

# Heaven, if you are not on Earth

**-Kuvempu**

## **SUMMARY**

The poem 'Heaven if you are not on earth', originally written by Kuvempu in Kannada has been translated by C. Naganna. The poet feels that heaven cannot be anywhere else except on earth because it is believed that heaven is supposed to be on a higher field far away from earth & it is only the blessed who can reach them. Added to it, nobody who has visited heaven has come back to report the nature of it and it remains a mystery. That is the main reason people are advised to do good to reach heaven. The poet feels that heaven cannot be anywhere else other than on earth. He continues with the same idea & further feels that if we cannot be gods, then there can be no gods & the same with heavenly nymphs (Angels). He expresses this idea with a strong belief that human beings are a combination of divine and demonly qualities & the moment the divine qualities excel; he turns to be almost to an angel.

Beautiful description of nature is presented. A river or stream rushes fast & reaches the sea & loses its identity & the waves roll back as surf onto the shore. The sunshine is quite tender & acceptable to nature and this sunshine is spread throughout the green garden. When we see a combination these beautifully working in nature, then it is equated to heaven. The poet tries to describe the joy of good harvest as experienced by the farmers and when it is night, the presence of the moon further tries to create heavenly atmosphere and this beautiful nature as experienced by the poet is converted into words and written in the form of a lyric or a poem and this creature of literature is bound to create heaven on earth and in this circumstance, the poet who creates heaven through his poetry or song.

## **Comprehension I**

**I. Answer the following questions in a word, a phrase or a sentence each: -**

**1. According to the poet Kuvempu, 'Heaven' is .....**

**Ans:** on earth

**2. What are the creations of human mind?**

**Ans:** All divine entities like god, heaven and nymphs are the creation of human mind.

**3. Who are heavenly nymphs?**

**Ans:** We ourselves the human beings are the nymphs.

**4. How is the stream presented in the poem?**

**Ans:** The stream is roaring and rushing fast.

**5. According to the poet we find heaven precisely in .....**

**Ans:** Nature

**6. Where does the sunshine lean?**

**Ans:** The sunshine leans on verdant gardens.

**7. What does heaven spill all around?**

**Ans:** The heaven spills around the song of nectar.

**8. How is sun described in the poet?**

**Ans:** The sun is described as gentle.

**9. According to the poet..... Makes this earth heaven.**

**Ans:** gentle sun

**10. 'In the splendour of harvest and of moonlight. Heaven lies all over!' the phrase refers to .....**

**Ans:** heaven can be seen in the harvest and moonlight

**11. What does the line 'Heaven lies all over' suggest?**

The line 'Heaven lies all over' suggests that the beauty of heaven lies in the splendour of harvest and the moonlit night.

**12. What are the different forms of heaven that make earth a heaven?**

The different forms of nature like the roaring stream, the rolling surf at the edge of waves, the tender sunshine, the sun, the harvest and the moonlight make this earth a heaven.

**13. Who creates heaven on earth?**

**Ans:** The poet creates heaven on earth

## **Comprehension II**

**Answer the following questions in a paragraph of 80 – 100 words each:**

**1. How does the poet break the myth of heaven in the poem?**

The poet considers concepts like 'God', 'nymphs' and 'heaven' as myths, which are only figments of man's imagination. He says that if at all heaven exists it exists only on this earth. To break the myth of heaven in man's mind he presents before us charming sights of nature and argues that nothing can be more heavenly than these forms of nature. He makes a direct address to nature and declares that if heaven does not exist on the earth where else can it be. He justifies his statement referring to the streams, the waves, and the sunlight.

**2. How is nature presented in the poem, 'Heaven, If You Are Not Here On Earth'?**

**Ans:** The poet says that man can become god, nymph and make this earth as heaven, only if he is in union with the nature. The poet personifies the entities from the nature. He hears the stream roaring, and sees the sunshine leaning. The poet perhaps wants to attribute human qualities component of human life. The poet continues to personify nature and

mentions how man in communion with nature is responsible for heaven to be on earth. In the splendor of the harvest and in the beauty of moonlight on the nature which form important we can see heaven.

### **3. Describe the beauty in nature that makes the earth a heavenly place?**

**Ans:** The poet brings out his rationalistic outlook of heaven. He suggests that one should perceive divinity and enjoy heavenly bliss in the company of nature itself. Hence the poet argues that we need not to seek heaven after death. We can enjoy heavenly bliss in look at nature on this earth itself. The poet tries to introduce us to the different forms of heaven that exists on earth. The poet emphatically states that the bliss that one experiences while looking at the streams that are leaping down, roaring from the top of the hills, the waves that come rolling across the sea carrying surf at their edges, the tender rays of sunlight falling on the sprawling green garden and the gentle sun warming up the earth make this earth a heavenly place.

### **4. Why does the poet feel that earth is more beautiful than heaven?**

**Ans:** According to the poet there is no heaven in reality, and strongly believes that Heaven and earth are not separate entities. The poet refers to our beliefs about 'God' and 'heavenly nymphs'. He expresses his conviction, that there is no God and it is man himself who is God. He firmly believes that we ourselves are the nymphs, and the nymphs are to be nowhere else but on this earth only. Heaven and God are merely of man's imaginations. He tries to tell us, the different forms of heaven that exists on earth like the green forests, the stream that leap down the hills, the waves that roll across the sea, the moonlight and splendor of harvest appears more beautiful than imaginary descriptions of man. Hence he suggests that one must enjoy the pleasures of heaven looking at nature.

## **Comprehension III**

### **IV. Answer the following questions in about 200 words: -**

#### **1. Describe the beauty in nature that makes the earth a heavenly place**

OR

#### **Why does the poet feel that earth is more beautiful than heaven?**

The poet tries to argue that the concepts like 'Heaven' 'God' and the 'Nymphs' are created by man. It is simply man's imagination. Therefore, man himself is God and so also the heavenly nymphs. They are not elsewhere best here on earth. The poet wants to dismiss the belief that God and nymphs live in heaven and people go to heaven after then death and find the God and nymphs there. In the next stanza, the poet describes 'the splendor of Nature' and makes us appreciate and enjoy the heavenly bliss, when we are alive. When one looks at the streams roaring and leaping down

from the top of the hills , the waves that roll across the sea carrying surf at their edges, the tender rays of sunlight falling on verdant gardens and the gentle sun warming up the earth reflect 'Heaven'. The splendor of harvest and the moonlight nights creates a picture of 'Nature' in its pristine form. The poet who imbibes this heavenly bliss can spread the nectar of 'Heaven' through his poetry on the earth. Natural things appear to be more beautiful than imaginary things. Therefore, the poet is of the opinion that 'Heaven' exists only on the earth and nowhere else. The so called pleasures of heaven could be very well obtained on earth, when one enjoys and experiences.

## **2. How does the poet break the myth of heaven in this poem?**

**Ans:** In this poem, Kuvempu urges us to understand the power and beauty of nature which we see through our eyes. The poet considers concepts like 'God', 'nymphs' and 'heaven' as myths are created by humans. In the poem, the poet is quite radical in his approach that he is denying the existence of gods which we adore. He strongly feels that God resides in everybody and we ourselves are gods. He believes that only humans as gods live on this heavenly earth. For him heaven is not something beyond the boundaries of this world, since earth itself possesses all that the so called heaven promises. In order to break the illusion of heaven in man's mind, he presents before us charming sights of nature and argues that nothing can be more heavenly than forms of nature which lie all over. In the first two lines, he makes a direct address to nature and declares that if heaven does not exist on the earth where else can it be. He justifies his statement referring to the streams that leap down roaring from the top of the hills, the rolling surf at the edge of waves, the tender rays of sunlight falling on the green garden, thus sun makes earth a heaven.

## **3. How does the poem celebrate the power of the poet?**

**Ans:** The poet tells the reader that the poets who enjoy such heavenly sights imbibe the beauty of nature and spill the nectar of heaven on earth and celebrates the joys of heaven through his poetry. The poet tells that if at all there exists an entity called heaven, it exists only on this earth. The poet presents before the reader's beautiful imageries of nature. In the last stanza, the poet states that one visualizes scenes of heaven lying all over in the splendour of harvest and of moonlight. He concludes the poem celebrating poetic talent. Poetry is the rhetoric act. Poet brings beauty by using right poetic devices which surely hypnotize the readers. Thus we have been enjoying reading poems. There is a famous saying that poet sees what can't be seen by sun, it means poet has such a vision that he can go beyond the capacity of sun. The poet can only bring the heavenly world in front of the readers. Thus poet tells that poet imbibes and spills the song of nectar over the readers. The nectar itself makes the works eternal and those works

pleases the minds who read. Therefore, the poet says that poet creates heaven on earth.

**4. How according to the speaker can we create heaven on earth in the poem 'Heaven if you are not here on earth'?**

**Or**

**How, according to the speaker, can we create heaven on earth?**

**Or**

**Human effort alone can create heaven on earth. How is this brought out in 'Heaven if you are not here on earth'?**

**Ans:** In this poem, the poet Kuvempu stresses and warns his readers gently that heaven is not somewhere in the skies but here on this beautiful earth. He gently questions us, as a poet, if heaven is not here on our earth where else it can be. He wonders if we the human beings with all our traits of humanism, compassion, love and forgiveness cannot be Gods, who else can we think God is. He points us to watch the beautiful streams rushing past and the rolling bubbles of water can be seen and the soft sun lighting our green gardens, especially, the radiant sun make us feel that the earth is heaven. He asks us to view heaven when the gentle moon spills milky white light, during the full moon on the heaps of grains harvested and think that heaven is here on the earth. He tells us that a poet inspired by all this natural beauty, writes beautiful poetry which are as sweet as nectar. By writing such poetry the poet creates heaven on earth or inspires us to think that earth is like heaven.