

Chapter 8: On Killing a Tree

Thinking about the Poem

Question 1:

Can a “simple jab of the knife” kill a tree? Why not?

Answer:

No, a simple jab of knife does not have the ability to kill the tree. It has to go through various processes. If its root is not removed from the earth, it will sprout again.

Question 2:

How has the tree grown to its full size? List the words suggestive of its life and activity.

Answer:

The tree consumes the earth, and rises out it feeding upon its crust. It absorbs years of sunlight, air and water.

Question 3:

What is the meaning of “bleeding bark”? What makes it bleed?

Answer:

‘Bleeding bark’ means the twigs which are cut mercilessly. They leave a liquid substance. If any part of the human body is cut, it starts bleeding. In the same way the liquid substance comes out from the branch of a tree. The human beings’ axe makes it bleed.

Question 4:

The poet says “No” in the beginning of the third stanza. What does he mean by this?

Answer:

‘No’ is used to emphasize the perspective that chopping or hacking will not be sufficient for killing a tree.

Question 5:

What is the meaning of “anchoring earth” and “earth cave”?

Answer:

It means that the earth protects it like a mother. ‘Earth Cave’ implies a hole inside it. The tree allows its roots to spread underneath. The earth protects it and fosters it. It provides all the essential ingredients to the tree.

Question 6:

What does he mean by “the strength of the tree exposed”?

Answer:

The stem/root is the strength of a tree. When the tree is pulled out, its strength is exposed.

Question 7:

What finally kills the tree?

Answer:

Pulling out the tree from the mother earth and scorching and choking it in the sun and air kill the tree. It becomes brown, dry and gets hard. Eventually it dies.