

BA (Hons.) Semester II: Subsidiary English

English Literature (Poetry and Drama)

Study Material for Unit I

A.K. Ramanujan. 'Ecology'

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Text of the poem:

The day after the first rain,
for years, I would home
in a rage,

for I could see from a mile away
our three Red Champak Trees
had done it again,

had burst into flower and given Mother
her first blinding migraine
of the season

with their street-long heavy-hung
yellow pollen fog of a fragrance
no wind could sift

no door could shut out from our black –
pillared house whose walls had ears
and eyes,

scales, smells ,bone-creaks , nightly

visiting voices, and were porous
like us,

but Mother, flashing her temper
like her mother's twisted silver,
grandchildren's knickers

wet as the cold pack on her head,
would not let us cut down
a flowering tree

almost as old as her, seeded,
she said, by a passing bird's
providential droppings

to give her gods and her daughters
and daughters' daughters basketsful
of annual flower

and for one line of cousins
a dower of migraines in season.

Glossary: (Find the meaning of difficult words as given below .It is in the context of the poem.)

Rage : Anger

Migraine : Very severe headache .

Burst into flower: Produces flower

Sift: to separate or remove

Porous : the house lacked repairs , and had hold and cracks in the walls through which creatures could enter into the house .Therefore, the poet calls it porous.

Flashing : displaying

Providential : By chance, divine

Appreciation: ‘Ecology’ appeared in A.K. Ramanujan’s third volume of poems, ‘Second Sight’(1986). The narrator is caringly devoted to his mother. The narrator used to visit home in frenzy and anger after the first rain of monsoon because the blooming red Champak tree in the vicinity of his ancestral place used to cause allergy to his mother. Red Champak’s suffocating smell (because the mother was a sense of allergy to it) was spreading everywhere. The walls of narrator’s house were not capable enough to check the fragrance from coming inside .

To save the mother from any kind of allergy and pain, the narrator decides to cut down the tree but the mother stops the narrator from doing so. The mother says that the tree is of her age . The mother tells an interesting fact on the birth of the tree . It had been fertilized by the droppings of a passing bird , and it is considered to be a very good sign as per belief in that region.

Although the tree causes migraine to the mother yet it produces several basketful of flowers to be offered to gods and to ‘her daughters and daughter’s daughters’ every year. Te astonishing thing is that, it would give a terrible migraine to one line of cousins as a legacy.

Main Themes

1. Ecology
2. Co- existence(human-nature)
3. Narrator’s interest in family
4. His memories of the past
5. Portrayal of family
6. A self sacrificing mother (Can you consider her like mother nature?)
7. Reference to Hindu mythology (see the mentioning of gods)

The text is open ended , you are advised to find many other themes based on your reading .

Features of Style :

1. The whole poem runs as a single sentence
2. Descriptive note
3. Irony
4. Symbolism
5. Imagery

Food For Thought (Enjoy and associate)

- ‘Ecology’ by A K Ramanujan is not communicating the popular meaning of ecology, it has varied connotations involved with it.
- Find out any other poem where mother –son/daughter relationship is show.

Questions :**Read the poem , and find the answers of the following questions:**

1. How does the mother explain his mother’s love for the Champak tree?
2. How does the flowering on the Champak tree affect the poet’s mother ?
3. Why did the poet’s mother not allow the Champak trees to be cut ?