

10th Standard - English

Snake Summary

Introduction

In this poem the poet describes how a snake came to his water trough one hot day to drink water. The poet threw a log at it but it escaped into its hole. The poet stood criticizing himself for this act. What he says in his reaction is the subject matter of the poem.

A snake comes to drink water to the water trough
There came a snake to the poet's water trough one hot day to drink water. The water trough was in the deep and scented shade of a carob tree. The poet also came there with his pitcher to take water. But he stood waiting as he had come there after the snake.

How the snake moves and drinks water

The snake came out from the dark inside of the earth. It pulled its yellow-brown loose soft-bellied body over the edge of the water trough. Resting its throat upon the stone bottom, it sipped water softly and silently. Then it lifted its head from drinking like the cattle do and looked vaguely at the poet. It flickered its two-forked tongue and thought for a moment. Being earth-brown and earth-golden, it stooped again and drank a little more water. It had come from the burning inside of the earth on the day of Sicilian July when Etna volcano was bursting out.

Poet's inner voice

The poet's inner voice said to him that the snake must be killed as such snakes in Sicily are poisonous. However, black snakes are not so.

Poet's liking the snake

The poet, however, confessed that he liked the snake. Also he was glad that the snake had come there quietly like a guest.

It would depart peacefully after drinking water. However, he questioned himself and wondered whether his not killing the snake proved his cowardice. Or whether his desire to talk to it proved his debasedness. However, he felt honoured that the snake had accepted his hospitality in drinking water at his water trough.

Snake's return

The snake seemed licking its lips after the satisfaction of quenching his thirst. It looked around like a god. Then very slowly it proceeded to draw its slow length curving round. It climbed again the bank of the wall to retire.

Poet's hitting it with a log

As the snake was returning and had almost entered its hole, the poet felt a kind of protest against it. He looked round and threw a log at the snake. The part of the snake's body which was out of the hole twisted like lightning. In no time the snake had gone inside the hole. The poet stared with fascination at the snake. He regretted his act of throwing a log on the snake. His feeling to be a host to the snake had been hurt.

Poet's accusing himself

The poet felt greatly hurt inwardly at his act of throwing a log at 'his guest'. He called it 'a vulgar and mean act'. He started hating himself and his "human education". He thought of the sea bird albatross and wished the snake would come back again. He found the snake like an uncrowned king living in exile. He felt that he missed a chance (to honour a king). He would always regret this 'pettiness' on his part.