



INDIAN SCHOOL AL WADI AL KABIR

Class: IX	QUESTION BANK (2023-2024) TOPIC: THE LEGEND OF THE NORTHLAND	SUBJECT: ENGLISH
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SUMMARY OF THE POEM

In this poem, the poetess tells us a story. It is a story of the Northland. At that time, St. Peter lived on the earth. He used to go round the world and preach in his typical manner. One day, he came to a cottage. He saw a woman making cakes. St. Peter had fasted for the whole day. So, he was hungry and tired. He asked the woman to give him a cake from her store of cakes.

The woman was very greedy. She made a very small cake for the saint. But when the cake was baking, she thought that it was too large to give away. So she made another one which was smaller even than the first. But when it was ready, she thought that it was also too big to be given. So, she made a very small and very thin cake for him. But as she was greedy, she did not want to part with even this cake. She placed it on the shelf.

Saint Peter saw this and grew angry. He told her, "You are very selfish. You do not deserve to live in the world in human form. You do not deserve food, shelter and fire to keep you warm." He cursed her to be changed in a bird. She became a woodpecker and flew out of the chimney. In the end, the poetess says that every school going boy has seen her in the wood: She still lives there in the trees. She keeps boring trees for her food all day.

Theme

The poem is based on the theme that greed is a grave sin. Greedy people do not deserve the blessings and the comforts of human life. Human beings should thus acquire qualities of kindness, fellow-feeling and empathy. The little woman's greed stopped her from sharing even her smallest cake with hungry Saint Peter, thus earning his wrath.

Poetic Devices

1. Alliteration

Repetition of initial consonants.

Example:

- Funny, furry clothes

2. Personification

Giving human qualities to inanimate objects and animals.

Example:

- Where she lives in the trees.

3. Repetition

Multiple uses of a word.

Example:

- And rolled and rolled it flat
- Boring and boring for food
- By boring, and boring, and boring

4. Simile

Comparing two distinct words using the word 'as'.

Example:

- Black as coal in the flame
- Baked it thin as a wafer.
- Children look like bear's cub.

MCQs

Choose the correct answer.

1. The poem 'A Legend of the Northland' was written by :

(A) Robert Frost

(B) Phoebe Cary

(C) W. B. Yeats.

(D) Coates Kinney.

2. What did Saint Peter ask for from the little woman?

(A) A single cake.

(B) A dozen cakes.

(C) A loaf of bread.

(D) Something to eat.

3. How will you compare the winter days and nights in Northland?

(A) The days are too long and the nights are too short.

(B) The days are too short and the nights are too long.

(C) The days and nights are of twelve hours each.

(D) There are no days; it is always night there.

4. Why can't people sleep the winter nights through in Northland?

(A) Because the nights are too short there.

(B) Because the nights are too long there.

(C) Because it is all the time night there.

(D) Because there is no night there.

5. What do the people of Northland harness their sledges to?

(A) The Foxes.

(B) The oxen.

(C) The bullocks.

(D) The reindeer.

6. How do the children wearing furry clothes look?

(A) They look like little pups.

(B) They look like foxes.

(C) They look like fawns.

(D) They look like bear's cubs.

7. What did Saint Peter do during his travels around the world?

(A) He looked after the poor and the rich.

(B) He preached the people.

(C) He met little women.

(D) He begged for food.

8. What was the little woman doing when Saint Peter went to her?

(A) She was eating cakes.

(B) She was giving away cakes to the poor.

(C) She was making and baking cakes.

(D) She was putting cakes on the shelf.

ANSWERS: : 1. B 2. A 3. B 4. B 5. D 6. D 7. B 8. C

SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

Question 1.

Where does this legend belong to and what kind of country is it?

Answer:

The legend belongs to the “Northland”, an area that could refer to any of the extremely cold countries in the Earth’s north polar region, such as Greenland, the northern regions of Russia—Siberia, or the Scandinavian countries – Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Iceland and Finland. It is a cold place where days are short and the nights are long.

Question 2.

‘And the children look like bear’s cubs.’ What have the children been compared to? Why?

Answer:

Northland is a cold place so the children have to wear funny furry dresses to protect themselves from cold. These dresses make them look like bear cubs.

Question 3.

What does the poet tell us about the story she is about to narrate? Why does she want to tell the tale?

Answer:

The poet says that she is going to tell a strange tale told by the people of Northlands. She admits that though the story may not be true, still she wants to tell the story because it contains a lesson in generosity and philanthropy. She

wants the readers to learn a lesson from the poem.

Question 4.

What happened to the cake every time which the old lady tried to bake it?

Ans. The old lady was a greedy woman. She had no desire to share her things with others. Once Saint Peter was tired and hungry. He arrived at her cottage to get something. The old lady tried, again and again, to bake a too small cake for Saint Peter. But the size of the cake always appeared to her bigger and the lady was unable to give this cake to the saint.

Question 5.

Describe the theme of the poem 'A Legend of the Northland'.

Ans. A woman was busy baking cakes when St. Peter chanced to come to her door. He was hungry and tired. He asked the woman to give him a cake to eat. The woman made a small cake but it seemed to be big. She did not give it to St. Peter. She made another small cake but again it looked big. So she did not give it too. St. Peter became angry. He said that she was not fit to be a human as she was selfish. He changed her into a bird who had to search for food the whole day.

Question 6.

What happened to the old lady when Saint Peter cursed her?

Ans. Saint Peter became angry at her greed because she did not give a piece of cake to Saint Peter to satiate his hunger. When he cursed the lady, she turned into a bird. She became a woodpecker and flew through the chimney. She wore a red cap and her body was burned and had become black. This is the same colours that a woodpecker have on its body. Besides, she was bound to live in the forest with scanty food.

Question 7.

Why did the little old woman have to struggle for her scanty food after she was cursed to be a woodpecker?

Ans. The greedy little woman refused to give hungry Saint Peter even a small piece of cake. She made a very small piece of cake but it seemed too large for her to be given away. She went on making it still small and smaller. She was cursed by Saint Peter to be a woodpecker. She was made to struggle even for her scanty food. As a woodpecker, she went on boring to get a small morsel of food.

Question 8.

How did Saint Peter's curse act upon the old lady?

Ans. Saint Peter was a holy man. He cursed the old lady to be turned into a bird. His curse at once acted upon her. She was changed into a woodpecker wearing a

scarlet cap. All her clothes were burnt black as she went through the chimney and flew out of the top.

Question 9.

How does the woodpecker get her food?

Ans. The woodpecker constantly bores into the dry hardwood. She has to make big efforts to get its little food.

Long Answer Type Questions

1. Describe Northland as done by the poet?

Answer: The Northland is the area around the North pole, an area that includes any of the extremely cold countries in the Earth's north polar region, such as Greenland, the northern regions of Russia—Siberia, or the Scandinavian countries Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Iceland and Finland. It is a cold, snow-covered place where days are short and the nights are long.

In this region, hours of the day are few and nights are so long and so cold in winter that people are unable to sleep through the whole night. When it snows people harness their reindeers to pull their sledges. Because of extreme cold children look like bear's cubs in because of funny and furry clothes.

2. Briefly narrate the legend of the old woman and St Peter?

Answer: Once Saint Peter stopped by an old lady's cottage because he was feeling hungry and weak after the day's fasting. The lady was baking cakes on the hearth. When Saint Peter asked her for one of cakes, she tried to make a tiny cake for him. But as it was baking, she found it too large to be given away.

She tried baking two more times but even the smallest of cakes seemed too large to her. Such greedy behaviour of the lady annoyed the hungry saint. He cursed her saying that she was far too selfish to be a human, to have food, shelter and fire to keep her warm. Thus, she was transformed into a woodpecker.

All her clothes except her scarlet cap were gone as she went up the chimney and flew out of the top. Every country schoolboy is said to have seen her in the forest, boring into the wood for food till date.

3. What is the message of the poem?

Answer: This poem teaches us that true happiness lies in sharing things with the persons who are in need. If we are greedy, we cannot have happiness in our life. On the other hand our charitable nature makes us think about pains and sorrows suffered by the other

people. The little woman baking cakes was asked for something to eat by a tired and hungry traveller. The woman, who had a large store of cakes, was greedy and selfish.

She made smaller and smaller cakes, but in the end refused to part with any. Her greed and miserliness angered the weary traveller, Saint Peter, who told her that she was too selfish to dwell in human form, where she had food, warmth and shelter. He cursed her to become a bird and live in a nest and search for scanty food by digging all dry and hard wood.

4. A holy man should not curse another human being. Justify this statement in the context of the poem 'A Legend of the Northland'.

Ans. A holy man is known for his wisdom. He teaches moral lessons to the people whether they are liberal or greedy. All are equal in his eyes. In the present story, Saint Peter is a holy man. He is also famous for his preaching. He has preached and travelled a lot. So, he is hungry. He asks the lady for some food but she does not share her food with him. Finally, the saint becomes angry and curses her. In fact, he should have shown some mercy and the example of his wisdom with the power of his wisdom he could influence the woman and get some food. Therefore, it is appropriate to say that a holy man should not curse the lady.

Q5. What moral lesson do you get from the poem 'A Legend of the Northland'?

Ans. This poem teaches us that true happiness lies in sharing things with the persons who are in need. If we are greedy, we cannot have happiness in our life. On the other hand, our charitable nature makes us think about pains and sorrows suffered by other people. The charitable people have many friends and they are always connected with one another with a strong bond of sentiments. But the greedy people have hardly any friends and they often live alone in the world.

Q6. How is our happiness spoiled by greed? Explain in the context of the poem 'A Legend of the Northland'.

Ans. True satisfaction lies in sharing things with others. Peace and satisfaction are the two sides of a coin. If there is satisfaction in our life, peace is bound to come in our life. However, greed spoils both. If we are greedy, we cannot get satisfaction as well as peace in our life. In the poem, the old lady was greedy and she failed to give the cake to the saint. If she had satisfaction, she would certainly have shown honour and regard to the saint. So, in the case of this little lady, it can be said that her greed had spoiled her peace and satisfaction. Actually, Saints try to create such societies in which all the people shall be treated with equality and greed will have no room in them. With the help of teachings, they desire to bring down heaven on the earth.

Value-based questions-

1. How did the woman behave when Saint Peter asked her for a cake?

Ans. Saint Peter had eaten nothing all day. He came to the door of a cottage. He saw a woman making cakes. He asked her for a single cake. The woman baked a small cake for him. But then she thought it was too big to give away. She made a smaller cake. But she thought it was as big as the first one. Now she made a very tiny cake. It was as thin as a wafer. Even this one seemed to her too large to give away. She placed all the cakes on her shelf. She did not give the saint any cake.

2. Why did the saint punish the woman? What was the punishment?

Ans. The woman was very selfish. She didn't give the saint even a small cake to eat. The saint was very angry. He cursed the woman. He said that she was too selfish to live in a human form. He said that she would now live as a bird. She would have to bore the hardwood for her food. At once, the woman went up through the chimney. When she came out at the top, she was turned into a woodpecker. Now she had to keep boring the trees for her little food.

Q3. Why and how did the little lady bake the cake again and again for Saint Peter?

Ans:-The little old lady had to bake several cakes because of her stingy and uncharitable nature. When Saint Peter, who was feeling weak because he had been fasting and wandering all day, asked the woman to give him just one cake out of her big stock, the greedy woman set down to bake a new cake for him. She first made a small cake but when she laid it to bake, it seemed much too big to be given away. So, she kneaded a still smaller cake but it too seemed as big as the earlier one. Then she took a small bit of dough and rolled it as thin as a wafer but could not part even with that. She was surprised that her cakes seemed very small when she ate them herself but appeared too large for charity. Thus, driven by greed, the woman repeatedly baked a cake for Saint Peter.

Q4. How and why was the little woman turned into a woodpecker?

Ans:-The little woman was turned into a woodpecker towards the end of the poem. Her greedy behaviour had provoked and angered Saint Peter and he pronounced a curse upon her. He observed that the woman was so selfish that she could not part even with her thinnest cake. He felt that God had blessed her with food, shelter and warmth of the fire, but she was extremely greedy and selfish. This led him to conclude that she did not deserve the comforts of human life. So, he cursed her to become a woodpecker and find her food with difficulty. After the curse was pronounced, the woman has driven up the chimney and came out of the top as a woodpecker. Her clothes had burnt black as coal and had become the body of the bird while her scarlet cap remained as the red plumes of the bird. To this day, the woman can be seen as a woodpecker pecking at the trees for food.

Q5. The poet, Phoebe Cary, introduces Saint Peter in the poem as "Good Saint Peter". Which values of his character justify this introduction?

Or

How is Saint Peter presented as a dedicated missionary who wants human beings to have positive human values?

Ans:-Saint Peter, the apostle of Christianity, has been presented through this legend as a messenger of God whose mission is to preach age-old human values of kindness and charity. He is a dedicated and devoted saint who has come down to the Earth with the purpose of imparting good values to humanity.

Such is Saint Peter's dedication to his mission that he roams about the whole day on an empty stomach. By evening, he is very tired and hungry, still, he asks only for a single cake from the little woman. As a 'Good Saint', he waits patiently for her while she bakes one small cake after the other to be given to him as charity.

However, Saint Peter does not tolerate greed and selfishness. He believes that human beings are blessed with food, shelter and the warmth of a fire and that they should be ready to share these comforts with the needy. If they lack the will to share their blessings, they have no right to enjoy the comforts of human life. Hence, although he is a saint, he loses his temper and curses the woman. The selfishness of the stingy woman upsets and provokes good Saint Peter.

Thus, Saint Peter is a dedicated missionary who wants human beings to have positive human values of mercy and generosity.

Q6. Which values does the legend of Saint Peter and the little woman teach?

Ans:-The legend of Saint Peter and the little woman teaches the values of love, mercy, pity, charity, kindness, and a sense of sharing. The tale is based on the moral lesson that human beings must rise above selfishness and agreed to help people in need. They should be ready to share their blessings and joys with others. God is never happy with people whose interests are confined to themselves. It is inhuman to find somebody in need and not provide the required help. The story reveals that those who lack love and empathy and are not charitable will be punished by God or His messengers. If the little woman had shared food with Saint Peter, she would have enjoyed a happy, contented life. But her greed and selfishness resulted in her doom. She was deprived of all human comforts and was converted into a woodpecker who had to lead a life of hardship. The values of kindness, generosity, and compassion are emphasised by this legend.

REFERENCE TO CONTEXT QUESTIONS

RTC 1

Away, away in the Northland,

Where the hours of the day are few,

And the nights are so long in winter
That they cannot sleep them through
Where they harness the swift reindeer
To the sledges, 'when it snows;
And the children look like bear's cubs
In their funny, furry clothes:

Questions :

- (i) Which country does this legend belong to?
- (ii) How were the days and nights there?
- (iii) How did the people drive their sledges when it snowed?
- (iv) How did the children look in their furry clothes?
- (v) What is the name of the poet of these lines?

Answers :

- (i) This legend belongs to Northland.
- (ii) The days were short and the nights were very long.
- (iii) They drove them with the help of reindeer.
- (iv) They looked like a bear's cubs.
- (v) The name of the poet is 'Phoebe Cary'.

RTC 2

So she made a very little cake,
But as it baking lay,
She looked at it and thought it seemed
Too large to give away.
Therefore she kneaded another,

And still a smaller one;

But it looked, when she turned it over,

As large as the first had done.

Questions :

(i) What did the woman make?

(ii) What seemed to the woman?

(iii) What did she do then?

(iv) How did the second cake appear her to be?

(v) What quality of the woman is presented in this stanza?

Answers :

(i) She made a very little cake.

(ii) It seemed to the woman that the cake was too big to give.

(iii) She made the cake smaller than the first one.

(iv) It seemed to her to be as big as the first one.

(v) She was a selfish lady.

RTC 3

‘Now, you shall build as the birds do,

And shall get your scanty food

By boring, and boring, and boring,

All day in the hard, dry wood.’

Then up she went through the chimney,

Never speaking a word,

And out of the top flew a woodpecker,

For she was changed to a bird.

Questions :

- (i) How did Saint Peter punish the selfish woman?
- (ii) What will she do to get her food like a bird?
- (iii) What was the woman changed into?
- (iv) Where did she fly out?
- (v) Name the poem and the poet.

Answers :

- (i) He cursed her to be changed into a bird.
 - (ii) She will keep boring all day.
 - (iii) She was changed into a woodpecker.
 - (iv) She flew out of the chimney.
 - (v) The Legend of Northland' by Phoebe Cary.
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