



INDIAN SCHOOL AL WADI AL KABIR

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STUDY NOTES	Topic: The Way through the Woods	Note: Only for reference

The Way Through the Woods - Rudyard Kipling

Introduction to the poem

This poem was written by Rudyard Kipling. He was an English poet and wrote many poems. Like his other poems, The Way Through the Woods also carries powerful lessons for us. The poem primarily talks about the relationship between human beings and Nature. It was Nature that first started to influence living beings on the face of Earth. However, after humans achieved a certain level of intellect, they also started altering Nature for their own motives. For example, the rapid deforestation rate across the globe shows how we are bringing changes in the environment for our needs. Kipling paints the same conflict between man and nature in this poem. Through an example of a road which is vanished in the woods after people abandoned it, he shows the gradual re-growth of Nature, thereby removing all remains of the road. Structurally, the poem has two stanzas constituted by twenty-five verses.

Summary of the poem

The poet starts the poem by telling the reader that he is talking about a road. A road which was closed seventy years ago for some reason. The harshness of weather and heaviness of rains have so far vanished all the traces of the road. And on the spot, there is no sign that once a road was there. The re-growth of Nature has covered it with coppice, heath, and anemones. Only the keeper of the territory knows that there was a road that is no longer visible to most of the people. Moreover, he says that it is the place where otter (a mammal) is not afraid of humans because it has seen only a few of them. If anybody visits the woods in a summer evening, he will only hear silence. A silence that can only be replaced by the galloping of a horse that walks through the misty atmosphere of the place. Only that rider could identify the road as being covered by the greenery. In the last two verses, the poet says that it was the road that was lost in the woods. And the woods show no sign of its previous existence.

Theme of the poem:

The theme of this poem is power of nature over man. Rudyard describes a struggle between mans' creations and natures power of regrowth. Nature had taken over and that road became part of its anew.

Themes in the Poem the way through the woods

1. The Power of Nature

The conflict between the power of man and the power of Nature is depicted in this poem. His confidence in himself has made man think that he can overcome Nature and reduce its power. Kipling, however, denies this view that Nature can be defeated. Nature has supreme power. As shown in the poem, Nature takes very little time to re-grow at the places it owns. Although man had made a road in the woods to fulfill his needs of moving across, it did not last forever. The road had to be closed seventy years ago. Once it was abandoned by man, Nature starts gaining the territory it once had. Therefore, the triumph of Nature over man is the foremost theme in this poem.

2. Indifference of Nature

Nature is very indifferent to our desires, plans, and motives. It is to say that natural laws are not constrained by the will of man. Nature has its own plans. And it faces no obstacle in executing all of them. The very indifference of Nature to the developments we have so far made is shown in this poem. Hundreds of people would have labored to construct the road. Later on, they had to close it. However, Nature had nothing to do with the time invested and efforts done by those many laborers. In its very essence, Nature is expansive. It can deepen its roots anywhere. So does happen in this poem.

3. The decay of everything

Another important theme in this poem is decay. The imagery created by Kipling in this poem tells us as to how things get to end and their remains vanish. Nature has the power to drive anything to nothingness no matter how much time it had taken to be. Just seventy years after the road was abandoned, it started to exist no more because Nature had already covered it with grass and plants. Not even the road itself, there is also no trace that it had once existed. Only the keeper of the area knows that there was once a road here which has now faded. In this way, the theme of decay is infused in the poem.

Lessons from the Poem the way through the woods

1. We cannot defeat Nature

Nature is unconquerable. Even our hardest efforts cannot make it kneel down before our will and plans. We cannot fully control the happenings of Nature. It possesses the utmost power to replicate itself and show its glimpse everywhere. We are powerless to make it serve the way we want. Therefore, any attempt made by man to clutch Nature would be in vain.

2. We should not harm Nature

Another lesson which we get from this poem is that Nature should not be harmed in any way. For the fulfillment of our material needs, we often start destroying nature. For example, to expand the area for living deforestation is done which results in the lack of forests. However, this is not even good for us. We should not sacrifice everlasting benefits for temporary gains. Therefore, harm to Nature must be avoided.

3. We should protect Nature

Instead of conflicting with it, we should strive to protect Nature, since it provides us relief through its beauty. There is an urgent need for cherishing the natural environment. In order to not fall prey to its indifference, it is necessary to embrace Nature as it is. The only way to please it is to protect it. It is good for us and even for it.

4. We should connect emotionally to Nature

The technological developments of modern-day have emptied our hearts of the will to explore Nature. Man's emotional connection to Nature is significantly reduced by massive industrialization and mechanization of human society. Therefore, it is needed that we should invest our emotions in getting the joy of Nature and its beauty.