

Keeping Quiet



Pablo Neruda

GENERAL INTRODUCTION:

The poem “Keeping Quiet” written by Pablo Neruda discusses the need of maintaining peace and silence. He stresses upon being quiet and harmless to the human beings, animals and environment. He suggests that in order to maintain peace and harmony, it is required to stop and introspect ourselves.

ABOUT THE POET PABLO NERUDA

Pablo Neruda (1904 – 1973) was the ‘pen name’ and later, ‘legal name’ of this famous Chilean poet – diplomat – politician. He won the Nobel prize for literature in the year 1971. He wrote in green ink which was his personal symbol for desire and hope. His writings are simple, wherein lies their beauty.

IMPORTANT POINTS:

- The poet talks about the need of silence and quiet introspection and the importance of quietude and calmness. He also talks about creating a feeling of mutual understanding among human beings.
- The poet asks us to keep still and count up to twelve. He also asks us to sit still. For a moment we should not speak any language. We should not move our arms so much.
- It will be a moment of complete silence without rush or worry. This would be an exotic moment.
- Then a sudden strangeness will prevail which we will all enjoy. It will be bliss.
- The fisherman would not harm the whales on the cold sea. Even the man gathering salt would stop working and look at his hurt hands and reflect at the pain and harm his strenuous task has caused him.
- All kinds of wars must be stopped at once. The green wars against the environment, wars with poisonous gases, firearms, must be stopped at once.
- People who are all the time preparing for wars leaving no survivors behind ought to find time to wear clothes and walk around with their brothers strengthening the message of peace and brotherhood.
- At the same time the poet cautions not to confuse stillness with total inactivity. Life is an ongoing process and should not be associated with death. It is to live with a positive attitude.
- He does not want us to ruminate over death.
- But he feels that if for once we do not focus ourselves single-mindedly to keep our lives moving but do some introspection or spend some time in silence doing nothing, we can

understand ourselves better and escape from the threatening calls of death.

- The earth can teach us a lesson how everything comes to a dead end and comes to life again.
- In the same manner a quiet introspection can bring all evil thoughts to an end and bring in a new life of peace and tranquility.
- Now the poet will count up to twelve and they should keep quiet and he will go.

SUMMARY:

“Keeping Quiet” is a peace poem written by Pablo Neruda. The poet asks humanity to count numbers from one to twelve – twelve being the number of hours shown in a clock or the number of zodiac signs. He requests everyone not to speak because languages create barriers between people. The moment when everyone stops moving their body will be very special and different as we have never experienced such a moment before.

The poet says that in this period of inactivity the fishermen would not harm the whales, the salt gatherers will not hurt their hands, those who are busy destroying the nature will adopt a new approach towards life, The men who are preparing for wars and victory based on deaths of innocent people will join their enemy and stand in unity with them, doing nothing. No one will

harm himself or any other person. Everyone will unite and ponder upon his acts and realize the results of his deeds.

The poet clarifies his idea and says further that he does not want people to stand idle. He wants that there should be no war because he does not want to see trucks laden with dead bodies of the soldiers. He is promoting Universal brotherhood and peace.

The poet says that everyone is working continuously, to achieve one's goals. People are threatened by death and the fear forces them to work endlessly so that they can achieve everything quickly. In this mad rush, they do not realize the repercussions of their acts. He wants us to pause and come out of the mad rush. He wants us to be happy about our achievements and celebrate them. He wants us to overcome the fear of death and to relax for a while. We should know the results of our deeds and celebrate our achievements.

When the people will remain quiet for a while, they will realize the purpose of their lives. Just like all the creations of nature undergo a rebirth with the change of seasons, similarly, keeping quiet will be a rebirth for the human soul. It will give a new meaning to our life. Again, the poet says that he will count till twelve and asks everyone to remain quiet while he leaves.

सारांश:

“चुप रहना” पाब्लो नेरुदा द्वारा लिखित एक शांति कविता है। कवि मानवता से एक से बारह - बारह तक की संख्या गिनने के लिए कहता है, जो एक घड़ी में दिखाए गए घंटों की संख्या या राशियों की संख्या है। वह सभी से न बोलने का अनुरोध करता है क्योंकि भाषाएं लोगों के बीच अवरोध पैदा करती हैं। वह क्षण जब हर कोई अपने शरीर को हिलाना बंद कर देगा, वह बहुत ही खास और अलग होगा जैसा कि हमने पहले कभी ऐसे क्षण का अनुभव नहीं किया है।

कवि का कहना है कि निष्क्रियता के इस दौर में मछुआरे व्हेल को नुकसान नहीं पहुंचाएंगे, नमक इकट्ठा करने वाले अपने हाथों को चोट नहीं पहुंचाएंगे, जो प्रकृति को नष्ट करने में व्यस्त हैं वे जीवन के प्रति एक नया दृष्टिकोण अपनाएंगे, जो पुरुष युद्ध और जीत की तैयारी कर रहे हैं बेगुनाहों की मौत के आधार पर अपने दुश्मन में शामिल हो जाएंगे और उनके साथ एकता में खड़े होंगे, कुछ भी नहीं करेंगे। कोई भी खुद को या किसी अन्य व्यक्ति को नुकसान नहीं पहुंचाएगा। हर कोई एकजुट होगा और उसके कार्यों पर विचार करेगा और उसके कर्मों के परिणामों को महसूस करेगा।

कवि अपने विचार को स्पष्ट करता है और आगे कहता है कि वह नहीं चाहता कि लोग

बेकार खड़े रहें। वह चाहता है कि युद्ध न हो क्योंकि वह सैनिकों के शवों से लदे ट्रकों को नहीं देखना चाहता। वह सार्वभौमिक भाईचारे और शांति को बढ़ावा दे रहे हैं।

कवि कहता है कि प्रत्येक व्यक्ति अपने लक्ष्य को प्राप्त करने के लिए निरंतर कार्य कर रहा है। लोगों को मौत की धमकी दी जाती है और डर उन्हें अंतहीन काम करने के लिए मजबूर करता है ताकि वे सब कुछ जल्दी से हासिल कर सकें। इस पागल भीड़ में, उन्हें अपने कृत्यों के नतीजों का एहसास नहीं होता है। वह चाहता है कि हम रुकें और पागलों की भीड़ से बाहर आए। वह चाहता है कि हम अपनी उपलब्धियों से खुश रहें और उनका जश्न मनाएं। वह चाहता है कि हम मौत के डर पर काबू पाएं और कुछ देर आराम करें। हमें अपने कर्मों के परिणामों को जानना चाहिए और अपनी उपलब्धियों का जश्न मनाना चाहिए।

जब लोग थोड़ी देर चुप रहेंगे, तो उन्हें अपने जीवन के उद्देश्य का एहसास होगा। जैसे प्रकृति की सभी रचनाएं ऋतु परिवर्तन के साथ पुनर्जन्म लेती हैं, वैसे ही चुप रहना मानव आत्मा के लिए पुनर्जन्म होगा। यह हमारे जीवन को एक नया अर्थ देगा। फिर से, कवि कहता है कि वह बारह तक गिनेगा और सभी को उसके जाते समय चुप रहने के लिए कहता है।

KEY WORDS:

1	Still	Without movement, Calm	शांत
2	For Once	One Single Time	एक बार
3	Exotic	Unusual, Strange	अनोखा
4	Rush	Hurry	तुरंत
5	Engines	Factory, Vehicles	इंजन
6	Cold Sea	Sea whose water is cold	शीत सागर
7	Huge	Very Big	विशाल
8	Interrupt	Break	बाधा

MCQ:

- The poet uses conversational style and personal pronouns as 'you', 'we' and 'I' because
 - he wants to be intimate with mankind
 - he tries to read out to the readers
 - he wants to establish contact easily
 - third person is ineffective
- The last line of the poem is
 - and later proves to be alive
 - life is what it is about
 - I want no truck with death
 - and you keep quiet and I will go
- Man needs to learn a lesson from
 - moon
 - stars
 - earth
 - sun
- According to the poet wars that are fought have no
 - soldiers
 - weapons
 - fighter planes
 - earth

- (d) survivors
(d) survivors
5. 'Cold sea' is a poetic device
(a) personification
(b) transferred epithet
(c) metaphor
(d) alliteration
(b) transferred epithet
6. Without rush, without engines' refers to
(a) no noise
(b) no hurry to go to the office
(c) no travelling
(d) no holidaying
(a) no noise
7. The poet wants the entire humanity to
(a) keep talking
(b) keep running
(c) keep laughing
(d) keep still
(d) keep still
8. 'Have no truck with death' means
(a) will not die of the truck accident
(b) remove poverty and illiteracy
(c) have no association or deal with death
(d) will not drive a truck
(c) have no association or deal with death
9. The poet advocates the balance of nature to be
(a) maintained
(b) destroyed
(c) temporarily disturbed
(d) ignored
(a) maintained
10. What does man threaten himself with?
(a) death
(b) birth
(c) robbery
(d) suicide
(a) death
11. The types of wars the poet talks about are
(a) green wars, wars with gas, wars with fire
(b) verbal wars
(c) technological warfare
(d) nuclear wars
(a) green wars, wars with gas, wars with fire

12. Fishermen in the cold sea would not harm
- (a) seahorses
 - (b) mermaids
 - (c) whales
 - (d) tortoises
- (c) whales**
13. What kind of a moment would it be when everyone is silent
- (a) terrible
 - (b) painful
 - (c) exotic
 - (d) unforgettable
- (c) exotic**
14. What can human beings learn from nature?
- (a) beauty
 - (b) keeping quiet
 - (c) to be happy
 - (d) working with silence
- (d) working with silence**
15. What symbol from nature the poet uses to prove that keeping quiet is not total inactivity?
- (a) Sun
 - (b) Soil
 - (c) earth
 - (d) Nature and earth
- (d) Nature and earth**
16. How will silence benefit man and nature?
- (a) both will be friends
 - (b) man will know nature better
 - (c) man will be healthy
 - (d) man will stop hurting nature and both will heal themselves
- (d) man will stop hurting nature and both will heal themselves**
17. Why is the poet asking everyone not to speak any language?
- (a) to avoid noise
 - (b) to avoid loud voices
 - (c) to avoid people
 - (d) to avoid conflicts and misunderstandings
- (d) to avoid conflicts and misunderstandings**
18. What will happen if there are no engines and no crowd?
- (a) noise will be lessened
 - (b) no crowd on roads
 - (c) no traffic rush
 - (d) it will create a perfect, happy moment

- (d) **it will create a perfect, happy moment**
19. What is always alive even when everything seems to be dead or still?
- (a) mountains
(b) rivers
(c) Sun
(d) Earth and nature are always alive
- (d) **Earth and nature are always alive**
20. What is the sadness in the poem that the poet speaks about ?
- (a) violence because of unthoughtful ness of the people
(b) unnecessary movements
(c) speaking aloud
(d) fighting
- (a) **violence because of unthoughtful ness of the people**
21. What should not be confused with total inactivity or death?
- (a) no movement
(b) a statue
(c) talking people
(d) Stillness and silence
- (d) **Stillness and silence**
22. Not move our arms' what does this expression refer to?
- (a) sit quietly
(b) stand quietly
(c) to be inactive
(d) sitting still without any movement
- (d) **sitting still without any movement**
23. What does number 12 represent?
- (a) hours of the day and months of a year
(b) earth
(c) clock
(d) cricket players
- (a) **hours of the day and months of a year**
24. How will keeping quiet protect our environment?
- (a) by creating peace and brotherhood feelings
(b) no noise will be there
(c) people will not fight
(d) none
- (a) **by creating peace and brotherhood feelings**
25. According to the poet what creates barriers?
- (a) interactions

- (b) reactions
- (c) fighting
- (d) languages
- (d) languages**
26. What is the essence or message of the poem ?
- (a) introspection and retrospection to be more peaceful and be in harmony
- (b) to prosper
- (c) to be happier
- (d) to reach out more people
- (a) introspection and retrospection to be more peaceful and be in harmony**
27. What does counting upto 12 signify and how will it help?
- (a) hours of the day
- (b) months of a year
- (c) it will help to create peace and harmony
- (d) all
- (d) all**
28. What does the title of the poem suggest?
- (a) Inactivity
- (b) noise
- (c) unhappiness
- (d) Maintenance of silence
- (d) Maintenance of silence**
29. What are the different kinds of wars mentioned in the poem?
- (a) War against humanity
- (b) War against nature
- (c) War with gasses and fire
- (d) All these
- (d) All these**
30. What is the poet expecting from fishermen?
- (a) to find more fish
- (b) to go deeper into the sea
- (c) to think and stop harming the fish
- (d) none
- (c) to think and stop harming the fish**

SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS:

Question 1. What will 'counting up to twelve and keeping still' help us to achieve?

Answer: Counting up to twelve and keeping still will help us to understand ourselves and to introspect. We will be able to realize the real impact of our selfish actions on each other and, finally, on the entire humanity.

Question 2. Do you think the poet advocates total inactivity and death?

Answer: The poet does not advocate 'total inactivity' because he has a firm belief in life. He wants everyone to live a complete life, full of peace and contentment. He wants everyone to take a break from the hectic schedule and introspect for a while to improve the quality of life.

Question 3. What is the 'sadness' the poet refers to in the poem?

Answer: The poet refers to the sadness which all human beings experience because of the lifestyle

of nonstop work, stress, aggression and destruction. This sadness comes because man does not understand himself.

Question 4. What symbol from nature does the poet invoke that there can be life under apparent stillness?

Answer: The poet uses 'Earth' as a symbol to invoke that there can be life after apparent stillness. The Earth seems 'still' from outside but is alive and vibrant deep within. Similarly, our silence can help us to maintain a harmonious life on Earth and stop destruction.