



മിണിപ്പുറം റിപ്പബ്ലിക് ഓഫ് മാനിപ്പുറം (ഇംഗ്ലീഷ്)

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (S)

Government of Manipur

NOTES:

UNIT: II (poetry-vi)

Snake by D.H. Lawrence

ABOUT THE POEM

David Herbert Lawrence (11 September 1885 – 2 March 1930) wants to convey a message in the poem 'Snake' that snake is a beautiful creature which is to be honored, not to be killed. It has a more harmonious behavior with nature than educated human beings. 'Snake' is one of the best animal poems, written by D. H. Lawrence during a stay at Fontana Vecchia in Taormina, Sicily, in 1923. Lawrence explores the relationship between humans and snake, one of the most feared reptiles.

SUBSTANCE

Once, the poet met a snake on a hot day in July when he stayed in Sicily. It happened when the poet went to his water trough to fetch some water, a snake had come before him to the water trough to quench its thirst. By a natural instinct, the poet felt honored of the snake and wanted to treat it as his guest. So, he had to stand and wait as a second comer in showing social civility. Now, the poet also met two contrasting thoughts. The voice of his human education insisted him, if he was a man (courageous), to kill the brown snake as brown snakes in Sicily were venomous. On the other hand, his instinct wanted to honor the snake as a guest. He was afraid of killing the snake as the snake wanted to seek hospitality from him. Then, the snake turned to enter its hot black snake hole. Meanwhile, the poet threw a stick at the snake through a sort of horror. The snake was not hit but it hurriedly went into its hole in an undignified manner. Suddenly, a sense of guilt came to the poet as if he had committed a sin against a lord of life, his king that the poet treated the snake as a king in exile subject to be crowned soon. Now, he remembered 'albatross' of the poem "The Ancient Mariner" whose killing brought ill luck to the mariner (sailor). He felt his acts to be mean and insisted by his accursed (an expression of a strong dislike of something) human education. Lastly, he wished to expiate (make reparation for guilt) for the wrongdoing.

WORD NOTES

- | | | |
|------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <i>Lines 1-6</i> | : <i>Water trough</i> | – An artificial watering points. |
| | : <i>Pyjma</i> | – A pair of loose trousers tied by a drawstring around the waist. |
| | : <i>Strange-scented</i> | – Unfamiliar scent. |
| | : <i>Great dark</i> | – Deep dark. |
| | : <i>Carob-tree</i> | – A tree growing in the Mediterranean Countries. |
| | : <i>Pitcher</i> | – Container. |

Lines 7-15 : *Fissure*
: *Gloom*

– Hole.
– Darkness.



জগদীশ্বর গণেশ শঙ্কর গণেশ (এম)
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (S)
Government of Manipur

- : *Trailed* – Draw behind.
 : *Slackness* – Not tight; loose.
 : *soft-bellied* – A snake's soft belly.
 : *Dripped* – Let fall drops.
 : *Small clearness* – A small pool of clear water.
 : *Strait mouth* – The snake put its mouth strait.
 : *Second comer* – The snake had come before the poet.
- Lines 16-21** : *His head* – The snake's head.
 : *As cattle do* – Cattle lift their head after a long drink.
 : *Vaguely* – The snake looked at the poet but not aware of his presence.
 : *Flickered* – Make small, quick movements.
 : *Two-forked tongue* – A tongue split into two distinct tines at the tip.
 : *Etna smoking* – Smoke coming out of Etna, an active volcano in Sicily, last erupted in December 1985.
- Lines 22-29** : *The voice of my education* – The knowledge the poet received from the society.
 : *Venomous* – Poisonous.
 : *If you were a man* – If the poet were courageous.
 : *Break him now* – The voice of the poet's education insisted him to kill the snake quickly as it was a poisonous one.
 : *But must I confess* – The poet thought to accept his guilt of inability to the snake.
 : *A guest in quiet* – A guest who keeps silence.
 : *Pacified* – Satisfied / the thirst being quelled.
 : *Burning bowels* – The snake-hole was burning hot.
- Lines 30-39** : *Cowardice* – Lack of bravery, as the poet dare not kill the snake.
 : *Perversity* – An odd desire, like the poet's desire to talk to the snake.
 : *Humility* – The quality of being humble.
 : *Those voices* – The voice of the poet's human education.
 : *Secret earth* – The hole in the earth is secret because no one knows what's inside it.
- Lines 40-49** : *Dreamily* – Like one in a dream.
 : *Unseeing* – The snake looks around but does not see anything particular.
 : *Thrice adream* – The snake seems to be in a deep dream.
 : *Slow length* – The long body of the big snake moves slowly.
 : *Curving round* – Turning in a curved manner.
 : *Bank* – Pile/ a mound of a particular substance.
- Lines 50-54** : *Dreadful hole* – The fearfully hot snake-hole.
 : *Snake-easing his shoulders* – The snake was pushing its shoulders easily.
 : *Sort of horror* – Kind of horror.
 : *Withdrawing* – Removing / taking away.
 : *Deliberately* – Consciously and intentionally.
 : *Overcame* – Overpowered / defeated.
- Lines 55-65** : *Clumsy log* – An awkward piece of wood.
 : *Clatter* – A continuous rattling sound as hard objects striking each other.
 : *Convulsed* – Violent involuntary movement.
 : *Undignified haste* – The snake left in a hurried manner and did not bother to move in elegance.
 : *Writhed* – Make twisting, squirming movements.
 : *Fascination* – Attraction / the state of being fascinated.
 : *Regretted* – Felt sorry / disappointed over.
 : *Paltry* – Very small / worthless.
 : *Vulgar* – Rude / indecent.

- : *Despised* – Hated.
 : *Accursed* – Worthy of a curse.

Lines 66-73 : *Albatross* – ‘Albatross’ is a big sea-bird. The poet remembers the poem “The Ancient Mariner” of S.T. Coleridge in which the killing of it brought ill luck to the mariner (sailor).

- : *Like a king* – The snake is dignified like a king.
 : *A king in exile* – The snake’s coming out of its underworld to the surface is said to be in an exile because it is not its place. The poet honors the snake like a king.
 : *Expiate* – The poet wished to expiate (make reparation for guilt) for his wrongdoing to the snake.

