

THE EMPTY HEART

Periasamy Thooran

PERIASAMY THOORAN (Periasami Turan, 1908-87), a distinguished Tamil writer, first made his name as a writer of short stories and poems. However he is best remembered today as the editor of the famous ten-volume general encyclopaedia in Tamil, Kalai Kazhanjiyam. Later, he also compiled and edited an encyclopaedia in Tamil for children. A master of style, Thooran handled successfully the prose-poem and the sonnet. His works include such popular collections as Ilantamiza and Turan Kavithaika (poems), Tangacangili (Short stories) and Puvir Sirippu (essays). Among the many awards that came to him were the Padma Bhushan and Kalaimamani from Tamil Nadu.

The poem Kurai Kudam (The Empty Heart) highlights a great human weakness: man's insatiable greed which ultimately destroys him.

A. Answer the following questions orally:

1. What is your opinion about a greedy man?
2. What does he do to satisfy his ambition?
3. What ultimate result does he have to come across?

THE EMPTY HEART

The man was rich, but not content.

Morning, noon and night he went

To the Wish-yielding Tree and prayed:

‘O Kalpaka, I seek your aid;

All I want is a pot of gold.’

His prayer was granted sevenfold:

For as a gift to him was given,

Glistening gold in pitchers seven.

Seven silver pitchers were now with him

Each with gold coins filled to the brim.

But the Tree unkind took into its mind

To add an eighth, a half-full pot.

B.1.1. Write ‘T’ for true and ‘F’ for false statement:

1. Periasamy Thooran has written the poem ‘The Empty Heart’.
2. Periasamy Thooran was a Bengali writer.
3. The poem ‘The Empty Heart’ has been translated by S. Swaminathan.
4. The man was given six pots .

B.1.2 Answer the following questions very briefly:

1. Why was the man not content, although he was rich?
2. When was the gift given by the tree?
3. Why was the tree called unkind?

4. When did the man want one pot of gold?
5. Why was he given seven pots?

To fill this quick was his thought;
The seven full vessels he clean forgot,
The demon Desire now made him mad.
To mother, wife, children 'good bye' he bade .
He rose before cock-crow, past midnight he worked;
Eating, drinking and sleep he shirked.
He wrecked his health, his conscience sold
And tried all tricks to gather gold.
Eager and anxious he shamelessly took
Each coin he could clutch by hook or crook.
Harder and harder he tried, but died
Before he could quite fill the pot.
Greed and endless, but life is not.
Nothing is wrong with a half-filled purse;
'Tis the void in the heart that is the curse.

B.2. Fill in the blanks with suitable words reading the poem carefully.

The man was rich, but

Morning, noon and he went.

His prayer was granted

For as a gift to him was

To fill this was his thought.
The seven full he clean forgot.
Nothing is wrong with a half- filled purse. 'Tis the void
in the heart

C.1. LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS

Answer the following questions:

1. Comment on the title of the poem. Is the title justified?
2. What does the name “Kalpaka” evoke? What light does it throw on the character of the person?
3. Contentment is the style of life. Discuss in the light of the poem.
4. Explain the following lines:
“Nothing is ‘wrong with a half-filled purse;
‘Tis the void in the heart that is the curse.”
5. What does ‘Silver pitcher’ symbolise in the poem ?

GLOSSARY AND NOTES

yielding (n) : to produce or provide

glisten (v) : to shine

pitcher () : a large clay container

vessels (n) : utensils for holding something, a large ship or boat, a tube the carries blood through body of the person or an animal

demon (n) : an evil spirit. a person who does very well or with a lot of energy

shirk (v) : to avoid doing, you should do, especially because you are too lazy

 THE EMPTY HEART

119

wreck (n) : a ship that has sunk or that has been very badly damaged, a person who is in a bad physical or mental condition

void (n) : a large empty space (v) : to state officially that it is no longer valid. (adj) completely making devoid

encyclopaedia (n) : a book or set of books giving information about all areas of knowledge or about different areas of one particular subject

brim (n) : edge or lip of a vessel

C.2. GROUP DISCUSSION

Discuss the following in groups or pairs:

1. The greed for the accumulation of material wealth leads to destruction.
2. What ultimately counts is not wealth but the richness of heart.

C.3. COMPOSITION

Write a paragraph in about 100 words on each of following:

1. A rich man's empty heart.
2. Rewards of being kind-hearted.

D.1. WORD STUDY

Correct the spelling of the following words:

Atteck

Apeal

Statament

Bigin

Chenge

Compeer

Gratful

Sufer

Refoote

D.2. Use the following words in sentences :

Care

Bridge

Demand

Hope

Guard

Fight

Promise

Profit

Return

Smell

D.3. Word Meaning

Ex. Match the words given in column 'A' with their meanings given in column 'B'.

A

B

- | | | |
|------------|---|------------------------|
| 1. Brim | - | A large empty space |
| 2. Void | - | To fill to the top |
| 3. Wreck | - | To avoid doing |
| 4. Shirk | - | A ship that has sunk |
| 5. Demon | - | A large ship or boat |
| 6. Vessels | - | An evil spirit |
| 7. Pitcher | - | To produce or provide |
| 8. Yield | - | A large clay container |

E. GRAMMAR

Pick out the infinitives, the gerund and the participles in the following sentences:

1. I decided to go there.
2. Walking is a good exercise.
3. He forced me to join the campaign.
4. Laughing is a good tonic.

F. ACTIVITY

Look at the following sentences and find out how the words rhyme.

1. The man was rich, but not content.
Morning, noon and night he went.
2. All I want is pot of gold.
His prayer was granted sevenfold
3. The Demon desire now made him mad
To mother, wife, children 'good bye' he bade.

Now fill in the blanks with appropriate rhyming words - one from the poem itself and another on your own.

thought	_____	_____
sold	_____	_____
took	_____	_____
pat	_____	_____
purse	_____	_____
seven	_____	_____
brim	_____	_____

Compose a small poem on Mother, using the rhyming words you have written above.

G. TRANSLATION

Translate into English:

1. मेरी माँ दयालु है।
2. वे सुबह में टहलते हैं।

3. तुम्हें आराम करना चाहिये।
4. वह कलम से लिख सकती है।
5. पटना बिहार की राजधानी है।
6. पटना गंगा के किनारे बसा हुआ है।
7. गंगा एक पवित्र नदी है।
8. गंगा को प्रदूषित नहीं करना चाहिये।
9. पटना एक पुराना शहर है।
10. उसने पटना के बारे में पत्र लिखा है।
