

ON KILLING A TREE

“On Killing a Tree” is a poem written by Gieve Patel. Gieve Patel is regarded as one of the prominent Indian poets writing in English. He is a medical practitioner by profession and he lives in Mumbai. He is one of those writers who subscribe themselves to the “Green Peace Movement”. His poems give expression to his anxiety and bitterness at man’s cruelty to Nature.

Patel’s “On Killing a Tree” is a poem which presents a graphic picture of the total annihilation of a tree. In the poem the tree symbolizes Nature. Modern man out of his indiscriminate greed and selfishness roots out nature and its very spirit. Man’s greed is not quenched by the mere physical process of killing a tree. Man realizes that it is not easy to kill a tree because it has grown slowly consuming the earth and absorbing water, air and sunrise for years. The mere act of hacking and chopping is not sufficient to kill a tree. The tree does not seem to feel any kind of pain because the bleeding bark seemed to heal all the time. The tree overcomes man’s onslaught by branching off small stems close to the ground and resumes life and grows again to its former size.

Knowing a tree’s power to come to life again, man decides to pull out the root of the tree. Like a butcher, he makes several cuts in the tree and cuts it down. He then cuts it into several convenient pieces. Still his greed is not quenched. Man is determined not to allow Nature a second life. He makes a deep cavity on the earth and roots out the tree which uses anchored safety inside the earth. The earth has so far protected and fed the tree like a mother. But, the cruel man uproots this safety. After pulling the tree down, the man further subjects it to various processes of rendering it fit for commercial purposes. He further tortures the tree by scorching and choking it in sun and air. He also subjects the tree to various methods such as browning and hardening. With this, the total killing of the tree is complete. Man is ensured that the tree has no second life. “And then it is done” says the speaker triumphantly.

The poet describes mans cruelty to nature with bitter irony and detachment. But his own sympathy is with Nature. The poem is a telling commentary on one of the major environmental issues that encounters modern man.

ON KILLING A TREE- Gieve Patel.

Answer the Following Questions

1) Why does the poet use the expression 'to kill' rather than 'to cut' a tree?

A) The poet uses the expression 'to kill' rather than 'to cut' as he wants to equate the life of a tree with the life of a human being. The word 'kill' involves moral feeling where as 'cut' does not involve moral feeling.

2) According to the poet, how does nature (here, the tree) renew itself after an attack by man?

A) According to the poet "Gieve Patel" the tree renews itself with the roots and trunk in the soil. As Indian scientist "Jagadish Chandra Bose" proved that plants also have feelings as human beings. After cutting the tree the different parts of the tree like bark, twigs will grow to their former size if left unchecked.

3) Why do you think the poet describes in detail the cutting of a tree? What effect does it have on you as a reader?

A) The poet describes the cutting in detail in order to produce disturbing moral feelings in the reader so that he will not cut the tree and will not feel guilty about it. He says that cutting causes pain to the tree. So, the reader will try to avoid cutting the tree.

4) What are the lessons to be learnt from the poem?

A) The reader will learn from the poem that the tree is just like human being in feeling the pain. The tree has also the capacity to renew itself after cutting by man. And the reader is made to feel guilty of cutting a tree and avoid cutting trees in future.

IS A GLOBAL AGREEMENT THE ONLY WAY TO TACKLE CLIMATE CHANGE?

DAVID KING AND ACHIM STEINER

The article “Is a global agreement the only way to tackle climate change “by David king and Achim Steiner deals with the most important problem of climate change due to global warming and carbon emissions. They try to give more importance to their pet idea of “Bottom up change “as reflected in the subtitle of the article.

BOTTOM-UP CHANGE WILL DELIVER

They think that the “Kyoto protocol” and the subsequent meeting for COP17 in Durban are unnecessary. For them the real driving force for change in climate negotiations is the call for voluntary national commitments. The call was issued in 2009 at COP15 in Copenhagen & Cancun. They think that what was a solid achievement compared to the circus like negotiations since Kyoto.

Even before 2009 it was clear that Kyoto was a failure because the first round agreement of a 5% emission reduction from industrial countries was woefully insufficient. So it was clear that the top-down approach to climate negotiations proposed at Kyoto was never going to work. At every climate conference since Kyoto which committed in principle to ratification and global agreement have failed in their practice.

But for them the Kyoto process with all its uncertainties has opened the way for an alternative approach. This approach was formalized in Cancun but really kick started in the U.K. In 2003 as a result the U.K became the first nation to announce voluntarily that it would reduce its carbon emissions by 60% by 2050.

The UK example encouraged other countries to do the same. The Brazilian government and also Chinese declared to follow the example. And further 85 countries have now announced voluntary climate commitments. According to them this kind of “muscular bilateralism” will ultimately lead to an international agreement on emissions reductions. Countries like Mexico, South Africa have followed the strategy. With its global influence & powers of sanction the WTO (world trade organization) not UNO (United Nations organization) is likely to drive this program forward.

GLOBAL AGREEMENTS DRIVE CHANGE

In spite of the advantage of the “Bottom-up” method International negotiations on ‘climate change’ have their own value as a catalyst. The UN framework convention on climate change and its Kyoto protocol has played a pivotal role in speeding up investments worldwide in areas like wind & solar power.

The surprising fact is that low carbon projects have raised from 50 in 2004 to 7000 at the present time. In 2010, \$211bn was invested in new renewable energy worldwide which was more than in new fossil fuels.

In addition to the two approaches ‘Top-down’ and ‘Bottom up’ there is also need for the private sector to play an important role in bridging the gap.

They conclude with the suggestion that focus must be more on working the international agreements sincerely than questioning them.

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

1. What approach do the authors feel will be most effective in dealing with climate change?

A) The authors feel that “Bottom-up” approach is the most effective way to deal with climate change. In their own words they say “The real driver for change in climate negotiations is the call for voluntary national commitments that was issued in 2009 at COP 15 Copenhagen and Cancun through voluntary and nationally agreed emissions reductions than in the fifteen years circle of negotiations since Kyoto”.

2. What significant step did the UK take in 2003 that has impacted climate change policies?

A) The significant step in dealing with the harmful effects of carbon emissions was kick started in the UK in 2003. As a result the UK becomes the first nation to announce voluntarily that it would reduce its carbon emissions by 60% by 2050.

3. What is meant by the phrase “Muscular Bilateralism”?

A) Actually ‘Bilateralism’ refers to the political, economic, or cultural relations between two sovereign states. Here the phrase “Muscular Bilateralism” is a voluntary undertaken activity inspired from the example of another country in the matter of emissions reductions .In this context, the inspiring example is UK.

It was the first nation which announced voluntarily that it would reduce its carbon emission by 60% by 2050. Unlike international agreement binding on the countries this is giving equality of participation between countries. It would involve countries making commitments on carbon reduction without the overarching framework of an international treaty.

4. Currently how many low-carbon projects exist?

Answer:

According to new figures about 7000 low carbon projects under the clean development mechanism exists. It is an unexpected rise from around 50 in 2004.

5. Which international organization is likely to drive the change?

Answer:

The WTO (World Trade Organization) is likely to drive this programme forward because it has its global influence and powers of sanction.

VERBAL ABILITY:

1. Circus: Any overactive engagement which may be sensational but achieve nothing.
2. Backing: support
3. Top-down approach: It is international arrived agreements among the advanced countries in the world which are imposed on the other poor and developing countries. The participating countries might have signed the agreement but in the matter of implementation many countries have failed to implement the agreement due to their own national economic interest.
4. Sell-by date: To make something acceptable within agreed time-frame. International treaties have exceeded their capacity to make agreed time frame.
5. Bridge a gap: In the particular context it means that the gap in the matter of implementation of the global agreements will be filled by the private sector.

HOW TO REGAIN GREEN COVER

The article 'How to Regain Green Cover' by Ajay Sreevatsan and Deepa H Ramakrishnan brings out the environmental consequences of the reduction in green cover like air pollution, Ground water depletion, frequenting flooding and rise in temperature. They think that Chennai holds the dubious distinction of being one of the least Green metros in the country.

The city's fall from grace has been dramatic after the "economic liberalization" between 1997 and 2001. As a result the city lost up to 99% of its green cover in some parts. Because the built up area in the city nearly doubled.

Air quality in the city has deteriorated and more & more young children are showing asthmatic symptoms. Studies show that residence of the Chennai metropolitan area would collectively breathe in over 4000 lakh kg of vehicular emission annually.

"URBAN HEAT ISLAND": He says that the combination of dense built-up areas and reduced vegetation has resulted in the urban temperature, a phenomenon known as the "urban heat island effect". Unlike trees which re-radiate heat back into the atmosphere, the concrete absorbs the heat & increase temperature. But Delhi has recovered from the harmful effects of rapid urbanization due to wise planning by people like Govind Singh. He thinks that the tree plantation efforts would be successful only if the local population is involved. Even ground water level also was stabilized in Delhi.

PLANTATION WITHOUT VISION:

If the cities are to be made sustainable, we must realize that trees are an integral part of the landscape. In Chennai through afforestation efforts are made, they are not done strategically. They don't contribute to environmental benefits 23 guidelines issued by urban development ministry for afforestation are not strictly followed. Tree can improve the urban environment when it is spaciouly integrated with in the city planning. An area of 6x6 inches is to be left uncemented around tree. The digging around the tree should also be avoided.

R.Madhavan of the environmental society of Mandavali says that maintenance and pruning is another problem. The trees have the roots restricted between the compound wall & the road. So the trees can easily topple. Madhavan says that instead of making a big fuss of cutting trees people must make a fuss about planting trees.

QUESTION AND ANSWERS:

1. How has the loss in green cover affected the health of the population in Chennai?

A) The loss of green cover has effected the air quality in the cit. As a result more young children are showing asthmatic symptoms than ever before.

2. How did Delhi regain its lost green cover? What lesson can other states learn from this?

A) Delhi was able to regain its green cover due to the efforts of many organizations like NGO for the post 10 year. The tree plantation drives would be successful only if the local population and eco clubs are involved. Air quality has improved and noise levels have reduced.

3. What are the recommendations given in the text to regain/protect Chennai's green cover?

A) The recommendations made by different organizations both at the state and the national level have not been strictly followed for example: the forest department planned to plant 600000 saplings in Chennai region. But actual planting of trees are not done. According to recommendations like guidelines specified in 2000 that an area of 6x6 inches is to be left uncemented around trees. Digging near trees is also to be avoided. Every tree that is taller than 25 feet requires attention ahead of the monsoon. The civic body should see that pruning is carried out on a regular basis across localities based on time table. R.Madhavan says the concept of a trees permanency does not exist. The trees are died but they ought to be replaced.

Chinnagya says that though Chennai's green cover is lower, efforts are made to increase the tree cover in schools and colleges by forming student clubs.

Citizens and NGOS must get involved.

Pauline says that the right place and species is highly crucial. Random planting should be avoided.

Nirmal says that when trees are cut the air becomes more polluted so it should be avoided.

VERBAL ABILITY:

1. Economic liberalization: according to principals of sociality government, institutions of the government have greater role in development activities while economic liberalization gives more importance to private companies in bringing about rapid industrialization and urbanization. When the government is not guiding properly the private agencies will resort to reckless pursuit of their profits at the expenses of public welfare. So such economic liberalizations results in all kinds of evils like air pollution.
2. Built up areas: The area where buildings like houses or offices are built.
3. Pipe dream: A dream which is impossible to achieve.
4. Hot spots: hot spots are areas with huge concrete buildings which increase in the heat.
5. Geographic areas: Specified area in the urbanization.