

IMPRESSIONS - II

1. AFTER TWENTY YEARS

Summary of the Story

The story, *After Twenty Years* by O. Henry, begins with a policeman on his night beat along a quiet avenue. It's about 10 o'clock at night, and the cold, rainy weather has emptied the streets. As the officer walks, he checks the doors of shops and businesses, which are mostly closed, and occasionally spins his club in a show of habit rather than performance.

Midway down the block, he notices a man standing in the doorway of a darkened hardware store, waiting with an unlit cigar in his mouth. The man explains that he is there for an appointment made twenty years ago with his best friend, Jimmy Wells, with whom he had grown up in New York. Twenty years prior, they had dined at "Big Joe" Brady's restaurant (once at this location but now demolished) and promised to meet again two decades later at this very spot, no matter what their lives might look like. They wanted to see where life would have taken each of them.

The man, now known as "Bob," describes how he and Jimmy had kept in touch for a while after he moved West but lost contact after a few years. However, he's confident that Jimmy, whom he describes as loyal and steadfast, will keep his word. As he waits, he shares that he's become quite successful in the West, where he's had to "compete with some of the sharpest wits." Jimmy, by contrast, was more of a "plodder" who preferred to stay in New York.

After exchanging good wishes, the policeman leaves, and Bob continues to wait in the worsening weather. Twenty minutes later, another man, tall with his collar turned up, approaches. Bob immediately assumes it's Jimmy, and the two men excitedly greet each other. As they walk down the street arm in arm, reminiscing, Bob notes that Jimmy seems taller than he remembered. When they reach the lighted corner of a drugstore, Bob stops abruptly, realizing that this man is not his old friend Jimmy. His companion reveals that Bob is under arrest and that he's wanted by the Chicago police.

The arresting officer hands Bob a note from Jimmy. In it, Jimmy explains that he was indeed present at the agreed time and place but recognized Bob as a wanted man when he lit his cigar. Unable to arrest his old friend himself, Jimmy called in a plainclothes officer to complete the arrest. Bob's realization that his childhood friend has turned him in closes the story on an ironic note, showing the conflicting demands of loyalty and duty.

Questions and Answers

1. Why was the policeman's walk described as "habitual and not for show"?

The policeman's walk was described as "habitual and not for show" because he was accustomed to his duties, carrying them out with routine seriousness, and not for the sake of impressing anyone, as there were few spectators.

2. What was the significance of "Big Joe" Brady's restaurant in the story?

"Big Joe" Brady's restaurant was significant because it was the place where Bob and Jimmy, the two friends, agreed to meet again exactly twenty years later, symbolizing their long-standing friendship and commitment.

3. How did Bob describe his life in the West?

Bob described his life in the West as one of success and adventure, where he had to compete with sharp minds to amass his wealth, suggesting that the West offered him opportunities and challenges that shaped him.

4. Why did Bob arrive early and decide to wait for Jimmy?

Bob arrived early and waited for Jimmy because he had faith in his friend's loyalty and believed Jimmy would honor their twenty-year-old appointment, showing his strong attachment to their friendship.

5. How did the policeman realize that the man in the doorway was wanted by the law?

The policeman realized the man was wanted by the law when he struck a match to light his cigar, which revealed his face and allowed the policeman to recognize him as the person wanted in Chicago.

6. Why did Jimmy Wells choose not to arrest Bob himself?

Jimmy Wells chose not to arrest Bob himself because he was emotionally conflicted due to their past friendship. Instead, he asked another plainclothes officer to make the arrest, showing his inner struggle between duty and loyalty.

7. What is the irony in the way Jimmy and Bob's reunion ends?

The irony lies in the fact that although they reunited as old friends, the meeting ended with one friend, a policeman, having the other friend arrested, revealing a conflict between friendship and moral duty.

8. Describe the character traits of "Silky" Bob as presented in the story.

"Silky" Bob is portrayed as confident, successful, and slightly egotistical due to his achievements in the West. He values loyalty and is committed to keeping his appointment with his friend, Jimmy, despite their long separation.

9. What role does the setting play in the story?

The quiet, almost deserted streets at night create a suspenseful atmosphere, emphasizing the sense of isolation, mystery, and the importance of the reunion between the two friends.

10. What message does the story convey about loyalty and duty?

The story conveys the message that loyalty and duty can be in conflict; while Jimmy values his friendship with Bob, he ultimately chooses to fulfill his duty as a policeman, showing that moral and legal obligations can sometimes override personal bonds.

2. A RING TO ME IS BONDAGE

Summary of the Poem:

Mina Asadi is an Iranian-born poet and writer, known for her thought-provoking and evocative poetry. She is recognized for her distinctive voice that blends traditional Persian themes with modern sensibilities. Asadi's poetry often explores themes of identity, exile, and the human condition, reflecting the complexities of her own life experiences.

The poem *A Ring to Me is Bondage* reflects the poet's deep longing for freedom, simplicity, and a profound connection with nature, contrasting traditional symbols and values with personal interpretations of joy, wealth, and love. Through each line, the poet redefines commonly accepted ideas, illustrating a world where material wealth, structured faith, and conventional attachments hold less importance than the unbound, open experiences that bring true happiness.

The opening line, "A ring to me is bondage," immediately signals the poet's view of attachments, whether in the form of relationships or societal expectations, as restrictions rather than comforts. The poet then distances himself from traditional religious symbols, like the "prayer-mat," which typically represents structured worship and devotion, instead favoring the natural beauty found on "a hundred roads" lined with "silk-tassel trees." This imagery of open roads and gardens represents paths of freedom and exploration, in contrast to a life restricted by rules or routines.

The poet embraces a fluid, spiritual connection with nature, illustrated through "daily prayers on the Silk Roads," where "the music of sparrows" replaces formal rituals. This line suggests that true spirituality, for the poet, is found in simple, unstructured moments in nature rather than in rigid, prescribed worship. Similarly, the poet's idea of happiness, or "Kibla," is wherever she feels joy, rejecting the idea that it must be bound to one place or object of devotion.

The poet values solitude and independence, finding joy in "aloneness" and calling the desert "home." He views wealth as simple, embodied in a "five-pound note," and associates love with sadness, seeing it as an emotional attachment that leads to

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restraint. She critiques societal norms, calling those who pick flowers "blind" for destroying nature, and sees cages as symbols of oppression. Unproductive thoughts are seen as barriers to freedom, with the poet advocating for natural and emotional liberation.

Through rich, symbolic imagery, the poet elevates nature and solitude as ideal sources of joy and freedom, ultimately rejecting conventional symbols of wealth, attachment, and structured faith as forms of bondage. This vision of a liberated, contemplative life speaks to the poet's desire to remain unbound by material, social, or emotional constraints, pursuing a life where happiness is found in nature, simplicity, and inner peace.

3. GIRL

"Girl" is a short story written by Jamaica Kincaid that was included in *At the Bottom of the River* (1983). It appeared in the June 26, 1978 issue of *The New Yorker*.

In this story "Girl," a mother gives her daughter a continuous stream of advice on proper behavior, domestic duties, and social expectations for a young woman. She begins by instructing the girl on household tasks like washing clothes, cooking specific dishes, and cleaning. This advice reflects a focus on practical, everyday skills that a woman of the time would be expected to know to manage a household efficiently.

Beyond domestic responsibilities, the mother instructs the girl on how to conduct herself publicly. She emphasizes modesty and decorum, cautioning her to avoid behaviors that might invite judgment or ruin her reputation. Specific commands such as "don't sing benna in Sunday school" and "don't squat down to play marbles" reflect traditional, conservative expectations that aim to maintain the family's and the girl's social respectability.

The mother also addresses issues of relationships, particularly with men, urging the girl to behave properly around them to avoid being perceived as promiscuous. She warns her about becoming "the slut you are so bent on becoming," revealing an underlying fear of the girl's potential missteps. This advice reflects both

societal judgment toward women's sexuality and the mother's anxiety about her daughter conforming to social norms.

The girl's brief interruptions indicate resistance, confusion, or disagreement with the advice, yet the mother's monologue continues with relentless authority. The mother's advice spans all aspects of life, ultimately creating a portrait of generational expectations and the pressures placed on women to conform to social, moral, and cultural codes. The poem captures the complex relationship between tradition and individuality, as well as the tension between maternal care and control.

4. THE COW OF THE BARRICADES

Raja Rao's short story *The Cow of the Barricades* reflects India's struggle for independence and the influence of Mahatma Gandhi's teachings. The central character, the Master, symbolizes Gandhi, and the cow, Gauri, represents peace, goodness, and unselfishness. Gauri's presence in the village becomes a symbol of hope, and her death at the end symbolizes the power of nonviolence, which cannot be defeated by force.

Every Tuesday, Gauri visited the Master's hermitage. She would walk around him, nibble at his hair, and disappear into the bushes after receiving food like grass, rice-water, and husk. The people in the village thought of Gauri as a divine being, perhaps Goddess Lakshmi, as she brought good fortune to everyone. People came to the Master's hermitage seeking blessings for various desires, such as passing exams, finding husbands, or having children.

Despite the reverence shown by the people, Gauri remained silent and would often not accept food offered by the villagers. Instead, the food would be given to the fish in the river, which ate it without fear, as the crocodiles were nowhere to be seen. This act of Gauri's showed her pure, compassionate nature, which was admired by all who encountered her.

Meanwhile, the village was caught up in the fight for independence, with the people resisting British rule. The Master encouraged villagers to boycott foreign goods

and refuse to work for the British. A large group of workers joined the struggle, and barricades were built to defend against the British soldiers. Despite the growing tensions, the Master urged nonviolent resistance, but the people were angered by the oppression and thought violence was the only way to win.

As the situation escalated, Gauri was placed on a barricade by the people, believing her presence would bring victory. However, when the British soldiers shot at her, Gauri died instantly without shedding a drop of blood. In honor of her sacrifice, a statue of Gauri was erected at the site, and the people continued to worship her. The Master believed that Gauri's spirit would be reborn, carrying with her the message of peace and nonviolence.

Questions And Answers

1. Who is Gauri in the story, and what is her unique behavior?

Gauri is a cow who visits the Master every Tuesday evening before sunset. She nibbles at the Master's hair, eats only the grain he offers, and then disappears among the bushes, only to return the following Tuesday. She is a compassionate and true soul, and her behavior is mysterious and unusual.

2. How do the people react to Gauri's visits?

The people are intrigued and try to honor her by offering grain, hay, and kumkum water. Some believe she is a goddess or a divine being. They make offerings and seek blessings for various desires, such as prosperity, education, and fertility.

3. What is the significance of Gauri's visit during the political unrest in the town?

Gauri's visit symbolizes peace and hope during a time of political turmoil. As the people prepare for conflict, Gauri, representing compassion and unity, walks through the streets, bringing a sense of calm and assurance to the crowd. She is seen as a protector.

4. How does Gauri contribute to the resolution of the conflict in the town?

Gauri's presence at the barricades causes the workers to lay down their arms, as they view her as a divine figure. Her calm and serene walk towards the barricades leads the soldiers to join the crowd, and ultimately, the tension is resolved without bloodshed.

5. What happens to Gauri at the end of the story, and how is she honored?

Gauri is shot by the Red-men's army but does not bleed in the usual manner; instead, blood drips from her chest. She is remembered and honored by the people, who erect a statue of her, and children play around it. The Master believes Gauri will be reborn when India faces sorrow again before gaining freedom.

6. What role does the Master play in the story?

The Master is a spiritual figure who has a deep connection with Gauri. He recognizes her as a compassionate soul and protects her from the political turmoil. The people seek his wisdom and understanding about Gauri's divine nature, and he suggests that Gauri represents love and compassion.

7. What is the message conveyed through the story of Gauri?

The story conveys the message of compassion, love, and the unity of all creatures, whether speechful or mute. Gauri represents purity, sacrifice, and the divine presence in all life, reminding people of the power of non-violence and love, as advocated by Mahatma Gandhi.

8. How does Gauri symbolize the ideal of non-violence?

Gauri's peaceful and serene behavior, despite the political chaos around her, embodies the principle of non-violence. She does not engage in conflict, but instead, her presence inspires peace and harmony, leading to the resolution of the conflict without bloodshed.

5. THE BEAUTY INDUSTRY

Aldous Leonard Huxley (1894–1963) was an English writer renowned for his satirical works, novels, and essays. He is most famous for *Brave New World* (1932), a dystopian novel critiquing technological and social advancements. Huxley's early works include *Crome Yellow* (1921) and *Point Counter Point* (1928), satirizing the intellectual circles of his time. Later in his career, Huxley turned to philosophical and spiritual themes, particularly after moving to California, where he explored mysticism and Hindu philosophy.

Summary of *The Beauty Industry*:

In his satirical essay *The Beauty Industry*, Huxley critiques the growing obsession with physical beauty in society, particularly focusing on women. He contrasts "real" beauty, rooted in character and health, with artificial beauty achieved through the use of beauty products. Huxley mocks the modern beauty culture that has women investing vast sums of money and energy into physical appearance, often neglecting the deeper qualities of the soul and character.

Huxley uses the example of American women, who, according to estimates, spend more than 156 million dollars annually on beauty products. He highlights how the beauty industry flourished during the economic slump of the 1930s, demonstrating that, while other industries faced decline, the beauty industry thrived. Huxley remarks that American women have become freer and more socially aware, which has led them to place a higher value on personal appearance.

However, Huxley argues that beauty derived from artificial means, such as cosmetics and other beauty products, is shallow and superficial. He compares this type of beauty to china porcelain—visually attractive but hollow and full of decay on the inside. The true beauty, according to Huxley, lies in the moral and spiritual attributes of a person. He emphasizes that character, not skin-deep appearances, is what makes a person truly beautiful.

Huxley uses the example of two women who fulfilled all the beauty standards but still lacked the qualities that would make them truly attractive—spiritual beauty. The essay concludes with Huxley's assertion that a healthy lifestyle and good character are the true sources of beauty, which shine through regardless of physical appearance.

Questions and Answers:

1. How much is being spent on beautification by American women?

According to Huxley, American women spend an estimated 156 million dollars annually on beauty products, a sum that surpasses the revenue of many nations.

2. What are the reasons for the modern cult of beauty?

The rise in prosperity, women's increased social freedom, and media influence have contributed to the modern obsession with beauty. Women now have the financial means to invest in beauty products and the societal freedom to emphasize their appearance.

3. What are the practical results of the cult of beauty?

While beauty products have made women appear younger and more attractive outwardly, they have not improved people's health or spiritual well-being. The pursuit of beauty has become an obsession, but it does not result in true beauty, which is found in the soul.

4. What type of ugliness shows through?

Ugliness, according to Huxley, comes from the neglect of one's soul and character. No matter how much one invests in physical appearance, a corrupted or shallow personality will always show through, rendering outward beauty meaningless.

5. What does Huxley compare artificial beauty to, and why?

Huxley compares artificial beauty to the beauty of a china porcelain vase. He explains that while it may appear beautiful outwardly, it is hollow inside, filled with slime, dead leaves, and flies. This comparison highlights how artificial beauty is only superficial, lacking any depth or true attraction, and how it can conceal inner emptiness and corruption.

6. How does Huxley view the relationship between beauty and health?

Huxley believes that true beauty is closely linked to health. He argues that a healthy body naturally reflects a healthy and attractive appearance. Using beauty products may enhance outward features, but without good health, a person can never truly be beautiful. He emphasizes that spiritual and physical health are essential for genuine beauty to shine through.

6. DIGGING

Seamus Heaney, one of the most celebrated poets of the 20th century, is known for his vivid imagery and exploration of Irish rural life. In his poem "Digging," Heaney reflects on his relationship with his father and grandfather, while also contemplating his own identity and the direction of his life's work. Through the metaphor of digging, Heaney connects the physical labor of his ancestors to his own intellectual work as a poet, showing that while the tools have changed, the act of digging for meaning remains the same.

Summary

The poem begins with Heaney holding a pen, an image that immediately contrasts with the traditional image of a shovel. As he sits at his desk, he hears the sound of his father working outside, digging in the earth. The sound of the shovel strikes Heaney deeply, evoking memories of his father and his grandfather. This auditory image establishes the central metaphor of the poem: the pen, which Heaney now uses as his tool, will replace the shovel used by previous generations. The sound of the shovel represents hard physical labor, while the pen symbolizes the intellectual labor of writing.

Heaney then recalls his father's skill in digging, specifically how he worked with the shovel in the garden to tend to the flowerbeds and later to replant potatoes. This passage paints a picture of hard, repetitive labor done with great care and expertise. The poet describes his father's movements with admiration, highlighting his strength and efficiency in performing this task. The repetition of digging, pulling potatoes up from the ground, and replanting them mirrors the routine of agricultural life, where

work is both demanding and purposeful. This rhythm of labor becomes an important metaphor for Heaney's own creative process.

The poet then shifts to memories of his grandfather, who worked even harder on the swampy land, cutting turf for fuel. Here, Heaney paints a picture of his grandfather's toughness and dedication. He remembers the simplicity of bringing him milk, a small, human moment amidst the grueling labor. This image reinforces the physicality and toughness required of Heaney's ancestors, emphasizing their connection to the land and the work that defined their lives. Like his father, Heaney's grandfather's labor is portrayed with respect and admiration, but it is clear that Heaney's work is different, not involving a shovel, but a pen.

In the final lines of the poem, Heaney reflects on how his own labor—writing—differs from the physical digging that defined his father's and grandfather's lives. While they worked the earth with shovels, Heaney digs into the world of words, using his pen as his tool. This transition from physical labor to intellectual labor shows a shift in Heaney's understanding of his place in the family tradition. He acknowledges the importance of the past while asserting his own role as a poet. Through this personal reflection, "Digging" becomes not just about the physical act of digging but about the continuity of work, heritage, and self-expression.

1. What is the central metaphor in Seamus Heaney's poem "Digging"?

The central metaphor in "Digging" is the comparison between the poet's pen and the shovel. While his father and grandfather use shovels for physical labor, Heaney uses his pen for intellectual work, symbolizing the continuity of labor across generations.

2. How does Heaney depict his father and grandfather in the poem "Digging"?

Heaney portrays his father and grandfather with admiration, emphasizing their strength and skill in physical labor. His father tends to flowerbeds, while his grandfather cuts turf, both men embodying hard work and expertise in their respective tasks.

3. How does Heaney feel about his work in "Digging"?

Heaney feels a sense of pride and respect for his father and grandfather's hard labor but acknowledges that his own work, through writing, is different. He sees his pen as his tool, allowing him to "dig" in a different way.

4. What role does memory play in "Digging"?

Memory plays a significant role in "Digging" as Heaney recalls vivid images of his father and grandfather working the land. These memories shape his understanding of work and influence his decision to pursue writing instead of physical labor.

5. What is the significance of the line "My God, my old man was incredible with a shovel"?

This line highlights Heaney's deep admiration for his father's skill and strength. It reflects the poet's awe and respect for the labor passed down through generations, even as he chooses a different path.

6. Why does Heaney mention the "chilly smell of the potato mould" in "Digging"?

Heaney uses the "chilly smell of the potato mould" to evoke nostalgia and a sensory connection to his past. This image of working the land serves as a reminder of his family's agricultural history and the hard labor involved.

7. THE TOWN BY THE SEA

Summary of the story

"The Town by the Sea" is a heartbreaking short story by Amitav Ghosh, depicting the aftermath of a devastating natural disaster. The narrative follows a scientist's search for his loved ones, who are lost in the calamity. In the end, he finds only his experimental slides and resolves to immerse himself in his work to cope with his grief.

On December 25, 2004, the director was in Port Blair, preparing to travel to New Delhi. He had left his family in Malacca while he was on official duty. That night, he stayed at the Haddo Circuit House, located close to the water. The next morning, on December 26, he was woken by the shaking of the building, realizing it was an earthquake. As he tried to leave, his phone rang, and it was his wife calling from

Malacca. He cut off the call, planning to call back later. However, as the tremors subsided, he noticed the water in the harbour rising rapidly, and the anchored ships were swirling. Realizing the danger to the low-lying Nicobar islands, especially Car Nicobar, he became anxious for his family.

The director, knowing that a government office in Car Nicobar had a satellite phone, repeatedly dialled their number. Eventually, he received news that Malacca had been badly hit and there were some survivors, but there was no information about his family. Later that afternoon, he learned that his son, aged thirteen, had been found clinging to the rafters of a church. The boy described how the house collapsed when the wave hit, and he was carried away by the water, managing to grab hold of something fixed to the ground to survive. When asked about his mother and sister, the boy tearfully said, "They just disappeared," believing he would be blamed for their loss.

With the help of local authorities, the director was able to board a flight the following day. He searched the rubble for his wife and daughter but found no trace of them. He returned to Port Blair with his son. A second visit to Car Nicobar revealed the devastation caused by the tsunami. While the landscape remained largely untouched by the disaster, the population along the seafront had been obliterated. Nature appeared unharmed, with many coconut palms still standing, and the forest canopy largely intact. The director showed his friend various possessions, including a suitcase and records, but nothing of his family.

As they visited the site of his former house, the director revealed that only the concrete foundation remained. He spoke about his wife, who had been a teacher but wanted to leave, and how he had been unable to secure a transfer for her. Regret and loss were evident in his words. When his friend reached out to comfort him, the director brushed him off, not wanting sympathy. He showed his daughter's paint box but did not pick it up, saying it would not bring anything back.

Reflecting on the director's response to the tragedy, the narrator acknowledges the difficulty of understanding the director's actions and emotions. In the face of such immense loss, the director made decisions without hesitation, guided by an impersonal effort to endure. The narrator realizes that, in such moments, words are

insufficient, and action becomes the most meaningful response. The director's quiet resolve in the face of unimaginable loss leaves a profound impression, illustrating the power of resilience in the face of disaster.

Questions and Answers

1. What was the director's initial reaction when he felt the shaking in Haddo Circuit House?

The director's initial reaction was to run out of the building when he felt the shaking and noticed the floor heaving. He then received a call from his wife, but chose to cut it off and call back later.

2. How did the director learn about the condition of his family?

The director learned that his family had been badly hit by the tsunami, and his son was found clinging to a church rafter. Later, the boy told him that his mother and sister had disappeared.

3. What did the director find when he returned to Car Nicobar for the second time?

When the director returned to Car Nicobar, he found a medical camp and a mound of household objects, including his wife's paint box, but his home and family were gone. Only the foundation of his house remained.

4. How did the director react when asked about his wife's unfulfilled transfer request?

The director expressed regret over not being able to provide his wife with the opportunity to leave, as her transfer request had never been granted. He reflected on what she could have achieved.

5. What did the director's actions convey about his emotional state?

The director's actions, such as refusing sympathy and not picking up his daughter's paint box, conveyed his emotional numbness and a sense of detachment from the past. He chose to act rather than dwell on his loss.

6. What did the director observe about the destruction caused by the tsunami in Car Nicobar?

The director observed that the tsunami had selectively destroyed human habitation while leaving nature, such as coconut palms and the forest, largely unharmed.

7. How did the director react when he showed the author the site of his former house?

When the director showed the author the site of his former house, he explained that only the foundation remained, and he reflected with regret on his wife's unfulfilled transfer request.

8. What was the director's emotional response when his son mentioned his mother and sister?

When his son mentioned his mother and sister, he began to cry, not out of grief for them, but out of fear that his father would blame him for their disappearance.

8. A DIFFERENT HISTORY

Sujata Bhatt's poem *A Different History* explores the themes of cultural assimilation, language, and the sacredness of books within the context of Indian spirituality. In the first part, Bhatt contrasts the ancient Greek god Pan with the Indian landscape, symbolizing a blend of Western and Eastern cultures. Pan's migration to India suggests that divinity transcends boundaries, with gods roaming freely in various forms, such as snakes and monkeys, which are important symbols in Indian mythology. By portraying the sacredness of trees and the reverence for nature, Bhatt underscores the immanence of spirituality in everyday life, challenging Western notions of distant or transcendent deities.

The poet also highlights the sanctity of knowledge in India, suggesting that disrespecting books is akin to committing a sin. This emphasizes the cultural importance of learning and the spiritual reverence associated with books and knowledge. Bhatt portrays books not just as physical objects but as sacred conduits of wisdom, urging readers to treat them with respect. This reverence is connected to the

belief in Sarasvati, the Hindu goddess of knowledge, who is invoked through the careful turning of pages. Bhatt weaves in a cultural ethos that elevates books to an almost divine status, aligning learning with spiritual growth.

The second part of the poem shifts focus to the oppressive nature of language, questioning its role in colonial domination. Bhatt uses rhetorical questions to examine the historical role of language as a tool of oppression, suggesting that all languages have been tainted by this legacy. She also explores the paradox of cultural assimilation, where future generations, despite the painful history of colonization, grow to embrace the very language used to subjugate their ancestors. This paradox raises critical questions about the relationship between language, identity, and the long-lasting effects of colonization on cultural memory.

Ultimately, *A Different History* invites readers to reflect on the complexities of language and cultural assimilation, emphasizing the intertwining of spirituality, nature, and knowledge in the Indian context. By juxtaposing the Western and Indian spiritual traditions, Bhatt challenges the dominance of Western perspectives and celebrates the richness of Indian culture. Through her nuanced exploration of the sacredness of books and the paradox of language, the poem urges readers to consider the power of words, the sanctity of learning, and the enduring impact of historical trauma on identity.

Questions and Answers:

1. What role do books play in the poem "A Different History"?

Books are depicted as sacred, with the poet emphasizing the sinfulness of treating them disrespectfully, highlighting their importance in preserving knowledge, wisdom, and spirituality in Indian culture.

2. How does the poet use animals like snakes and monkeys in the poem?

Snakes and monkeys are used as symbols of Indian gods, such as Lord Shiva and Lord Hanuman, illustrating the immanence of divinity in daily life and the spiritual connection between nature and the divine in Indian culture.

3. What rhetorical questions does the poet pose regarding language and oppression?

The poet asks which language has not been used as an oppressor's tongue, and how future generations, despite the suffering inflicted by conquerors, come to love the language that once oppressed them, exploring the complexities of language and identity.

4. What is the significance of Sarasvati in the poem?

Sarasvati, the Hindu goddess of knowledge, is invoked to emphasize the sacredness of books and learning, symbolizing the reverence for wisdom and the spiritual connection between education and divine forces.

5. What is the significance of the reference to Great Pan in the poem?

The reference to Great Pan symbolizes the blending of cultures and divinity's transcendence beyond geographical boundaries, with Pan migrating to India as a metaphor for spiritual adaptation to a new cultural context.

6. How does the poet highlight the paradox of language and cultural assimilation?

The poet questions how future generations, despite suffering under colonial oppression, come to embrace the language that was once used as a tool of their subjugation, emphasizing the complex relationship between language, identity, and colonization.

9. ENGINE TROUBLE

Engine Trouble is a Story written by Famous Indian writer R.K Narayan, originally published in 1972 in his famous collection *Malgudi Days*. The story explores the theme of Luck and Responsibility.

The story begins at a fair in the small village of Malgudi, where the narrator, like many others, buys a lottery ticket. The biggest prize, hidden under a black blanket, attracts many participants. When the narrator's number is called, he uncovers the blanket to reveal a road roller engine as his prize. Shocked and

bewildered, he doesn't know how to transport the enormous machine back to his home, which marks the beginning of his trouble.

The next day, the narrator receives a notice from the municipal corporation demanding a tax of 100 rupees per month for using government land to park his engine. Desperate to get rid of the engine, he tries to sell it, but no one is interested. As the months pass, the narrator sells his wife's jewelry to pay the tax. The situation worsens when he receives another notice to remove the engine within 24 hours. In his despair, he seeks help at the temple, where a pandit offers the use of an elephant to move the engine, along with 50 laborers to assist.

With the elephant and the laborers in place, they try to move the engine, but it stubbornly refuses to budge, hitting a wall in the process. The person whose wall is damaged demands that the narrator rebuild it and remove the engine from his property. The police arrest the narrator for the damage and set a 30-day deadline to rebuild the wall. Just when it seems things can't get worse, a thunderstorm causes the road roller to fall into a drain, further complicating matters.

Ironically, the person whose wall was broken thanks the narrator for covering the drain, which he had been unable to do himself due to municipal pressure. The narrator uses this opportunity to negotiate, telling the man that he cannot keep the engine in the drain because of the expenses he has incurred, including the municipal tax and payments for the elephant and labor. In the end, the wall man pays off all the narrator's debts, allowing him to finally rid himself of the troublesome road roller and its burdens.

Questions and Answers:

1: What is the main problem the narrator faces in Engine Trouble?

The narrator wins a road roller engine in a lottery and struggles with how to transport and maintain it, facing mounting taxes and fees from the municipal corporation.

2: How does the narrator try to get rid of the engine?

The narrator attempts to sell the engine, uses an elephant and laborers to move it, but faces further complications, including breaking a wall and falling into a drain.

3: How does the story end for the narrator?

The narrator's debts are paid off by the person whose wall was broken, and he finally gets rid of the engine, resolving his troubles.

4: What unexpected prize does the narrator win at the fair?

The narrator wins a road roller engine, which he did not expect and has no idea how to use or transport.

5: How does the narrator handle the municipal corporation's notice?

The narrator struggles to pay the municipal tax, selling his wife's jewelry and later facing more notices demanding the engine's removal.

6: How does the temple help the narrator with his problem?

The temple provides an elephant and laborers to help move the engine, but their efforts fail when the engine damages a wall.

10. IS LOVE AN ART?

In this Essay *Is Love an Art?* Erich Fromm explores the notion that love requires knowledge and effort, challenging the popular belief that love is merely a spontaneous, fortunate experience. While society often views love as something that happens by chance, Fromm argues that love, like any art, requires learning and practice. He contends that many people, though starved for love, fail to recognize the importance of cultivating their capacity to love and instead focus on how to be loved or how to find the right object to love.

Fromm identifies a common misconception that love is primarily about being loved rather than the ability to love. This leads people to focus on becoming lovable, often through external attributes like success, attractiveness, and pleasing manners. In this pursuit, people overlook the importance of developing the internal capacity to love, as they concentrate on securing affection or approval from others rather than cultivating genuine emotional depth.

A further error lies in the confusion between the initial infatuation or "falling" in love and the sustained, committed state of "standing" in love. Fromm suggests that people often mistake the intensity of their emotions during the early stages of love for the depth of their feelings, whereas this intensity might actually reflect their own loneliness or unmet needs rather than true, lasting love. The idea that love is simple and effortless, Fromm argues, is a mistaken belief that leads to disappointment and failure in relationships.

Fromm concludes that love, like any other art, requires study, discipline, and a conscious effort to improve. He points out the irony that while people are willing to invest time and energy into mastering skills for wealth and prestige, they neglect the more profound, soul-enriching pursuit of learning to love. Fromm calls for a shift in perspective, urging individuals to view love as a lifelong art to be honed and cultivated, rather than an elusive or incidental experience.

Questions and Answers

1: What is the central argument of Erich Fromm in Is Love an Art?

Erich Fromm argues that love is an art that requires knowledge, effort, and practice, challenging the common belief that love is a spontaneous, effortless experience that happens by chance.

2: What is the common misconception about love, according to Fromm?

Fromm suggests that many people mistakenly view love as the problem of being loved rather than focusing on the ability to love. They prioritize being lovable through external qualities like success and attractiveness rather than cultivating the internal capacity to love.

3: What distinction does Fromm make between "falling in love" and "standing in love"?

Fromm distinguishes between the initial infatuation of "falling in love" and the deeper, lasting commitment of "standing in love." He argues that people often mistake the intensity of early emotions for true, enduring love, which may actually stem from loneliness or unmet needs.

4: How does Fromm view the modern attitude toward love and learning?

Fromm criticizes the modern attitude that neglects love as an art worth learning, contrasting it with the time and energy people invest in mastering skills for wealth and prestige. He advocates for viewing love as an essential skill to be learned and practiced, enriching the soul rather than just providing material gain.