

Our Casuarina Tree

Toru Dutt's *Our Casuarina Tree* is a nostalgic dive into her past as she reminisces her beautiful childhood memories associated with the Casuarina tree. It was published in her collection of poems, *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan* (1882).

The poet begins with the physical description of the tree- its trunk wound by a creeper like a python which has left dents and scars on the tree's trunk. The tree valiantly wears all those scars like a scarf. The poet's casuarina tree is laden with bowers of flowers where bees abound. At night, when humans are asleep, birds sing and it knows no end.

In the second stanza, the poet shares that she used to be delighted to open her window at dawn. In winter, she had seen a baboon sitting on the tree, quietly watching the sunrise while her little one leapt and played about the tree. 'Kokilas', in their melodious voice, sang, welcoming the dawn. The poet also reminisces how the cows were guided towards the pastures and the water- lilies sprang under the shadow of the hoary tree-like gathered snow.

The poet, however, clarifies that it is not because of sheer magnificence of the Casuarina tree which makes it so endearing, but the memories associated with the tree. She had played with her siblings under the tree, and the image of casuarina swept the poet with all associated memories of her idyllic childhood about that tree. The poet mourns for those departed souls as she thinks down the memory lane. She imagines that the tree shares her loss as she hears the 'dirge-like murmur' like waves breaking on a beach.

In the fourth stanza, the poet says that even in distant lands, along the 'classic shores' of France and Italy, she has seen the image of the Casuarina tree as she has seen in her birthplace, raising in front of her eyes.

In the final stanza, the poet says that she writes this poem in the honour of the tree. For the people, she loved, loved the tree, are in blessed sleep now. She wants the tree to live long like those trees of 'Borrowdale' referring to Wordsworth's 'Yew-trees'. Like the Borrowdale, the Casuarina tree is deathless and has witnessed fear, hope, death and the time passing by. The poet admits that her verse may be weak but may the love they have for the Casuarina tree help her from sinking into oblivion.