

Wind

by Subramania Bharati

Explanation of the Poem

Central Idea of the Poem

This poem is derived from the poet's observation and devotion. He sees the effects of the wind in general and of stormy weather. He also praises the wind god. We are able to appreciate the keenness of the poet's vision, and his unique thought process about something as apparently simple as the wind. The poet suggests every one to be strong physically and mentally. Wind here is the symbol of difficulties or obstacles humans have to face for their survival. People with strong physique and good mental health will be able to stand and face odds or obstacles of life.

Stanza 1

Wind, come softly.
Don't break the shutters of the windows.
Don't scatter the papers.
Don't throw down the books on the shelf.

WORD MEANINGS

shutters	hinged panels used to close / open windows
scatter	throw in different directions
softly	slowly

Explanation The poet makes request to the wind, asking it not to blow so strongly that it breaks down the shutters of the windows, as they separate man from the stormy environment outside. So he is asking the wind for protection. He also asks the wind not to scatter the papers in his room, or to throw down the books from his bookshelves with its force.

Stanza 2

There, look what you did – you threw them all down.
You tore the pages of the books.
You brought rain again.

Explanation Here the poet accuses the wind of blowing too strongly and creating the mess in his room with the books thrown down from the shelves and their pages torn. He sees outside and tells the wind that it has brought rain with it again.

Stanza 3

You're very clever at poking fun at weaklings.
Frail crumbling houses, crumbling doors, crumbling rafters,
crumbling wood, crumbling bodies, crumbling lives,
crumbling hearts –
the wind god winnows and crushes them all.

WORD MEANINGS

poking at	making of
weaklings	weak bodies/persons
frail	weak
crumbling	destroying, breaking
rafters	sloping beams supporting a roof
wind god	(symbolic of) all kinds of wind
winnows	separates weak from strong

Explanation Now the poet speaks in a subdued tone to the wind, saying that it makes mischief whenever it encounters anyone who is too meek (humble) and mild to protest against its actions. It tears down doors, rafters and even entire wooden houses altogether, leaving people without shelter from the harsh world outside. This is an idiom implying that the troubles we face in life come as suddenly as the wind, and also leave suddenly. As the poet says, the wind can tear down weak bodies and fragile hearts. That is, difficulties in life can lead to a loss of hope, as well as a loss of life. Thus, it is all up to the wind god, says the poet.

Stanza 4

He won't do what you tell him.
So, come, let's build strong homes,
Let's join the doors firmly.
Practise to firm the body.
Make the heart steadfast.
Do this, and the wind will be friends with us.

WORD MEANINGS

firm	make strong
steadfast	firm and determined

Explanation The poet now speaks to the readers, saying that the wind does not listen to anybody and its actions are governed by it alone. To escape its harmful effects, we should build our homes on a strong foundation and ensure that their doors cannot be easily penetrated (get access to) by the wind. Also, we must train our bodies and our hearts to combat and resist (face) the ill-effects of the wind. If we are able to do this, then we will no longer consider the wind an enemy. Instead the wind will invite us to become its friend. This is an idiom meaning that if we make our character strong, we will be able to combat any troubles easily. However, if our character is weak, the troubles will create problems for us.

Stanza 5

The wind blows out weak fires.
He makes strong fires roar and flourish.
His friendship is good..
We praise him every day.

WORD MEANINGS

blow out	to stop a fire
flourish	grow healthy and vigorous

Explanation Here the poet describes how the wind has both bad effects and good effects. The bad effect is that it can blow out a weak fire. However, if the fire is burning strongly, then the wind will make it burn fiercer, thus nurturing what is already strong. The poet comes to the conclusion that if we are strong, then the wind is a good friend for us to have, as it will increase our strength. This is an idiom meaning that all troubles that we face in life will strengthen us further if our characters are strong. However, we will be seriously affected by troubles if our characters are weak. He also says that we should sing our devotion to the wind god on a daily basis meaning that we should happily face any troubles in our lives.

Poetic Devices Used in the Poem

Personification A figure of speech which is used for an inanimate object or animals/birds look or feel human.

The wind is personified throughout the poem. Some instances are:

Lines 5 - 8 There, look what you did — you threw them all down. / You tore the pages of the books. / You brought rain again. / You're very clever at poking fun at weaklings. (Here the poet is talking to the wind, gently admonishing it, just like to a human being.)

Lines 12 - 13 The wind god winnows (separates) and crushes them all. / He won't do what you tell him. (Here the wind is personified as a God.)

Line 18 Do this and the wind will be friends with us. (Here the wind is personified as a friend.)

Line 20 Do this and the wind will be friends with us. (Here the wind is personified as a friend.)

Line 21 He makes strong fires roar and flourish. (Here the wind is personified as a human.)

Line 22 We praise him every day. (Here the wind is personified as a God.)

Metaphor A device which compares two things or qualities which are unlike.

Line 12 The wind god winnows (Here 'winnows' is a metaphor for separating the weak from the strong.)

Anaphora This means repetition of the same word in successive lines. The instances are:

Lines 2, 3 and 4	Repetition of 'Don't'
Lines 6, 7 and 8	Repetition of 'You'
Lines 9, 10 and 11	Repetition of 'crumbling'
Lines 14 and 15	Repetition of 'Let's'

NCERT FOLDER

Here we have covered questions given in the NCERT textbook along with their answers.)

I. Thinking about the Poem (Page 31)

1 What are the things the wind does in the first stanza (Lines 5 - 7)?

Ans. In lines 5 - 7, the wind blows so strongly that it throws down the books from the shelves and tears the papers. It also brings rain.

2 Have you seen anybody winnow grain at home or in a paddy field? What is the word in your language for winnowing? What do people use for winnowing?

Ans. Yes, I have seen agricultural labour (usually women) winnowing grain, i.e. separating the heavier grains from the lighter chaff by letting it fall gently while a strong wind is blown. The word for winnowing used in our language Hindi is 'Barsana' (responses will vary in different languages).

For winnowing, usually a cane container with grain and a fan to blow air are used. In Hindi the winnowing fan is called 'chhaaj' used by the village people.

3 What does the poet say the wind god winnows?

Ans. The poet says that the wind destroys (winnows) weak houses, everything at home, weak bodies, weak hearts and even takes lives of those that are weak.

4 What should we do to make friends with the wind?

Ans. As the wind favours the strong, we should build strong homes with sturdy doors, make our bodies and hearts strong to make friends with the wind.

5 What do the last four lines of the poem mean to you?

Ans. The last four lines convey the message that only strong people, both physically and mentally, are able to withstand the troubles that come in their way in life; not only this, these make them stronger. On the other hand, weak people are swept away and defeated.

6 How does the poet speak to the wind — in anger or with humour? You must also have seen or heard of the wind "crumbling lives". What is your response to this? Is it like the poet's?

Ans. Initially, the poet speaks to the wind with anger, saying that it has thrown down his books from the shelves and torn their pages. However, later the poet's tone changes and he speaks to the wind with humour, inviting it to attack him, as he intends to prepare himself as if waiting for a 'friend'.

Yes, I have heard of the wind "crumbling lives". My response is similar to the poet's. I will prepare myself by becoming stronger and ready for any attack.

II. Thinking about the Poem (Page 31)

1 The poem you have just read is originally in the Tamil. Do you know any such poems in your language?

Ans. Yes, there are many similar poems in my language. (Do it yourself)

Exam Practice

Extract Based Questions

[4 Marks each]

Read the following extracts carefully and choose the correct option.

1 Wind, come softly.

Don't break the shutters of the windows,
Don't scatter the papers.

(i) What does poet ask the wind?

- (a) To blow gently and mildly
- (b) To blow fiercely
- (c) To create a storm
- (d) To stop blowing

(ii) What did the wind tear?

- (a) Curtains of the door
- (b) The pages of books
- (c) Leaves of the tender plants
- (d) Soft toys of the kids

(iii) What does the phrase 'come softly' in the passage mean?

- (a) Walk gracefully
- (b) Move gallantly
- (c) Blow gently
- (d) Spurt violently

(iv) Which poetic device has been used in these lines?

- (a) Simile
- (b) Metaphor
- (c) Alliteration
- (d) Personification

Ans. (i) (a) To blow gently and mildly

(ii) (b) The pages of books

(iii) (c) Blow gently (iv) (d) Personification

2 Don't throw down the books on the shelf.

There, look what you did –

You threw them all down.

You tore the pages of the books.

You brought rain again.

(i) Why is the poet disappointed?

- (a) Wind has overthrown him
- (b) Wind does not listen to him
- (c) Wind has broken plants
- (d) Wind has caused soil erosion

(ii) How is wind by nature?

- (a) Soft
- (b) Caring
- (c) Destructive
- (d) Conserving

(iii) What does 'you' stand for here?

- (a) The wind
- (b) The poet
- (c) The trees
- (d) The books

(iv) In what tone does the poet speak to wind?

- (a) Politely
- (b) Humorously
- (c) Lovingly
- (d) Angrily

Ans. (i) (b) Wind does not listen to him

(ii) (c) Destructive

(iii) (a) The wind (iv) (d) Angrily

3 The wind god winnows and crushes them all.
He won't do what you tell him.

So, come, let's build strong homes,
Let's joint the doors firmly.

(i) How does the Wind God come?

- (a) By crushing the weak
- (b) By making musical sound
- (c) By dancing gracefully
- (d) By flooding crops

(ii) Why does the poet want to join doors firmly?

- (a) To stop wind
- (b) To avert damage
- (c) To fight with wind
- (d) To control wind

(iii) What does the phrase 'winnows and crushes them all' mean?

- (a) Pick the strong
- (b) Select the weak
- (c) Separate the weak and destroy
- (d) Strengthen all

(iv) Why does the poet propose to build strong homes?

- (a) To defeat the wind
- (b) To empower oneself
- (c) To cut the wind
- (d) To escape from the harmful effects of wind

Ans. (i) (a) By crushing the weak

(ii) (b) To avert damage

(iii) (c) Separate the weak and destroy

(iv) (d) To escape from the harmful effects of wind

4 He won't do what you tell him.

So, come, let's build strong homes,

Let's joint the doors firmly.

Practise to firm the body.

Make the heart steadfast.

Do this, and the wind will be friends with us.

(i) Who won't do what is told to him?

- (a) The man
- (b) The mountains
- (c) The fire
- (d) The wind

(ii) What does the poet ask the readers to do so that wind becomes their friend?

- (a) To love the wind
- (b) To respect the wind
- (c) To build strong homes
- (d) To invite wind

- (iii) What does the poet advise us to do?
 (a) Eat more
 (b) Practise to firm the body
 (c) Work more
 (d) Fight more with wind
- (iv) Which word in the extract means the same as 'carry out or perform regularly'?
- | | |
|--------------|-----------------|
| (a) Practise | (b) Join firmly |
| (c) Build | (d) Steadfast |

- Ans.** (i) (d) The wind
 (ii) (c) To build strong homes
 (iii) (b) Practise to firm the body
 (iv) (a) Practise

5 So, come, let's build strong homes,
 Let's joint the doors firmly.
 Practise to firm the body.
 Make the heart steadfast.
 Do this and the wind will be friends with us.
 The wind blows out weak fires.

- (i) What does the poet want us to do?
 (a) Good relations with others
 (b) Being indifferent
 (c) Look for one's safety
 (d) Fight the wind
- (ii) What does the poet mean by 'weak fires'?
- | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------|
| (a) Slow ignition | (b) Poor relations with other people |
| (c) Strong winds | (d) Weak homes |
- (iii) Trace a word from the extract which means 'strong'.
- | | |
|---------------|----------|
| (a) Firm | (b) Weak |
| (c) Steadfast | (d) Blow |
- (iv) How will the wind be our friend?
- | | |
|------------------------|------------------------------|
| (a) By mixing joyfully | (b) By lighting 'weak fires' |
|------------------------|------------------------------|

- | |
|-----------------------------------|
| (c) By being cold towards others |
| (d) By making our heart steadfast |

- Ans.** (i) (a) Good relations with others
 (ii) (b) Poor relations with other people
 (iii) (c) Steadfast
 (iv) (d) By making our heart steadfast

6 The wind blows out weak fires
 He makes strong fires roar and flourish.
 His friendship is good.
 We praise him every day.

- (i) What does the wind do to fires?
- | | |
|---|-----------------------|
| (a) Supports fire | (b) Extinguishes fire |
| (c) Blows out weak fires while flames the strong fire | (d) Cools the fire |
- (ii) What is the advice of the poet?
- | | |
|--|-------------------------|
| (a) To make oneself physically and mentally strong | (b) To prevent the fire |
| (c) To preserve the fire | (d) To fuel the fire |
- (iii) Which word in the extract means the same as 'grow or develop in a healthy way'?
- | | |
|------------|--------------|
| (a) Blows | (b) Fires |
| (c) Praise | (d) Flourish |
- (iv) Which poetic device is employed in the stanza?
- | | |
|------------------|---------------------|
| (a) Alliteration | (b) Simile |
| (c) Metaphor | (d) Personification |

- Ans.** (i) (c) Blows out weak fires while flames the strong fire
 (ii) (a) To make oneself physically and mentally strong
 (iii) (d) Flourish
 (iv) (d) Personification

Short Answer (SA) Type Questions

[2 Marks each]

1 Who all are disturbed by the blowing of the wind and who are not?

Ans. All people who are physically weak and mentally not determined are disturbed by the blowing of the wind. Self-confident and strong people do not get disturbed by the wind blowing.

2 Why does the poet ask the wind to come softly in the beginning of the poem?

Ans. The poet asks the wind to come softly in the beginning of the poem so that order and peace may

be maintained. When the wind blows, it disturbs everything and everyone in society. So the poet pleads for the welfare of society.

3 How does the wind cause rain?

Ans. The wind blows violently, so that it appears as if a storm is coming. It brings clouds from distant places. As a result it causes rain.

4 Why should we build strong houses?

Ans. We should build strong houses so that they do not get damaged by the blowing wind. In other words,

we should build strong minds and bodies to withstand any kinds of violent challenges thrown in our paths.

5 How does the wind make fun of weaklings?

Ans. The poet tells the wind that it makes mischief whenever it comes face to face with weaklings, who are too meek and mild to protest against its actions, by destroying their lives.

6 What does 'crumbling' suggest in the poem 'Wind'?

Ans. 'Crumbling' suggests destruction in this poem. People who are weak will be crumbled by being overwhelmed by the difficulties that they face during their lives.

7 What does the wind symbolise?

Ans. The wind symbolises the trials and tribulations everybody faces in their lives.

Those who are strong in character succeed in overcoming them, while those who are weak are destroyed.

8 Give the central idea of the poem 'Wind'.

Ans. The central idea of the poem is that we should be strong in mind and body.

The wind will be our friend when we are strong. Actually the wind represents the difficulties and challenges we face in life. We should encounter them boldly.

Long Answer (LA) Type Questions

[8 Marks each]

1 How is 'Wind' a symbolic poem? Compare it with 'The Road Not Taken'.

Ans. Poems can be read just for the pleasure of their rhyme or for their literal meaning. However, poems can have a deeper meaning than the obvious one they show. Under an able teacher a student finds more pleasure in tracking down symbols and figurative meanings.

In simple words, what appears to be a simple poem of travelling on a forest road develops into a poem discussing the choices of life. Similarly, the wind can be compared to the difficulties we face in life. Strong people face difficulties bravely while weak people are broken or destroyed.

2 What destructive events are caused by the wind? How can we prevent these destructive events from happening?

Ans. The wind causes many destructive events like breaking the shutters of windows, scattering papers and throwing books down from the shelves. It even crushes weak bodies, lives and hearts, breaks down weakly built houses and walls, besides not listening to any entreaties.

We can prevent these destructive events from happening by being firm, positive and strong, both physically as well as mentally, besides making our houses (i.e. our characters) stronger.

By being strong, we will become friends with the wind (i.e. we will be easily able to tackle (handle) successfully the trials and tribulations (difficulties) we face in life), which will aid us in achieving success and in flourishing life.

3 Man can not overpower the fury of nature like storms or floods. Discuss the destruction caused by a natural element wind in this context. How can we face the fury of nature?

Ans. It is a well-known fact that nature knows how to maintain its balance even though the human race continues to believe it can overpower and destroy it. Through this poem wind the poet has given stances of how wind can be destructive. It can cause many destructive events like breaking the shutters of windows, scattering papers and throwing books down from the shelves. It even crushes weak bodies and breaks weakly constructed houses. We can prevent these destructive events from happening by being firm, positive and a friend of nature. If we maintain ecological balance, we can be friends with nature and there can be a harmony (balance) between human lives and natural elements.

Moreover the poet suggests human beings to be strong physically and mentally in order to be friends with nature (here Wind). Mentally strong here also suggests trying to treat nature in a friendly manner so that we do not have to face the wrath or fury (anger) of nature.

Self Assessment

Extract Based Questions

Read the following extracts carefully and choose the correct option.

- 1** Don't throw down the books on the shelf.
There, look what you did – You threw them all down.
You tore the pages of the books.
You brought rain again.
- (i) Why is the poet rebuking the wind?
(a) For tearing books (b) For breaking plants
(c) For tearing clothes (d) For putting off the fire
- (ii) What all has wind done?
(a) Disturbed peace (b) Torn books and caused rains
(c) Caused fire (d) Brought hailstones
- (iii) Which word in the extract means 'caused'?
(a) Thrown (b) Torn (c) Brought (d) Done
- (iv) Who does 'you' refer to?
(a) The poet (b) The books (c) The Rain (d) The wind
- 2** He won't do what you tell him.
So, come, let's build strong homes.
Let's joint the doors firmly.
Practise to firm the body.
- (i) Who is the poet talking to here?
(a) The readers (b) The fire (c) The wind (d) The rain
- (ii) What does the poet mean by 'practise to firm the body'?
(a) Learn to extinguish fire (b) Prevent hailstorms
(c) Strengthen mind, soul and relations (d) Build strong houses
- (iii) Which word in the extract means 'fix'?
(a) Do (b) Joint (c) Build (d) Firm
- (iv) Who is 'he' in the above extract?
(a) The fire (b) The poet (c) The home (d) The wind

Short Answer (SA) Type Questions

- 3** What does the wind god winnow?
4 'He won't do what you tell him'. Who is 'he' and why will he not do as told?
5 'Make the heart steadfast'. Why does the poet say this?
6 What is the significance of 'strong fires' near the end of the poem?
7 'The wind blows out weak fires.' What do 'weak fires' signify?
8 Why does the poet want us to praise the wind every day?

Long Answer (LA) Type Questions

- 9** The wind deals very cruelly with all weak things. Justify this by mentioning what has been written at various places in the poem.
10 What is the hidden or symbolic message of this poem?