

OORU KERI- Questions and Answers

1. Is the writer angry or amused about the societal practices in his village? Explain with examples.

The writer is more amused than angry about the societal practices in his village. His tone throughout the narrative is light-hearted and filled with subtle humour, even while highlighting serious issues. For example, he narrates how a buffalo was stolen and slaughtered by villagers and how his clever uncle scared away the actual owner by pretending there was a deadly illness in the village. This instance, though it reflects dishonesty, is told in an amusing way that celebrates the uncle's presence of mind. Similarly, he describes the religious festival where a man pretends to be possessed by a deity and refuses his own sheep to avoid sacrificing it. The villagers' realization and subsequent beating of the man are described humorously. While these examples highlight the blind beliefs and occasional trickery in village life, Siddalingaiah does not express overt anger. Instead, his use of humour and satire gently critiques the irrational practices and exposes their absurdity, allowing readers to reflect on them without harsh judgment. This narrative strategy effectively balances social commentary with storytelling, showcasing the writer's amusement rather than outrage.

2. How does superstition play an important role in the daily life of the villagers? Quote two instances.

Superstition is deeply embedded in the villagers' daily lives and decisions, often dictating their behaviour. One example is the festival for the village goddess, during which a person is supposedly possessed by the deity. The villagers unquestioningly follow the 'possessed' individual, believing that the deity speaks through him. The dialogues between the deity and the yajamaana, though clearly performative, are accepted as divine communication. This shows how blind faith governs religious observances. A second, more striking example is that of the Sheep Goddess. A man pretends to be possessed and demands sheep from devotees, who offer them fearing divine wrath. On one occasion, when he refuses a sheep (because it's his own), the villagers finally realize his deception. This not only exposes the man's exploitation of their superstitions but also reveals how deeply fear and blind faith control the community. These incidents illustrate how superstition governs both religious practices and everyday decisions, often leading to irrational and sometimes unjust outcomes.

3. Based on your reading of the text, elaborate the statement: "Nature is an integral part of life in the villages".

Nature plays a central role in the lives of villagers, as reflected in the serene and vivid descriptions in *Ooru Keri*. The narrative showcases a deep connection between the people and their natural surroundings. For instance, the writer recalls his visit to Avverahalli, where he sees cousins riding buffaloes and watches peacocks dance at the foot of a hill. The stream they cross and the river Arkavati flowing with a "julu-julu cadence" enhance the sense of harmony between villagers and nature. Such descriptions emphasize how the villagers' routines are shaped by natural elements—be it the timing of festivals, cattle herding, or hunting at night. Even the landscape becomes part of their cultural and emotional memory, like the hills and forests linked to his relatives and childhood. Nature is not just a backdrop but a living, breathing presence that influences beliefs, traditions, and social activities. The villagers' interaction with rivers, animals, and forests shows that nature is integral not only to their livelihood but also to their identity, shaping their values, imagination, and way of life.

4. "The man who was possessed by the deity was exploiting the innocence of his fellowmen." Explain.

This statement refers to the man who claimed to be possessed by the Sheep Goddess. He exploited the religious beliefs and fears of the villagers to his own advantage. Whenever he was 'possessed', he would demand sheep as an offering to the goddess. The villagers, afraid of divine punishment, would unquestioningly bring sheep to him. In truth, the man used this ritual as a pretext to get free mutton. The deceit became clear when, on one occasion, the 'goddess' refused a sheep—which turned out to be the priest's own. This revealed that his refusal was motivated not by divine will, but by personal interest. The villagers, realizing the fraud, became enraged and beat him. The incident highlights how the so-called possession was a deliberate act of manipulation. The man used the villagers' superstitions and innocence as tools to fulfil his selfish desires. This case clearly exemplifies the dangers of blind belief and how it can be exploited by cunning individuals for personal gain.

5. Do you think the villagers were really innocent and unaware of trickery? Justify your answer with examples from the text.

Yes, the villagers were largely innocent and unaware of trickery, as shown in several parts of the narrative. Their deep-rooted superstitions made them vulnerable to manipulation. For example, during the possession by the Sheep Goddess, they obeyed the commands of the supposed deity without question. They brought sheep for sacrifice, fearing divine wrath. Only when the goddess rejected her own sheep did they realize the deception, showing that they had not suspected foul play until it became obvious. Another example is the festival of the village goddess, where the villagers participate in the divine drama, believing it to be real. They follow the possessed person, interact with the deity through the yajamaana, and engage in rituals wholeheartedly. Their reactions suggest a genuine belief in the supernatural. Their innocence is also evident when they are unnerved by stories of theft and easily reassured by simple explanations, like the one the narrator's mother gives about the man collecting bones. These examples show that the villagers' lack of critical thinking, shaped by tradition and fear, makes them easy targets for trickery and exploitation.