Vikram’s English Academy (ICSE)

**Notes: The Hard Truth**

**Answer the following:**

1. **Which honour is mentioned in the first line? With whom did the writer share the honour? What choice did they give to the world?**

Ans: The honour refers to the ‘Nobel Peace Prize’ that the writer had received for his work as an environmental activist. He had shared the honour with a group of scientists who had contributed in a similar manner. The scientists had given the world a choice between two furtures – one which was moving towards destruction due to global warming and the other a secure and safe one which was possible if people jointly worked towards saving the planet.

1. **What do their (the scientists’) words remind him of? What is the meaning of the line he mentions?**

Ans: The words of the scientists remind the writer of the words of an ancient prophet. The words were ‘Life or death , blessings or curses. Therefore , choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live.’ The line mentioned by him means that we humans have a choice between life and death and we must choose a life that will be beneficial not only to our generations but also to the future ones.

1. **What ‘planetary emergency’ does the writer speak of? What potential has it gathered? Is the situation hopeless?**

Ans: The ‘planetary emergency’ refers to the global warming also known as ‘climate change’ which is a rise in the average temperature of the earth’s climate system which is a threat to the survival of our civilization. This threat is gathering ominous and destructive potential every second that goes by. The writer says that the situation is a dire one but not a hopeless one . There is hopeful news that we have the ability to solve these crises and avoid the worst if not all of its consequences.

1. **What does ‘fever’ refer to? What does the writer say about the ‘fever’?**

Ans: The ‘fever’ refers to the increasing heat which is due to various reasons related to lifestyle changes. The writer says that the fever is rising and it is not a temporary or passing illness that the world is facing. He says that many different experts have given the same opinion that the heat is not a temporary effect. Every one of them restated that something basic is wrong.

1. **What according to the writer is ‘wrong’ and what is the solution to the problem?**

Ans: According to the writer it is ‘we- citizens of the globe’ that is wrong and only we must make it right.

1. **What sad prediction was made the previous year? Why?**

Ans: Last September 21, as the Northern Hemisphere tilted away from the sun, scientists reported with unprecedented distress that the North Polar ice cap was melting. One study estimated that it could be completely gone during summer in less than 22 years whereas another study warns that it could happen in as little as 7 years.

1. **Enlist the major effects of global warming mentioned in the lesson.**

Ans: In the last few months there have been signs that our world is spinning out of kilter. Major cities in North and South America, Asia and Australia are nearly out of water due to massive droughts and melting glaciers. Desperate farmers are losing their livelihoods. People in the frozen Arctic and on low-lying Pacific islands are planning evacuations of the places in which they have dwelled since time immemorial. Climate refugees have migrated into areas already inhabited by people with different cultures religions and traditions, increasing the possibility of conflict. Stronger storms in the Pacific and Atlantic have threatened cities. Millions have been displaced by massive flooding in South Asia, Mexico and 18 other countries in Africa. Countless number of people has lost their lives. The reckless encroachment upon animal land is driving more and more species into extinction.

1. **Is the destruction of the planet intentional? What are the writer’s views about this?**

Ans: The writer says that the destruction of the planet is not intentional and we humans never intended it . Giving the example of Alfred Nobel , the writer says that he too never wished that dynamite be used for waging war. He had hoped his invention would promote human progress. Similarly says he, we too burnt coal, oil and methane for a constructive purpose without realizing the horrendous effects.

1. **What does the writer say about carbon dioxide?**

Ans: The writer says that unlike other forms of pollution , carbon dioxide is invisible, tasteless and odourless and thus we are unable to see the ill effects of it on our climate. Moreover the catastrophe now threatening us is unprecedented and we therefore think it is improbable.

1. **What do we find hard to do? What do we do then?**

Ans: We find it hard to imagine making the massive changes that are now necessary to solve the crisis. And when large truths are genuinely inconvenient, whole societies tend to ignore them.

1. **What changes have taken place ever since the Nobel peace prize was first awarded?**

Ans: In the years since this Nobel peace prize was first awarded, the entire relationship between humankind and the earth has been radically transformed. In other words initially the award was meant for those who had made massive efforts to harness resources for energy but now the challenge is to do so without any adverse effects on the environment.

1. **Explain: Mutually assured destruction**

Ans: The global warming is a result of certain recurrent mistakes by humans which looks like we have begun to wage a war on the planet itself. It seems like we and the earth’s climate are locked in a relationship familiar to war. This is what the term ‘mutually assured destruction’ means.

1. **What did the scientists calculate two decades ago? What do they warn us against now?**

Ans: More than two decades ago, scientists calculated that nuclear war could throw so much debris and smoke into the air that it would block life-giving sunlight from our atmosphere, causing a nuclear winter.

1. **What is the need of the hour according to the writer ?**

Ans: According to the writer the need of the hour is to mobilize our civilization with the urgency and resolve that has previously been seen only when nations mobilized for war. He says that the wars were won and enemy conquered when leaders found motivated the people at the eleventh hour and that released a mighty surge of courage , hope and readiness to sacrifice for a change which involved death and destruction . But mobilizing people to work towards the betterment of the environment was surely a cause for saving life.

1. **What does the writer say about the calls that were made by the leaders at the eleventh hour before war?**

Ans: The writer says that the calls made to the people of a nation at the eleventh hour before war, were not comforting and misleading. The leaders did not make assurances that the threat was not real or imminent or that it would affect others but not ourselves and that life would be normal at such times. Further things cannot be left to destiny and we have to act ourselves. The calls were made to come and defend the nation and the future. They were calls upon courage , generosity and strength of all the people of that nation to stand against the threat of war.

1. **What are the two different threats that the writer has mentioned? What does he say about the present threat?**

Ans: Earlier the threat to one nation was from another nation. But now it is the threat of climate crisis. It is real , rising, imminent and universal.

1. **Which African proverb does the writer mention? What is its significance with respect to the speech ?**

Ans: The writer mentions the African proverb which says, ‘If you want to go quickly, go alone. If you want to go far , go together’. He says that if we truly want to ride over the crisis of global warming then the whole world has to take unanimous and collective action. Any one or two nations acting singularly will not get very far or bring about a massive change.

1. **What conceit must we abandon?**

Ans: We must abandon the conceit that if individual countries act to fight the threats of global warming it will suffice. That may help temporarily but will not take us far enough.

1. **What does this new consciousness require?**

Ans: This new consciousness requires to expand the potential which is there within every human being. The innovators who will make inventions that are eco- friendly may be from across the globe yet will impact the movement against global warming. So we must ensure that entrepreneurs and inventors everywhere on the globe have the chance to change the world.

1. **What hard truths with respect to change does the writer mention at the end? What hope does he give inspite of the hard truths?**

Ans: The writer mentions the hard truths in the end. He says that the way ahead is difficult. What we are doing or can do is far less than what we must do. He further says that we have all the means to get started on the journey of change. He says that we have a purpose and we are many and we will rise together and act together for this purpose.