POERTY 6

MOTHER TONGUE

UNDERSTANDING THE POEM

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Question 1: The quill is the central element of the poem – what does it symbolise?

ANSWER:

The quill symbolises a new script. It is symbolic of the transition of a script, the characteristics that a script delivers to its successive script in legacy. Let us have a clearer idea of it by taking the evolution of Dogri's scripts into account. Around the time when the Dogri language developed, it used its native script Sharade, which evolved from the original Brahmi script. Sharade then came to be replaced by Devanagari, used presently. In the poem Mother Tongue, Padma Sachdev bemoans the depreciation of Sharade script. She explains a script's evolution by citing an example of a reed plant.

Question 2: You notice a sense of urgency in the poet's request – what is the reason for this?

ANSWER:

When the poet requests for a new script, she asks the reed to give it to her "quickly". There is a sense of urgency in the poet's request. She says that she needs the quill urgently as her Shahni, her mother tongue (Dogri language), must be looking for her. She is in such hurry probably because she is pregnant with a thought and wishes to jot it down immediately. As her thought is in Dogri language she needs the respective script to do so. So, she asks the stem of the reed for the script quickly, so that not much

time is wasted. The poet calls herself a servant of the Dogri language, and so she has to serve best to her Shahni. She wants to keep her happy without any delay. The stem says that it is not just the poet but it also is a servant of her Shahni. So, it cuts off its hand and gives it to the poet.

Question 3: How has the poet brought out her emotional attachment to her mother tongue?

ANSWER:

Padma Sachdev is a renowned Dogri poet. She won awards like Sahitya Academy at a young age of 34 for her first collection of Dogri poetry. She is deeply attached to her mother tongue and the poem in question is her tribute to the Dogri language. Due to the evolution many scripts get replaced by another scripts, old scripts are worn out and languages are forgotten. Sharade script of Dogri language also got replaced by Devanagari with the passage of time. The depreciation of the Dogri language is deeply grieved by Padma in her poem Mother Tongue. She bemoans by way of explaining with the example of a reed plant that how a script is replaced by a new script. The scripts get changed, languages wither away and give way to new languages and new scripts (a new quill every time), but the literature still seeks the language to speak and the writers depend on it to write their compositions and let it pass on to the future generations. Padma, who is a poet herself, calls herself a servant of her mother tongue, she contributes to Dogri literature. She bemoans at the loss of the native script, Sharade, of Dogri language and that now she has to use Devanagari to write her compositions.

Question 4: Personification is a figure of speech that attributes human qualities to inanimate things and abstract ideas. How has it been used in the poem?

ANSWER:

Padma Sachdev is a Dogri poet that is close to her indigenous language. In her poem Mother Tongue, she is in a melancholic mood for her language is depreciating and that its script has died away. She is admiring her mother tongue Dogri and its native script Sharade and praises it in leaps and bounds. She calls it a “very kind Shahni”, a benevolent mistress, who is always ready to help any author or poet, “ever ready to do her bidding”. Padma transcends the furthest boundary and praises Dogri as if it were the queen of all languages, an empress who is served by all the literature folk and scripts calling them all “her servants”. However, Dogri is just one of many languages spoken in the whole of India. It is one of the 22 scheduled languages in India and is spoken in the Jammu province of J and K and in Northern Himachal and in Azad Kashmir (Neelum Valey). Even the scripts join in and admit that they all are servants of Dogri and helps the poet by giving her a new quill.