet introspection, the poet doesn't mean total inactivity, instead he wants full involvement with life.
4. The reason for the discard & war is the imbalance between man & nature.
5. Quiet introspection will establish a spiritual & physical union that is most desirable for the survival of the earth & of human beings.

Important Extracts

1. Read the extract given below and answer the question that follow:

*It would be an exotic moment
without rush, without engines
we would be all together
in a sudden strangeness.*

Questions

Q1. Which moment is referred to here and how will it be?

Ans. it will be a moment of peace and introspection. It will be a strange and attractive moment that will bring us closer.

Q2. How would we feel at that moment?

Ans. We will realize a feeling of oneness.

Q3. How will it bring all of us together?

Ans. By keeping quiet and still, we all will feel alike as if we are together.

2. Read the extract given below and answer the question that follow:

*What I want should not be confused
with total inactivity.
Life is what it is about;
I want no truck with death.*

Questions

Q1. What is it that should not be confused with total inactivity?

Ans. It is the moment of silence that should not be confused with total inactivity.

Q2. What is the life about?

Ans. Life is about actions and dynamism. It must go on. The efforts to keep the race alive cannot be suspended even for a day. Action is essence of life.

Q3. Explain: “no truck with death”.

Ans. Total inactivity is a synonym of death and he has no association with death. This short silence is very much alive and a preparation for renewed hectic activity.

3. Read the extract given below and answer the question that follow:

*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.*

Questions

Q1. In which wars are there no survivors?

Ans. There are no survivors in the wars of poisonous gases and the war of firearms.

Q2. Who would put on clean clothes?

Ans. The war-wagers would put on clean clothes.

Q3. What does ‘put on clean clothes’ signify?

Ans. ‘Put on clean clothes’ signifies the feelings of their mutual understanding.

4. Read the extract given below and answer the question that follow:

*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.*

Questions

Q1. What will happen if we go on thinking single-minded?

Ans. In case we go on thinking single minded, we will remain busy in worldly activities, thereby we won't find time for self-introspection. It will be a sad situation.

Q2. How can we understand ourselves?

Ans. We can understand ourselves through self-introspection.

Q3. In what way can huge silence dispel sadness?

Ans. Huge silence will remove all our tension, violence and warfare. It will do away with all our sadness.

Q4. What is the ‘sadness’ that the poet refers to in the poem?

Ans. The poet Pablo Neruda refers to ‘sadness’ which we form out of our own thinking and actions. We understand a lot of things but fail to understand ourselves

and our actions and this becomes the creator of all disasters. This is the 'sadness' that the poet refers to in the poem

Q5. Why does the poet want us to 'do nothing' for once?

Ans. The poet wants to do nothing for once, here he specifies that we should cease all our activities in order to have introspection within ourselves so that we can realize the exotic moment.

Q7. How we can know ourselves?

Ans. We can know ourselves through introspection.

Q8. Identify 'we'.

Ans. 'We' here refers to all human beings.

5. Read the extract given below and answer the question that follow:

*Perhaps the Earth can teach us a
as when everything seems dead
and later proves to be alive.
Now I'll count up to twelve
and you keep quiet and I will go.*

Questions

Q1. What does the earth teach us?

Ans. The earth teaches us how life springs from dead things. It further teaches us to realize life under stillness.

Q2. What does the poet mean to achieve by counting upto twelve?

Ans. He wants us to achieve peace by counting upto twelve.

Q3. What is the significance of 'Keeping Quiet'?

Ans. 'Keeping quiet' means that we should avoid all those activities which hurt the nature.

Short Answer Type Questions

Q1. Why does the poet want us to keep quiet?

Ans. Keeping quiet will develop a better understanding among human beings and allow us to establish communion with our fellow beings at spiritual level.

Q2. Does the poet advocate total inactivity and death by suggesting being quiet?

Ans. No, the poet does not advocate it. He wants no truck with death. In fact he wants to live life full bloodedly. But by advocating quietness he wants mixing of physical and spiritual aspect of life.

Q3. Why does not the poet want us to speak in any language?

Ans. The poet wants us not to speak in any language to introspect and know what we are about- know the meaning of our existence. He wants everybody to know his spirit and have spiritual contact with others for sometimes for which no language is required.

Q4. What will counting up to twelve and keeping still help us achieve?

Ans. Counting up to twelve and keeping quiet will assist us in attaining a state of peace in which we will be able to introspect and thus, see and appreciate the benefits of the symbiotic relationship that would exist between humans and between man and nature.

Q5. Do you think the poet advocates total inactivity and death?

Ans. The poet does not advocate total inactivity and death, but he does advise that we introspect deeply and not indulge in activity that is mindless and thus potentially destructive for human beings and for the balance that should exist between man and nature.

Q6. What is the 'sadness' that the poet refers to in the poem?

Ans. Man fails to understand themselves. They are always threatening themselves with death. When they do not understand themselves, they become sad. Only silence might interrupt this sadness and make them happy.

Q7. What symbol from Nature does the poet invoke to say that there can be life under apparent stillness?

Ans. Life under apparent stillness can be seen in nature. During the winter season, the earth under the snow looks dead, with no activity and no growth. But when the spring comes, the snow melts away, the seeds sprout and the grass grows. All activities of life start again.

Q8. According to the poet, what is that human beings can learn from nature?

Ans. Nature teaches us a lot of things. We must learn that all things are bound together and depend on each other for their survival. We should introspect ourselves by remaining calm and composed. So it teaches us to be quiet and still. It is no use to hinder others. We should grow and develop at our own Place. We must be contented with what we possess. There is no need for greed. The nature always remains alive.