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Unit - IV :- Ted Hughes: The Thought Fox

## Ted Hughes "The Thought Fox": An Analysis

The poem entitled 'The Thought-Fox' is one of the most popular poems written by Ted Hughes. Ted Hughes and Philip Larkin are two great English poets of post-war era. 'The Hawk in the Rain', 'Lupercal', 'Wodan' and 'Crow' are the names of some of the most popular collection of poems of Hughes. Many critics call him - "a poet of violence". However, those who describe him primarily as "a poet of violence" do not intend this label as a tribute to him. They regard violence as a theme in his poetry as something abnormal and undesirable. In an interview, Ted Hughes himself told -

"My poems are not about violence but vitality. Animals are not violent, they're so much more completely controlled than men."

This poem "The Thought Fox" is one of the most beautiful poem of Hughes. It was published under the volume of poems entitled "The Hawk in the Rain" in 1987. This poem describes in an indirect and oblique manner the process by which a poem gets written. What a poet needs to write a poem is inspiration. A poet waits for the emrush of an idea through his brain. And, of course, he also needs solitude (loneliness)

and silence around him. Solitude and silence are, however, only contributory circumstances. They constitute a favourable environment, while the poem itself comes out of the poet's head which has been invaded, as it were, by an idea or thought. The idea or thought takes shape in his head like a fox entering a dark forest and then coming out of it suddenly. That is why the phrase "The Thought Fox" has been used as a title for this poem. The fox embodies the thought which a poet expresses in his poem. The fox here serves as a symbol.

The time is midnight. It is the moment which is imagined by the poet as a forest. In other words, it seems to him that he is in a forest, though actually he is in a room where he sits with the clock-ticking and with a blank page on which his fingers are moving - ~~the is alone~~ are the only living things besides himself. But then it seems to him that there is something else also which is alive.

" I imagine this midnight moment's forest  
Something else is alive  
Beside the clock's loneliness  
And this blank page where my fingers move."

Further, the poet goes in to the height of imagination and imagines that there are no stars visible to him through the window of his room; but something much nearer is moving through the darkness towards him so as to interrupt his solitude.

" Through the window I see no star:  
Something more near

Though deeper within darkness  
Is entering the loneliness."

Further, the poet gives an image of fox. This poem is full of images. At first he imagines about a midnight in the forest. Then he imagines about his loneliness and now about the fox which leaves distinct foot prints on the snow between the trees in the forest. As he writes —

"Sets neat prints in to the snow  
Between trees and warily a lame  
Shadow lags by stump and in hollow  
of a body that is bold to come."

Then the poet perceives the fox continuing to move forward and, with its attention focussed on one particular thing, it suddenly and abruptly enters the dark hole of his head. Even now there are no stars to be seen in the sky through the window. The clock is still ticking. But now the page before the poet is no longer blank.

So far as the style of the poem is concerned, it is praiseworthy. The poem is written in six stanzas of four lines each. Words are simple. The fox embodies the thought which a poet expresses in his poem. The fox here serves as a symbol. The poem is full of images from the first line to the last; and every image is vivid one. In the opening line the poet imagines that he is sitting in a forest at midnight. Then follow the images of lonely clock, the blank page, and the feeling that something else is also alive around the poet. There are no stars in the

sky; then the poet perceives something intruding upon his loneliness or solitude. Next a fox nose touches a twig and then a leaf. The two eyes of the fox moving forward.

The Thought Fox has greatly been admired by Critics but it does not have much of an appeal for the average reader. The poem contains an abstract idea which the poet has tried to concretize. In this poem, the fox has been elevated to the status of a poetic idea. Nor can we affirm that this poem is remarkable because of its felicity or word and phrase.

The only remarkable quality of this poem is its imagery. Hughes disdains strict rhyme and iambic pentameter. His rhythm is mimetic, seeking to stimulate the action of the poem. The mimetic language here works in two ways: it evokes the movement of fox and those movement in turn provide an image for the movement of poem itself.