

Ecology by A K Ramanujan

The poem, 'Ecology' is taken from Ramanujan's third volume of poems, 'Second Sight', published in 1986. The speaker seems to be the poet himself or some imaginary person who is loyally devoted to his mother. He is angry because his mother has a severe attack of migraine; a very bad kind of headache, often causing a person to vomit; which is caused by the fragrance of the pollen of the flower of the Red Champak every time it is in bloom. The fragrance is heavy and suffocating as the yellow pollen spreads everywhere. Even the doors of the speaker's house cannot prevent the strong smell from entering the house. The walls of the house are able to absorb almost everything-the sounds, sights, the human voices, the harsh sounds produced when new shoes are worn. But they cannot stop the fog of pollen dust from the Champak trees. The loving son therefore decides to cut down the tree, but he is prevented from doing so by his mother who sees the positive side of the tree in her garden. She says that the tree is as old as her and had been fertilized by the droppings of a passing bird by chance which is considered to be a good omen. The positive side of it is that the tree provides many basketful of flowers to be offered to her gods and to 'her daughters and daughter's daughters' every year, although the tree would give a terrible migraine to one line of cousins as a legacy. The yellow pollen fog is the yellow dust of pollen carried in the air which is thick and heavy like fog which covers the earth.

This poem portrays Ramanujan's strong interest in the family as a very important theme of his poetic craft. His memories of the past would inevitably bring pictures of his family, especially his mother who is self-sacrificing. There is also a reference to his Hindu heritage as he mentions the gods and the ancient beliefs in the poem. The sense of irony is indicated when the mother very angrily protests the idea of cutting down the tree even though she is suffering very badly

from the migraine caused by it. She has a kind of emotional attachment to the tree, saying that it is as old as herself.

‘Ecology is a poem which could be read as one single sentence. However, each stanza has one particular idea. There is a casual connection between the ideas and they flow from one stanza to the next. ‘Flash her temper’; an instance of the use of irony because she is very angry at the idea of having the tree cut down. The actual meaning of the word ‘Ecology’ is not followed here but the poet seems to convey the thought that a particular kind of tree may have both negative and positive factors and therefore it need not be pulled down.

(Source: <http://drspzmai.blogspot.com/2018/10/ecology-k-ramanujan-study-material.html>)