



The Noble Nature

A. Lead-in :

We love beautiful things around us. The hills and trees attract us. Good and noble persons also impress us. All noble things influence us. In this context, let's read the poem 'The Noble Nature' given below :

Before we do that discuss the following :

- Name three flower-bearing plants to your partner.
- Ask your partner to name three big, tall trees and then tell the class which of these trees look like an oak (a type of large European tree which lives for hundreds of years).
- Listen to your teacher reading the poem aloud. Now find out what a noble man is compared to.

B. The text :

It is not growing like a tree
 In bulk, doth make Man better be;
 Or standing long an oak, three hundred year,
 To fall a log at last, dry, bald, and *sere* :
 A lily of a day
 Is fairer far in May,
 Although it fall and die that night -
 It was the plant and flower of Light
 In small proportions we just beauties see;
 And in short measures life may perfect be

C. About the poet :

Ben Jonson (1572-1637) was an English Renaissance dramatist, poet and actor. A contemporary of William Shakespeare, he is best known for his 'comedy of humour' with a tone of satire. Jonson's poetry, like his drama is informed by his classical learning. In the poem, The Noble Nature, he talks about the qualities that make a man noble. He compares man to a sturdy oak and to a delicate lily, in support of his views.

D. Notes and glossary :

Oak : a large tree with tough, hard wood

(a large European tree that lives for hundreds of years)

sere : dried and withered

proportions : quantities

measures : units in which we express size

[Your teacher will read the poem aloud again. See if you found out what a noble man is compared to. Share your answer with the class.]

E. Let's understand the poem :

Read the poem silently and try to find out the answer to the following.

Discuss the answers with your partner.

1. What is noteworthy in an oak ?
2. Who is fairer: an oak or a lily? How ?
3. What ultimately happens to an oak ?
4. Is a man blessed with a long life and material prosperity ?
5. What are your impressions about the lily ? (Clue: Ref. To L7 & 8.)
6. Can a short life be perfect? Which lines suggest this and how ?
7. Choose the best possible meaning of 'Just' in line of from the following : (a) Only a short time ago (b) really (c) morally fair.

F. Let's appreciate the poem :

(a) Comprehension questions :

1. Why is a lily far fairer than an Oak ?
2. Which qualities make a man noble ?
3. Is long life a yardstick to judge the worth of a human being ?
4. Do you agree with the idea that in short measures life may perfect be ?
5. Of a day, that night, smell, short- what do these suggest ?

(b) Read the last four lines of the poem and answer the following by choosing the most appropriate option given for each.

1. We see beauty in lily because.
 - (i) it is short lived
 - (ii) it is the flower of light
 - (iii) small is beautiful
 - (iv) it is not like an oak
2. The poet's philosophy of life is that
 - (i) one must enjoy life to the fullest extent
 - (ii) one must make others happy
 - (iii) small things can make life beautiful
 - (iv) longevity should be the good of our life.
3. In a phrase of the poem the poet suggests that 'short life' is
 - (i) tie that night.
 - (ii) flower of light
 - (iii) small proportions
 - (iv) short measures

4. If you were asked to describe lily in a few words, how would you do it in the context of the poem ?
- (i) a flower bearing plant
 - (ii) beautiful but short lived
 - (iii) a water plant
 - (iv) sweet smelling flower

G. Let's do the activities :

- (a) Now, read the poem aloud with your friends.
- (b) Do you want to be a noble human being ? Discuss it in groups.
- (c) Have you read the Odia poem, Sefali Prati by Kuntala Kumari Sabat ? If not, read the poem and find out the similarities.

