

Subject-English

Hons. Core Course

Semester II

Paper -ENGH-H-CC-T-3

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**Commentary on the poem “Our Casuarina Tree”:**

This poem begins with the description of a giant tree with a creeper wound around it like a huge python. No other tree can survive the grip of the creeper. But the casuarina tree bears the creeper like a scarf. The tree is the centre of busy life of birds and bees. The tree is depicted as grand and charming. The first stanza of the poem is thus a pictorial description of the tree. The second stanza points out the poet’s impression of the tree. Every morning when she opens the window, she is spellbound by the tree’s majesty and she sees the landscape surrounding it. It proclaims how deeply she is in love with nature. The tone changes to melancholic reflection in the third stanza as the poet says why the tree is dear to her. The next two stanzas link the tree with the poet’s memories of her lost brother and sister. The tree is so dear to her because of its association with memories of her childhood when she used to play beneath it with her brother and sister. It is for their sake the tree shall ever remain dear to her memory. In the last

stanza, the poet wishes that the casuarina tree may be held among those few trees which have been immortalised in literature.

The poem begins with the objective description of the tree and later describes the charm associated with her childhood. In this poem, the poet celebrates the beauty and majesty of the tree. She uses the medium of tree to receive memories of her childhood days. She nostalgically remembers those days which would never come back. The poem reminds of the Romantic trait of going back to childhood days and recapitulating them. This poem is romantic in tone and contains autobiographical reminiscences. The poet says that the tree is so dear to her not because it is magnificent, but because she with her brother and sister, used to play together beneath the tree when they were little children. This thought brings out an intense yearning for those playmates who are now no longer alive. For their sake the casuarina tree stands as the symbol of the poet's joyous past. The image of the tree rises in her memory till her eyes become dim with tears. To the poet's fancy, the tree in sympathy makes a sound like a dirge, a funeral song. It is, as if, the tree is in unison with the poet lamenting over the loss of dear ones. This lamenting

seems to be an eerie speech and the poet can hear this wailing of the tree wherever she goes. It follows her to the distant lands. The last stanza unfolds the desire of the poet for the immortality of the tree. She wants to make the tree immortal like the Yew trees of Borrowdale sanctified by Wordsworth in his poetry. She consecrates a song for the tree as it is loved by those departed souls of her siblings who are dearer to the poet than her own life. She says that her love will confer on it immortality if her own verse is too weak to confer immortality. The tree will remain immortal and keep alive the memory of her companions. The tree is the sole bond between the past and the present. When she recalls the tree, it brings to her mind a chain of memories of her happy time of childhood. The poem reflects her deep admiration, affection for the tree which is freely linked in her mind to her homeland. When she is abroad, she longs for her native land and the symbol of all those memories is the casuarina tree. It proclaims how she is deeply in love with nature. The poet attempts to recapture the happy time of her childhood in the company of her siblings. She delicately recaptures the past and binds it to the present.

Sample questions and answers:

1. Who are addressed as 'sweet companions'?

In this poem, the poet is recollecting her joyful childhood days. She reminisces the memories of her companions with whom she once used to play in the garden beneath the tree. The 'sweet companions' refer to the poet's brother and sister. The tree is a medium to link the poet's past with the past.

2. What does the poet watch on winter mornings?

The poet says that when she gets up in the morning, she is delighted to see the tree. In winter season, a grey baboon used to sit on the branches of the tree watching the sunrise. She compares the baboon to a statue. Its infants are playing on the branches of the trees. The poet also watches that the kokilas are hailing the day, the sleepy cows are heading their way to pastures and the water-lilies have sprung on the lake beside

the casuarina tree. Here the poet's minute observation and selection of detail instil the poem with interest.

### 3. What is the meaning of 'Oblivion's curse'?

Oblivion means a state of forgetfulness. 'Oblivion's curse' means when something is lost into forgetfulness. The poet wishes that the tree will survive the 'Oblivion's curse'. In the last stanza of the poem, the poet desires for the immortality of the tree. She hopes that if not her verse at least her love will confer immortality on the tree and thus the tree can outlive the curse of oblivion.

[ For a detailed study of the poet, please go through the article 'The Writings of Toru Dutt']