

Chapter 14

Mother Tongue

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Understanding the Poem

1. The quill is the central element of the poem – what does it symbolise?

Answer

The quill symbolises the Sharade script. A script is central to propagate and preserve any language. In this case the poet is eager to make a point for her mother tongue Dogri which was originally written in Sharade script but for reasons unknown happened to be written in Devanagari script. So she personifies the reed and requests it to give a quill and the reed instantly agrees to do so saying that it is also the servant of the Shahni like the poet herself and ready to serve her.

2. You notice a sense of urgency in the poet's request – what is the reason for this?

Answer

The reason for the sense of urgency shown in the poem is because of fast depleting base of Dogri language in its native speakers and the influence of other language on it. The poet is concerned that if the Dogri speaking population is not ready to serve the Shahni(Dogri) then it will be too late to save the language.

3. How has the poet brought out her emotional attachment to her mother tongue?

Answer

The poet has brought out her emotional attachment to her mother tongue in the form of this beautiful poem wherein she treats her mother tongue as Shahni and the poet herself as a maid to the service of the queen. The emotional height is reached when the reed instantly agrees to cut its hand and give it away for the service of Shahni in the form of a quill.

4. Personification is a figure of speech that attributes human qualities to inanimate things and abstract ideas. How has it been used in the poem?

Answer

The poet has beautifully used the tool of personification for her mother tongue Dogri and its script Sharade. Dogri has been personified as Shahni and Sharade script has been personified as the queen's maid in the form of a quill. The dramatization of the reed cutting its hand to offer for the service of the queen animates the entire poem and rouses the reader to stand up for the greater cause of saving/serving one's mother tongue.