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Master of Arts
(English)

Indian Writing in
English(Poetry-1)
Semester-II

Author- Dr.Parul Sharma

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Indian Writing in English – Poetry (Paper – 1)

Learning Outcomes

The student will be able to understand:

Unit I

- Students to understand and appreciate diverse perspectives within the cultural and historical context of 19th-century India.
- Studying Derozio's works allows students to assess his impact on Indian literature and his legacy as a poet, teacher, and social reformer.
- Students to understand the cultural and intellectual awakening in 19th-century Bengal, emphasizing the importance of education and social reform.
- Students appreciate the impact of British colonial rule on Indian society and the emergence of nationalist sentiments.

Unit II

- Analyze Tagore's use of poetic techniques such as metaphor, symbolism, and imagery to convey his ideas and emotions.
- Explore the poems in the context of the Indian independence movement, considering Tagore's role as a poet during a crucial period in Indian history.
- Evaluate Tagore's ideas on freedom, education, and societal progress, encouraging students to question and analyze the underlying assumptions.

Unit III

- Analyze Naidu's use of poetic devices such as imagery, symbolism, and metaphor to convey the themes and emotions in the poems.
- Understand the historical context in which Naidu wrote, considering the impact of British colonial rule on Indian society and culture.
- Analyze patriotic symbols and imagery in the poems, understanding their role in conveying a sense of national identity.

Unit IV

- Analyze the use of poetic devices such as imagery, symbolism, and metaphor in the poems to understand how they contribute to the overall meaning and tone.
- Analyze how the poems reflect themes of identity, belonging, and the intersection of modernity and tradition in the context of post-colonial India.
- Understand the historical and political context of post-colonial India as reflected in Ezekiel's poetry, considering how societal changes and challenges are portrayed.

Unit V

- Analyze Das's use of poetic devices such as imagery, symbolism, and metaphors to understand how they contribute to the overall meaning and emotional impact of the poems.
- Discuss the ethical dimensions embedded in Das's exploration of societal issues, considering how her poetry prompts reflection on ethical behavior, gender roles, and cultural values.
- Analyze historical and political context of post-colonial India as reflected in Das's poetry, considering how societal changes and challenges are portrayed.

INDIAN WRITING IN ENGLISH – POETRY SYLLABUS

UNIT I

HENRY DEROZIO

“Freedom to the Slave”, “The Orphan Girl”

UNIT II

RABINDRA NATH TAGORE

“Where the Mind is Without Fear”, “Freedom”

UNIT III

SAROJINI NAIDU

“Song of Radha: The Milkmaid”, “Indian Weavers”

UNIT IV

NISSIM EZEKIEL

“Enterprise”, “Night of the Scorpion”

UNIT V

KAMLA DAS

“An Introduction”, “My Grandmother’s House”

UNIT

I

HENRY DEROZIO

STRUCTURE

- 1.1 Learning Objective
- 1.2 Author Introduction
- 1.3 Freedom to the Slave
- 1.4 The Orphan Girl
- 1.5 Review Questions
- 1.6 Multiple Choice Questions



1.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVE

After completion of this unit, student will be able to know about the author's life and his poems that was based on real world-based topics.

1.2 AUTHOR INTRODUCTION



Henry Louis Vivian Derozio, (born April 18, 1809, Calcutta, India—died Dec. 26, 1831, Calcutta), poet and assistant headmaster of Hindu College, Calcutta, a radical thinker and one of the first Indian educators to disseminate Western learning and science among the young men of Bengal. The son of an Indian father and an English mother, Derozio was influenced by the English Romantic poets. He began publishing patriotic verses when he was 17, which brought him to the attention of the intellectual elite of Calcutta. In 1826 he was appointed instructor at Hindu College, where his reportedly brilliant teaching influenced his students and won him their loyalty. In 1828 his students organized the Academic Association, a debating society that drew both Britons and Indians to discussions of religion and philosophy. In the spirit of English rationalism, Derozio criticized the social practices and religious beliefs of orthodox Hinduism. Accused of irreverence by his students' orthodox Hindu parents, he was forced to resign by the directors of Hindu College in 1831. Long after Derozio's death (of cholera), his influence lived on among his former students, who came to be known as Young Bengal and many of whom became prominent in social reform, law, and journalism.

1.3 FREEDOM TO THE SLAVE

As the slave departs, the Man returns- Campbell

How felt he when he first was told

A slave he ceased to be;

How proudly beat his heart, when first

He knew that he was free! —

The noblest feelings of the soul

To glow at once began;

He knelt no more; his thoughts were raised;

He felt himself a man.

He looked above—the breath of heaven

Around him freshly blew;

He smiled exultingly to see

The wild birds as they flew,
He looked upon the running stream
That 'neath him rolled away;
Then thought on winds, and birds, and floods,
And cried, 'I'm free as they!'
Oh Freedom! there is something dear
E'en in thy very name,
That lights the altar of the soul
With everlasting flame.
Success attend the patriot sword,
That is unsheathed for thee!
And glory to the breast that bleeds,
Bleeds nobly to be free!
Blest be the generous hand that breaks
The chain a tyrant gave,
And, feeling for degraded man,
Gives freedom to the slave.

About the poem

In this poem, the poet-persona expresses his notion of the true value of freedom to a slave. Only when human beings are free from the shackles of slavery, they can perceive the aesthetic aspects of life and human existence. To a slave, freedom is the feeling of being treated with the dignity that a man truly deserves. The poet persona imagines how the slave will feel, when he will be informed that he is no longer a slave. Receiving the news of his newly acquired freedom, his heart beats proudly. The noblest feelings will be emanating from his mind that will inspire his soul to grow. He is not supposed to kneel before anyone now. The sheer thought of that will make him feel the dignity of a man and place him in an elevated state. The heavenly breeze will blow around him as he will hold his head high to see the sky. He will be so elated to see the wild birds flying and the gushing stream meandering beneath him. Upon this thought he will exclaim- "I am free as they". The word freedom is so impactful that it is capable of illuminating the altar of his soul with an eternal flame. A patriot attains freedom with his valorous sword and bleeding breasts. The slave will bless the generous hands that shattered the chain of slavery tied by the tyrant and felt for the humiliated man and offered the slave freedom.

Summary

This poem begins with an allusion to Thomas Campbell's poem "The Pleasures of Hope". Then the text directly jumps into the story of a slave who was enslaved. Right now, he is freed from the shackles of slavery. First and foremost, he realizes the hidden potential and



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noblest feelings buried inside his soul. It makes him kneel no more to anyone. Once again, he feels himself a human being, not a creature destined to serve, suffer, and follow.

Then Derozio delves deeper into the joy of the emancipated character. He looks around and realizes that he is now as free as the air, bird, and river. The flame of freedom has enlightened his soul's altar. In the next lines, he expresses his gratitude to all those who are fighting in order to make the slaves free. He wishes the almighty to bless those generous hands which break the chain of slavery in any form.

Form, Rhyme Scheme, & Meter

Form

"Freedom to the Slave" is 28 lines long. Derozio groups the lines into a single stanza. Every four lines of the text form a unit (similar to a quatrain) and present a specific idea. There is only a difference in lines 9-16. Here, the poet packs the eight lines together. Besides, he writes this piece from the third-person point of view and describes the happiness of the slave after getting freedom.

Rhyme Scheme

The rhyme scheme of the poem is regular and it follows the ABCB rhyming pattern. It is also known as the ballad rhyme scheme. For example, the second and fourth lines rhyme together while the first- and third-lines end with distinct sounds.

Meter

Regarding the meter, it is composed of iambic tetrameter and iambic trimeter alternatively. The poem begins with an iambic tetrameter line. It is followed by a line in iambic trimeter. This pattern is repeated throughout the text. Let's have a look at the scansion of the first eight lines in order to have an idea of the metrical scheme of the overall poem.

How felt/ he when/ he first/ was told

A slave/ he ceased/ to be;

How proud/-ly beat/ his heart, / when first

He knew/ that he/ was free! —

The nob-/lest feel-/ings of/ the soul

To glow/ at once/ be-gan;

He knelt/ no more;/ his thoughts/ were raised;

He felt/ him-self/ a man.

In this excerpt, it can be seen that the first line consists of four iambs (unstressed-stressed) while the following line contains three iambic feet. This pattern occurs in the following lines.

Themes

The poem "Freedom to the Slave" taps on the themes of freedom, slavery, and patriotism. As the title says, this piece is all about the idea of freedom. But, Derozio explores this theme from the perspective of a slave who is freed from the chains of subjugation. In order

to appreciate the theme, one has to look deeper into the mind of the slave. His exploration of the things that he was not able to cherish before reflects the inherent desire of a man to be free like the nature around him.

By writing this poem, Derozio uses the character as a metaphor of all the Indians, enslaved by the colonial rulers. Their life was no different than the life of a slave. But, the slave in the poem can lead his life freely. Indians could not. Hence, the poet is sympathetic towards the sufferings of his countrymen and tries to infuse the spirit of freedom in their hearts.

Line-by-Line Analysis & Critical Appreciation

“And as the slave departs, the man returns.”- Campbell

The epigraph of “Freedom to the Slave” alludes to Thomas Campbell’s poem “The Pleasures of Hope”. Derozio quotes this line in order to give a hint to readers regarding the main idea of the poem. In this line, Campbell uses an epigram. He says that as a slave is freed from the chain of subjugation, he becomes a man again. Here, the terms “slave” and “man” are used to refer to the concepts of “slavery” and “humanity”. So, this line also contains the use of synecdoche.

The meaning of this line is that slavery kills the basic essence of humanity from a man’s heart. The slavers treat a slave as a creature inferior to them. Thus, when a slave is emancipated, he can enjoy the pleasures of being a man.

Lines 1-4

How felt he when he first was told

A slave he ceased to be;

How proudly beat his heart, when first

He knew that he was free! —

The poem directly begins with the essence of the epigraph. Besides, the title “Freedom to the Slave” also hints at a slave who is given freedom. Derozio anticipates in the first two lines regarding his state of mind. When he was first told he ceased to be a slave, it gave him pleasure, inexpressible with words. By hearing that he was free, his heart leaped up in joy. He became proud to know that he could live as a human being. Here, the poet focuses on the term “heart” in order to refer to the emotions of the person. Besides, he uses a rhetorical exclamation in the fourth line to portray his happiness after seeing the slave freed to be a man again.

Lines 5-8

The noblest feelings of the soul

To glow at once began;

He knelt no more; his thoughts were raised;

He felt himself a man.

In the following line, Derozio refers to the “noblest feelings of the soul”. The noblest feelings in a man’s heart include happiness, pride, compassion, and benevolence. It does



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not end here. Rather such feelings include all the qualities that make a person, a human being. Previously, the slave was treated as an inferior creature who was destined to serve his superior. As he ceased to be a slave, he could explore those feelings once again.

He had to kneel to nobody. This feeling of self-confidence and self-esteem elevated his thoughts. He could think freely. In this way, he felt himself a man. Here, the poet uses an epigram. He conveys that when a man is free in his mental space, he can explore the true meaning of being a human. The thoughts of selfhood are what make him complete as a man.

Lines 9-16

He looked above—the breath of heaven

Around him freshly blew;

He smiled exultingly to see

The wild birds as they flew,

He looked upon the running stream

That 'neath him rolled away;

Then thought on winds, and birds, and floods,

And cried, 'I'm free as they!'

In the following lines, Derozio describes how the freed slave draws inspiration from his surroundings. After being completely free internally and externally, he could appreciate the nature around him. He could breathe the freshness of air once again. Here, the poet uses a metaphor in “breath of heaven”. The “heaven”, a reference to the sky, is invested with the idea of breathing. Its “breath” is a reference to the air humans breath.

He looked around at the wild birds. Their flight filled his heart with happiness. It is important to note the term “wild” here. By this term, Derozio connects the untamed spirit of the person to that of the wild birds.

He looked upon the “running stream” that rolled away beneath his feet. So, the person was standing near a river and appreciating the beauty of nature. The “running stream” contains the use of personification. Here, the stream is invested with the idea of running away.

The scene filled him with pleasure. It made him wonder about his own freedom. Thus he said, “I'm free as they!”. The exclamation reflects his mental happiness. In this line, Derozio uses the repetition of “and” in order to emphasize the terms mentioned here. Besides, these terms “winds”, “birds”, and “floods” are symbols of freedom.

Lines 17-20

Oh Freedom! there is something dear

E'en in thy very name,

That lights the altar of the soul

With everlasting flame.

In this section, Derozio shifts from his subject (the slave) and describes how he sees “Freedom”. Firstly, he personifies the abstract idea by invoking it as a human being. According to him, there is magic in the very word itself. Indeed, if we pronounce the term by closing our eyes, we can feel the essence tied to it. It transcends the soul, elevates the mind, and frees the spirit.

Not only that, it lights the “altar of the soul”. In this phrase, the poet compares the human soul to an altar. It is like a temple where the lord resides. Freedom is the priest who lights the temple with its “everlasting flame”. In this way, freedom enlightens the spirit and the darkness fades from there. Besides, its flame has an eternal quality. As long as the man lives, the light of freedom stays with him.

Lines 21-24

Success attend the patriot sword,

That is unsheathed for thee!

And glory to the breast that bleeds,

Bleeds nobly to be free!

In these four lines, Derozio taps on the theme of patriotism. After reading these lines, it becomes clear why the poet is talking about the freed slave in this poem. He does so in order to bring home the idea of India’s slavery to the British empire.

Here, Derozio’s poetic persona directly addresses the spirit of Freedom. He blesses the patriotic spirits who unsheathed their swords to free their country from the shackles of colonial rulers. The “unsheathed” sword is a symbol of protest as well as war. By using this symbol, Derozio voices against the subjugation of his dear countrymen.

He glorifies the brave hearts who bleed to emancipate themselves as well as their nation. His spirit salutes those who devoted their lives for the noble cause. Readers can find the repetition of the word “bleeds” that creates a resonance of the idea in their minds. It is meant for the sake of emphasis.

Lines 25-28

Blest be the generous hand that breaks

The chain a tyrant gave,

And, feeling for degraded man,

Gives freedom to the slave.

In the last section of “Freedom to the Slave”, the poet blessed the generous humans who felt pain when they saw their fellow humans were tied by the chain of slavery. By “generous hand”, the poet refers to the generous people. They broke the chain which a tyrant gave to the slaves. The “chain”, a symbol of subjugation or dependence, was meant for holding them back. By freeing them from these symbolic fetters, the abolitionists helped them to realize their true potential.

The last two lines show the poet’s sympathy for the degraded state of the slaves. He blesses the hearts of those who had fellow feelings for the slaves. The feeling of compassion is what gives them freedom.

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1.4 THE ORPHAN GIRL

She was yet young and fair — but oh she seemed
 Marked for much woe in this unpitying world!
 Poor friendless wanderer! —
 Her hair was black as a raven's wing,
 Her cheek the tulip's hue did wear,
 Her voice was soft as when night winds sing,
 Her brow as a moonbeam fair;
 Her sire had joined the wake of war; —
 The battle-shock, the shout, and scar
 He knew, and gained a glorious grave—
 Such is the guerdon of the brave! —
 Her anguished mother's suffering heart
 Could not endure a widow's part;
 She sunk beneath her soul's distress,
 And left her infant parentless. —
 She hath no friend on this cold, bleak earth,
 To give her shelter, a home and a hearth;
 Through life's dreary desert alone she must wend,
 For alas! the wretched have never a friend!
 And should she stray from virtue's way,
 The world will scorn, and its scorn can slay.
 Ah! shame hat enough to wring the breast
 With a weight of sorrow and guilt oppress'd;
 But oh! 'tis coldly cruel to wound
 The bosom whose blood must gush unbound.
 No tear is so bright as the tear that flows
 For erring woman's unpitied woes;
 And blest be for ever his honored name
 Who shelters an orphan from sorrow and shame!



Summary

Part 1

The speaker begins by telling the appearance of the orphan girl. The speaker says that she has black hair like Raven's (crow) wings and cheeks as bright as the tulip flower.



Moreover, she has a soft voice just like the rustling, calm and gentle wind or air at night time. Similarly, her forehead is as cheerful as the moon rays. In the beginning, the speaker has a quite pleasing tone, yet after the fourth verse, the tone changes and turns to illustrate the dark realities of life.

The speaker informs the readers about the death of the young girl's father. Her father went to the war and bravely fought there, yet eventually died. Before dying, the father knew that he will die. The speaker mourns that in this world, the brave is rewarded by the martyrdom. This phrase shows the brutality of the world and how it treats the courageous and brave people.

Her mother couldn't bear the death of her husband and died of the heart attack. Ultimately, the girl is left orphan in the cruel world.

Part 2

The speaker in the second part of the poet refers to the young girl's uncertainty in this world. In this cold and bleak world, the world that lacks human warmth and hope, the little young orphan has no friends at all. She is friendless, had no relatives to provide her shelter, home, and little affection. She is destined to live a desolate, dull and depressing life. The world is compared to the desert.

The poet reiterates the verses and warns the young girl to be good and kind as the world is full of cruel people who will scorn her, mock her and abuse her. Ultimately, the cruel world will kill her.

Furthermore, the poet laments over the fact that as a girl, the shame she will have to suffer will be sufficient to bleed her breasts. She will be oppressed by the world by putting the weight of sorrows and guilt on her shoulder.

To wound a woman (bosom) who is already bleeding from the breast because of the sorrows and shame is very brutal. The tears of the woman coming out of sorrow and oppression are the most painful tears.

At the end of the poem, the speaker appreciates those who shelters an orphan from sorrow and shame. According to the poet, those people are the most blessed and honourable people. Though the poet ends the poem with hope, yet he still is uncertain about the future of the young orphan girl.

Form, Rhyme Scheme, & Meter

"The Orphan Girl" consists of three stanzas. The first section acts as an introductory part. In the following stanzas, Derozio tells readers the sad story of the orphan girl.

This poem is written in a regular rhyme scheme. The first stanza does not have a rhyme scheme as such. The first two lines rhyme imperfectly. While the following stanzas contain a set rhyming pattern. The first four lines of the second stanza contain the ABAB rhyme scheme. While the following lines are written in the rhyming couplet form. So, the overall rhyme scheme of the first stanza is ABABCCDDEEFF. The second stanza contains the same AABB rhyming pattern.

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Regarding the meter, the overall poem is mostly composed of the iambic tetrameter. It means, on average, there are four iambic beats (daa-dum) per line. Readers can also find a few metrical variations in the text.

Poetic Devices & Figurative Language

Derozio makes use of the following poetic devices in order to make the story of the girl more appealing to readers.

- **Alliteration:** It occurs in “yet young”, “Her hair”, “glorious grave”, “She sunk”, “dreary desert”, etc. Derozio uses this device to create internal rhymings.
- **Personification:** It occurs in the “unpitying world” and “when night winds sing”. Here, the poet personifies the inanimate ideas such as the “world” and “night winds”.
- **Simile:** The poet uses a simile to describe girl hair, cheek, voice, and brow in the first four lines of the second stanza. For example, he compares the girl’s hair to “a raven’s wing” and her brow to “moonbeam”.
- **Metaphor:** In the line “Her cheek the tulip’s hue did wear”, Derozio compares the girl’s red cheeks to the hue of a tulip. By the phrase “guerdon of the brave”, he makes an implicit comparison between death and the reward of bravery.
- **Enjambment:** It occurs throughout the poem. Derozio uses this device to create tension between the transition of lines. For example, the line “She sunk beneath her soul’s distress” makes one quickly read the next line “And left her infant parentless” for grasping the overall idea.
- **Irony:** It occurs in the line “Such is the guerdon of the brave!”. Here, the poet sarcastically says that death is the ultimate reward of bravery. Literally, it is not a reward, but an unrecognized punishment.
- **Hyperbole:** Derozio uses this device in “Marked for much woe in this unpitying world!” He tries to emphasize the suffering of the girl by using the hyperbolic expression “much woe”. It also occurs in “No tear is so bright as the tear that flows”.
- **Rhetorical Exclamation:** This device is used in a number of instances. For example, “For alas! The wretched have never a friend!” contains this device. It is used here to emphasize the girl’s friendless, lonely life.

Stanza-by-Stanza Explanation & Critical Analysis

Stanza One

She was yet young and fair—but oh she seemed

Marked for much woe in this unpitying world!

Poor friendless wanderer! —

Derozio’s poem “The Orphan Child” begins with a three-line stanza. It introduces the main character of the poem. In this stanza, the poet gives a hint to the girl’s impending tragedy. Besides, the title also serves a similar purpose. It tells readers that the poem is going to talk about the predicament of the girl after losing her parents.

In these lines, the poet refers to the age and looks of the little girl. One could not anticipate what was waiting for her in the future by merely looking at her innocent face. According to the poet, she seemed to be destined for many woes in this world. He refers to the people living in this world as “unpitying”. They don’t have any sympathy for an orphan kid like her.

The third line refers to the girl as a “poor friendless wanderer”. In this line, Derozio uses an exclamation in order to show his sympathy for the child’s fate.

Stanza Two

Lines 1-4

Her hair was black as a raven’s wing,

Her cheek the tulip’s hue did wear,

Her voice was soft as when night winds sing,

Her brow as a moonbeam fair;

The main story begins in this stanza. In the first few lines, Derozio describes the child’s looks. According to him, her black hair was similar to the wings of a raven. Her cheek is reddish just like the tulip flower. Here, the “tulip” acts as a symbol of innocence. It hints at the innocence of the girl.

Her voice has the softness of night winds and her brow is as fair as the moonlight. In this way, the poet seeks elements from nature in order to describe the childish beauty of the orphan girl.

All the lines from this section begin with the word “Her”. It is an example of anaphora. This device is used for connecting the ideas of the speaker.

Lines 5-8

Her sire had joined the wake of war; –

The battle-shock, the shout, and scar

He knew, and gained a glorious grave–

Such is the guerdon of the brave! –

In these lines, Derozio describes how her father died. The term “sire” is an archaic term for “father”. According to the poet, her father went to war. Though he was aware of the outcome of the war, he still went there. The terms “battle-shock” and “scar” refer to the impact of war. While the word “shout” resonates with the noise of war.

The child’s father died on the battlefield and gained a “glorious” grave. Here, “glorious” is used in its ironic sense. Derozio does not want to glorify the outcome of the war. He rather criticizes it by using this lofty term and ties it with the idea of death. In the following, he further satirizes the reward a soldier gets in return for his contribution to the nation. According to him, they just get the “guerdon of the grave”. “Guerdon” means a reward or recompense. The poet uses the theme of the futility of war in these lines.

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**Lines 9-12**

Her anguished mother's suffering heart

Could not endure a widow's part;

She sunk beneath her soul's distress,

And left her infant parentless. –

Her father's untimely death at war made her mother extremely sorrowful. She could not bear the pain of losing her husband. Besides, it was very difficult for her to play a "widow's part". Gradually, she sank beneath her soul's distress. Here, Derozio metaphorically compares "distress" to a sea. Finally, she died of her heartache. In this way, the child lost both her parents. She could even imagine that things would change so fast. All of sudden her little world shattered into pieces and she was at a loss.

Stanza Three**Lines 1-4**

She hath no friend on this cold, bleak earth,

To give her shelter, a home and a hearth;

Through life's dreary desert alone she must wend,

For alas! the wretched have never a friend!

The third stanza of "The Orphan Girl" deals with what happened with the child after the tragedy. In the first four lines of this stanza, the poet talks about how lonely the girl was. She had no friend to comfort her during her hard times. Besides, the world around her appeared as cold and bleak as a winter landscape. The term "cold" is a reference to the lack of compassion and passivity of others toward the poor girl. "Bleak" hints at the idea of hopelessness.

There was no one to shelter the child. Derozio uses the term "home" and "hearth" as a symbol. The first term symbolizes love and the second one is a symbol of warmth and comfort. By using these symbols, the poet tries to say that there is nobody to love or care for the girl.

Her life turned into a "dreary desert". She had to wend alone. In the fourth line, the poet uses a rhetorical exclamation to repeat the idea of the first line. Here, the poetic persona says that as the girl never had a friend, she had to walk alone, in the lonely desert of her life. The "desert" is a symbol of hopelessness as well as loneliness.

Lines 5-8

And should she stray from virtue's way,

The world will scorn, and its scorn can slay.

Ah! shame hath enough to wring the breast

With a weight of sorrow and guilt oppress'd;

In these lines, Derozio specifically comments on the attitude of society toward an unfortunate girl like her. According to the poet, people were just waiting to point out her



mistakes. They did not care about her condition or how lonely she was. What mattered to them the most was the mistakes of the girl. If she went astray from “virtue’s way”, they would come with their scathing words to demean and blow off the girl’s dim-lit confidence.

They would scorn and their scornful words could “slay” her soul. Here, the poet compares their criticism to a sword metaphorically. The former hurts one’s mind while the other hurts one externally. But the effect is more or less similar. The criticism of society makes it difficult to even breathe. From this perspective, the sword is better than the harsh words of hypocrites. The scars they cause are invisible, yet they pain one’s soul deep.

According to the poet, they did not have shame to wring the breast of the orphan girl with “a weight of sorrow and guilt”. It means their harsh words increased the burden on her heart and intensified her suffering.

Lines 9-12

But oh! ’tis coldly cruel to wound

The bosom whose blood must gush unbound.

No tear is so bright as the tear that flows

For erring woman’s unpitied woes;

In these lines, Derozio says that it is “coldly cruel” to wound the girl mentally. Here, the term “cold” refers to the passivity of society towards the girl’s suffering. Their cruelty wounded the girl. They did not care about the age of the girl. The girl, who should play and run in an unbound manner, was burdened with oppression.

According to the poet, the sorrow of the girl is unmatched. Her grief originates from “unpitied woes”. Through this line, the poet tries to say that society did not forgive her for her errors. They kept on criticizing the girl and remained unsympathetic to her woes.

Lines 13-14

And blest be for ever his honored name

Who shelters an orphan from sorrow and shame!

The last two lines reflect the poet’s sympathy for the girl. He refers to an honored man who, he thinks, may shelter the orphan from her “sorrow and shame”. His blessing is showered on that generous person who does so. Here, sheltering the girl from “sorrow” and “shame” means comforting the girl with love and protecting her from the hypocritical society. In this way, Derozio remains hopeful regarding the future of the child. Besides, the concluding section of this poem resembles that of his poem “Freedom to the Slave”. It also ends on a similar note.

Themes

In “The Orphan Girl”, Derozio taps on the theme of the sorrow and suffering of an orphan child. This poem also showcases the themes of the futility of war, distress, the hypocrisy of society, and loneliness. The main idea of Derozio’s poem concerns the predicament of a girl after losing both her parents. In the first few lines, the poet implicitly says that none

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could anticipate that such a tragedy could happen with her. However, when she was all alone, hypocritical society came with their criticizing words. They taunted her at each step that caused her to suffer internally. Through this poem, the poet's sympathy for the helpless and unfortunate girl is portrayed.

1.5 REVIEW QUESTIONS

SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS

1. What is the theme of the poem "The Orphan Girl"?
2. How was the hair of the orphan girl?
3. How did the orphan girl lose her father?
4. What is meant by the expression "Freedom to the Slave"?
5. What does the expression "as the slave departs, the man returns" mean in the poem "Freedom to the Slave"?

LONG ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS

1. Who speaks the words "I'm free as they!" in the poem "Freedom to the Slave"?
2. How did the slave feel when he was first told that he was free?
3. When was "Freedom to the Slave" written?
4. How did the orphan girl's mother die?
5. What is the meaning of the phrase "She sunk beneath her soul's distress"?

1.6 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. **Henry Louis Vivian Derozio, _____.**
 - a. Born April 18
 - b. Born May 14
 - c. Born April 12
 - d. Born June 11
2. **Henry Louis Vivian Derozio, was born in _____.**
 - a. Mumbai
 - b. Calcutta
 - c. Kerala
 - d. Tamil Nādu
3. **Henry Louis Vivian Derozio, was died on Dec. 26, _____.**
 - a. 1828
 - b. 1829
 - c. 1830
 - d. 1831
4. **Poet and assistant headmaster of _____.**
 - a. Maharashtra university
 - b. Delhi university
 - c. Hindu College
 - d. Bengal university

5. The rhyme scheme of the poem “Freedom to The Slave” is regular and it follows the _____ rhyming pattern.
- ABBC
 - ABDC
 - ADCD
 - ABCB
6. “Freedom To The Slave” is also known as the _____ rhyme scheme.
- Ballad
 - Vallad
 - ABCB
 - None of the above
7. The term “sire” in poem “the orphan girl” is an archaic term for _____.
- Sister
 - Brother
 - Father
 - Mom
8. In poem “the orphan girl” the _____ acts as a symbol of innocence.
- Tulip
 - Rose
 - Daffodils
 - None of the above
9. The child’s _____ died on the battlefield and gained a “glorious” grave.
- Mother
 - Father
 - Brother
 - Him self
10. In poem “the orphan girl” The terms “battle-shock” and “scar” refer to the _____.
- Scar on face
 - Orphanage
 - Electric shock
 - Impact of war

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UNIT

II

RABINDRA NATH TAGORE

STRUCTURE

- 2.1 Learning Objective
- 2.2 Author Introduction
- 2.3 Where The Mind Is Without Fear
- 2.4 Freedom
- 2.5 Review Questions
- 2.6 Multiple Choice Questions

2.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVE

After completion of this unit, student will be able to:

- Know about a great Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore.
- Learn more about his poems.
- Know about his poem “Freedom” and “Where The Mind Is Without Fear”.

2.2 AUTHOR INTRODUCTION



Rabindranath Tagore [1861-1941] was considered the greatest writer in modern Indian literature. A Bengali poet, novelist, educator, Nobel Laureate for Literature [1913]. Tagore was awarded a knighthood in 1915, but he surrendered it in 1919 in protest against the Massacre at Amritsar, where British troops killed around 400 Indian demonstrators. Tagore gained a reputation in the West as a mystic originally and that has perhaps misled many Western readers to ignore his role as a reformer and critic of colonialism.

When one knows thee, then alien there is none, then no door is shut. Oh, grant me my prayer that I may never lose touch of the one in the play of the many.” (From Gitanjali). Rabindranath Tagore was born in Calcutta in a wealthy and prominent Brahman family. His father was Maharishi Debendranath Tagore, a religious reformer and scholar. His mother Sarada Devi, died when he was very young. He talked of seeing her body carried through a gate to a place where it was burned - and it was at that moment that he realized that she would never come back.

Tagore’s grandfather had established a huge financial empire for himself, and used it to finance large public projects, such as the Calcutta Medical College. The Tagore’s were pioneers of Bengal’s Renaissance and tried to combine traditional Indian culture with Western ideas. However, in his “My Reminiscences” Tagore mentions that it was not until the age of ten that he started to wear shoe and socks. Servants beat the Tagore children regularly. All the children contributed significantly to Bengali literature and culture. Tagore, the youngest, started to compose poems at the age of eight. He received his early education first from home-tutors and then at a variety of schools. Among them were Bengal Academy where he studied Bengali history and culture, and University College, London, where he studied law (but left after a year without completing his studies). Tagore did not like the British weather. Once he gave a beggar a gold coin - it was more than the beggar had expected and he returned it. In England Tagore started to compose the poem Bhagna Hridaj (a broken heart).

In 1883 Tagore married Mrinalini Devi Raichaudhuri. Together they had two sons and three daughters. He moved to East Bengal in 1890. His first book, a collection of poems, had been published when he was 17; it was published by Tagore’s friend who wanted to surprise him. In East Bengal (now Bangladesh) Tagore collected local legends and folklore and wrote



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seven volumes of poetry between 1893 and 1900, including *Sonar Tari* (The Golden Boat), 1894 and *Khanika*, 1900. This was highly productive period in Tagore's life, and earned him the rather misleading epitaph 'The Bengali Shelley'. More important was that Tagore wrote in the common language of the Bengali people and abandoned the ancient form of the Indian language. This also was something that was hard to accept among his critics and scholars. In 1901 Tagore founded a school outside Calcutta, *Visva-Bharati*, which was dedicated to emerging Western and Indian philosophy and education. It became a university in 1921. He produced poems, novels, stories, a history of India, textbooks, and treatises on pedagogy. His wife died in 1902, followed in 1903 by the death of one of his daughters and in 1907 his younger son.

2.3 WHERE THE MIND IS WITHOUT FEAR

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high

Where knowledge is free

Where the world has not been broken up into fragments

By narrow domestic walls

Where words come out from the depth of truth

Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection

Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way

Into the dreary desert sand of dead habit

Where the mind is led forward by thee

Into ever-widening thought and action

Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.

Summary

"Where The Mind Is Without Fear" is a pre-independent poem in which the poet sincerely urges to God to awake his fellow beings for the realization that the essential need to live in a free and united country. He wants his countrymen to awake and enjoy the life of full dignity and honour.

His countrymen would not be superstitious or believers of blind faith rather than they would lead the life of enlightened and educated. He wishes to the people, to be honest, open-minded and industrious. Then only they would stretch their 'arms towards perfection' and the nation can actually achieve the apex of success.

They need to use their reasons over their blind faiths and must be ready to accept new thoughts and ideas. He requests God to free his country from manipulation, corruption, and slavery. He yearns for an awakened country where there would be freedom of the mind and expression of ideas.

The poem invokes the deep patriotic feelings. Our country is subjugated by castes, creed, superstitious beliefs and biased ideas. Tagore earnestly appeals to God that a country would be where people's 'head is high' and 'knowledge is free'.

His country would not be divided and fragmented into pieces due to their narrow thoughts. They should express their words not from the mind but from 'the depth of truth' and heart. He urges God to guide his countrymen for moral awakening to fight for their rights

against British inhuman rules. Liberate them from the fear of oppression, repression, and subjugation. Unshackle the chains of fear and direct them to the paths of progress and prosperity.

They should be confident not confined. There would not be injustice and inequality in the country on the basis of caste, creed, and gender. Countrymen should be unprejudiced and open-minded accepting the new challenges and changes. They should lead their lives of decency and dignity.

To conclude “Where the Mind Is Without Fear” is a poem in which Tagore reveals his personal quest for the Divine and characterized by a variety of original themes both in thought and expression. Therefore, this poem is remarkable to a great extent which expresses the intensity of the feeling of freedom. His poem is universal in its appeal and envisions the ‘heaven of freedom’ and happier future for mankind.

Theme

The poem is about true freedom. According to the poet, true freedom is an inner possession of man and it can be realized only with God’s help. It means moral and spiritual uplift of the people under divine guidance. Freedom should give India courage and should induce her people to pursue the path of knowledge and truth. It should liberate her from narrow prejudices and superstitions and make her people sincere in word and action. We, men and women of India, must make a supreme mental and spiritual effort to achieve this true freedom with God’s help and guidance. This true freedom is true patriotism and it is something more than narrow nationalism or “*self-love of Nations*”.

Analysis

Rabindranath was a true patriot: he was never a narrow nationalist. “*My country, right or wrong*”, was never his creed. To him love of God and love of the people are complementary and these two justify and fulfil each other. Religion and patriotism reinforce each other.

In the poems of Naivedya, hymns to the Divine are also prayers for the people. The ideal that the poet held aloft for his country and for which he invoked divine aid was also his ideal for every other country of the world. Rabindranath rose above that narrow patriotism which is aggressive and unmindful of other’s good. He protests against the so-called patriotism which means self-love of Nations and which makes a man forget the higher values and principles of human life.

The poem “Where the Mind is Without Fear” is the English version of a famous Bengali poem composed by Rabindranath Tagore, and first published in his Bengali poetical work, Naivedya (1901). Later on, it was included in the Gitanjali (an offering of songs), published in English in 1912-13, and occurs at No. 35.

It is one of Tagore’s most popular and admired lyrics and shows his firm faith in God and His benevolence. It is suffused with patriotic feelings and shows the poet’s vision of a free and ideal India. It is a remarkably inspiring poem in which the poet envisions an ideal future for his motherland. He dreams of a free India in which people will lead a good and virtuous life.



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It satisfies and appeals to the intellect and inculcates a desire for the growth of moral and spiritual values for which India had been a beacon light to the rest of the world. The poet seems to have felt deeply and intensely all that has suggestive of Tagore's love for India and her culture. He visualizes a country where the people's minds will be free from fear and narrow-mindedness such as casteism, racialism, conservatism, etc. In free India everybody will have equal right to attain knowledge. People will remain fully united and live like one community. All old and lifeless beliefs, blind customs and superstitions will be abolished and clear reason will reign. There will be an atmosphere of intellectual and spiritual enlightenment, and people will always follow the right path. They will be inspired by God, and arise and awaken in this '*heaven of freedom.*'

By heaven of freedom' the poet means not only political and economic freedom, but also spiritual freedom from fear, superstitions, narrow-mindedness and evil desires and motives. This kind of spiritual freedom the poet envisages for his country.

The poem is rather unusual as a poem on freedom. In this poem, the poet preaches the gospel of a new patriotism which is without fear, without narrow prejudices, and which is based on truth and reason and is realized under God's spiritual guidance.

The song is a fine example of Tagore's spiritual humanism. It speaks of his love for freedom, and is intensely patriotic in nature. The whole poem is in the form of a single sentence. The key to this sentence is provided in the last line where the poet prays to God to grant true freedom to his country. The rest of the poem is concerned with explaining what this freedom really means. The poet calls it the 'heaven of freedom.'

Where the Mind is Without Fear: Line by line Explanation

Line 1-2

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;

In the very first line, the poet prays to the Almighty that his countrymen should be free from any fear of oppression or forced compulsion. He wishes that everyone in his country has his head held high in dignity. In other words, according to him, in a truly free country every person should be fearless and should have a sense of self dignity.

Where knowledge is free;

In the second line of Where the Mind is Without Fear the poet dreams of a nation where knowledge would be free. Education should not be restricted to the upper class only but everybody should be allowed to acquire knowledge. Not only that, the children should learn freely from the nature and the world around them. They should not be forced memorize some predetermined lessons. And this is Tagore's typical concept of education.

Line 3-4

Where the world has not been broken up into fragments

By narrow domestic walls;

In the next two lines, the poet emphasizes the unity of not only of his countrymen but also of the entire world. He thinks there should be no division among people based on their

caste, creed, color, religion or other baseless superstitions. In other words, prejudices and superstitions should not divide the people in groups and break their unity.

Line 5-6

Where words come out from the depth of truth;

In line 5 of *Where the Mind is Without Fear*, Tagore wants a nation where people are truthful. They should not be superficial and words should come out from the depth of their hearts.

Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;

In the sixth line of the poem, the poet wants everyone to work hard to reach their goal, and in the long run to reach perfection. He thinks they should not be tired by working. People should not be lazy and ignoring their work.

Line 7-8

Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way

Into the dreary desert sand of dead habits;

In line 7, the poet compares 'reason' or logical thinking to a 'clear stream' and in the next line compares 'dead habits' or superstitious beliefs to a 'dreary desert'. He wants the stream of reason not to lose its way into the desert of prejudices. In short, people's thought should be monitored by rational thinking, not by superstition; logic should rule over old baseless beliefs.

Line 9-11

Where the mind is led forward by thee

Into ever-widening thought and action;

In line 9 and 10 the poet wishes his countrymen to be progressive and broad-minded. He wants that their minds are "led forward" to "ever-widening thought and action" by the Almighty. In short, we should be open-minded and do something unusual or extraordinary, overcoming the narrowness of mind.

Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake

In the final line of the poem, the poet addresses the God as 'Father'. He asks him to awaken his country into such a 'heaven of freedom' where the above conditions meet.

To make it clear, the poet prays to the Almighty (my Father) to raise or lift (awake) his country to such heights where freedom would be realised at its best (a heaven of freedom). In turn, he is actually praying that God awakens his countrymen so that they come out from the darkness of ignorance, prejudices, disunity and all other evils.

Here, a great addition from our reader Ravi Murti suggests that Rabindranath wants to awaken the God within us to free our mind from shackles and bondage. It is not invoking God but using it as metaphor for the higher self within us. This interpretation is beautiful and I can't resist the urge to add it here.





2.4 FREEDOM

Freedom from fear is the freedom
 I claim for you, my motherland!
 Freedom from the burden of the ages, bending your head,
 Breaking your back, blinding your eyes to the beckoning
 Call of the future;
 Freedom from the shackles of slumber wherewith
 You fasten yourself in night's stillness,
 Mistrusting the star that speaks of truth's adventurous paths;
 Freedom from the anarchy of destiny
 Whole sails are weakly yielded to the blind uncertain winds,
 And the helm to a hand ever rigid and cold as death.
 Freedom from the insult of dwelling in a puppet's world,
 Where movements are started through brainless wires,
 Repeated through mindless habits,
 Where figures wait with patience and obedience for the
 Master of show,
 To be stirred into a mimicry of life.

Summary

'Freedom' by Rabindranath Tagore is a beautiful poem directed to the people of the poet's home country – India. This powerful poem begins with the speaker telling his listener, the people of India, and the country as a whole, that he is going to claim freedom for them. It is the freedom that's going to allow them to escape from the oppression they suffered under, in various forms, for centuries. The freedom of the future is calling to them, with a bright light and a beckoning sound. He goes on to say that fate, as determined by others, is no longer going to play a part in their lives. They are going to be free from "dwelling in a puppet's world." They are no longer going to have to live a "mimicry of life."

Structure and Form

'Freedom' by Rabindranath Tagore is a seventeen-line poem that is written in free verse. This means the lines do not make use of a specific rhyme scheme or metrical pattern. They are also contained within one stanza. Upon a cursory glance, readers will immediately notice that the lines vary greatly in length. Some are as short as four words, while others are closer to ten.

Literary Devices

Throughout this poem, the poet makes use of several literary devices. These include but are not limited to:

- **Enjambment:** can be seen when the poet cuts off a line before its natural stopping point. For example, the transition between lines one and two as well as lines four and five.
- **Caesura:** can be seen when the poet inserts a pause into the middle of a line. This can be accomplished through the use of punctuation or through a natural pause in a line. For example: “breaking your back, blinding your eyes to the beckoning.”
- **Imagery:** can be seen when the poet uses particularly interesting descriptions. These should trigger the reader’s senses. For example, “whole sails are weakly yielded to the blind uncertain winds.”
- **Alliteration:** occurs when the poet repeats the same consonant sound at the beginning of multiple lines. For example, “breaking,” “back,” “blinding,” and “beckoning” in line four and “helm” and “hand” in line eleven.

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Detailed Analysis

Lines 1-7

Freedom from fear is the freedom

I claim for you my motherland!

Freedom from the burden of the ages, bending your head,

Breaking your back, blinding your eyes to the beckoning

Call of the future;

Freedom from the shackles of slumber wherewith

You fasten yourself in night’s stillness,

In the first lines of this poem, the speaker addresses his words to India. This is implicit through the poet’s country of birth. But, since India is not mentioned by name in this poem, it’s possible to also interpret these words as a reflection on another country. The poet uses an apostrophe, or an address to someone or something that cannot hear or respond to their words, in these lines. They tell India that they “claim freedom from fear” for the country.

It is a special freedom, one that is separate from “the burden of the ages.” The history of the country, and the various kinds of subjugation that the country’s people have suffered under, will be relieved with this new freedom. No longer shall the people of India bend their heads in submission or break their backs with hard work.

Instead, the Indian people will be blinded with the “beckoning call of the future.” The poet continues to repeat the word “freedom.” This occurs in several lines of this poem. It is a literary device known as anaphora. There are also numerous examples of alliteration in these lines, for example, “shackles” and “slumber” in line six.

Lines 8-17

Mistrusting the star that speaks of truth’s adventurous paths;

Freedom from the anarchy of destiny

RABINDRA NATH
TAGORE



**Whole sails are weakly yielded to the blind uncertain winds,
And the helm to a hand ever rigid and cold as death.
Freedom from the insult of dwelling in a puppet's world,
Where movements are started through brainless wires,
Repeated through mindless habits,
Where figures wait with patience and obedience for the
Master of show,
To be stirred into a mimicry of life.**

The speaker tells their intended listener, the country of India, and the people of India, that from now on, they will no longer be guided by the “anarchy of destiny.” This suggests that the speaker sees his people as, for a long time, being controlled by someone else’s determination of what their fate should be. The poet uses a wonderful example of imagery in these lines, in addition to personification, as he describes the shape of destiny and how the people of India had to “yield [...] to the blind uncertain winds.”

While this could be interpreted as a beautiful image, the following line describes a “hand ever rigid and cold as death” ensures that readers see it as a negative. This is also a good example of juxtaposition. Readers can compare this line, which is emblematic of the past, with the blinding, beckoning light of the future from the previous lines.

The final few lines of the poem compare the life that the speaker’s people had been living to a puppet show. They were puppets on a wire, waiting with “patience and obedience for the / master of show.” No longer, the speaker implies. They will no longer repeat their “mindless habits” or have to play a “mimicry of life.”

2.5 REVIEW QUESTIONS

SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS

1. Images of Colonialism in “Freedom”
2. Patriotism a theme in Tagore’s “Freedom
3. What is the idea of freedom that the poet is propagating?
4. Why does the poet want freedom for his country?
5. When did Rabindranath Tagore write the “Freedom” poem?

LONG ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS

1. What message does Tagore portray through the poem “Freedom”?
2. What is the tone of the poem “Freedom” by Rabindranath Tagore?
3. After reading the poem “Where The Mindi’s Without Fear”, what do you think about the state of the country at this moment in poet’s eyes?
4. In poem “Where The Mindi’s Without Fear” To whom is the poet speaking to? What is he saying?
5. Explain author Rabindranath Tagore’s life in brief.

2.6 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

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1. **Rabindranath was a true _____.**
 - a. Painter
 - b. Patriot
 - c. Legend
 - d. None of the above
2. **Bengali name of “Where the Mind is Without Fear” this poem is _____.**
 - a. Darr
 - b. Shotti
 - c. Naivedya
 - d. None of the above
3. **“Where The Mind Is Without Fear” is a pre-independent poem.**
 - a. Post independent
 - b. Independent
 - c. Pre independent
 - d. None of the above
4. **“Where The Mind Is Without Fear” published in English in _____.**
 - a. 1913-14
 - b. 1912-13
 - c. 1913-15
 - d. 1912-15
5. **Tagore was awarded a knighthood in _____.**
 - a. 1913
 - b. 1914
 - c. 1915
 - d. 1916
6. **The poem “Where the Mind is Without Fear” is the English version of a famous Bengali poem composed by Rabindranath Tagore.**
 - a. Hindi
 - b. Bengali
 - c. Tamil
 - d. None of the above
7. **_____ of poem freedom: Enjambment, Caesura, Imagery and Alliteration.**
 - a. Key words
 - b. Points
 - c. Literary Devices
 - d. Theme
8. **“The poet continues to repeat the word “freedom.” This occurs in several lines of this poem. It is a literary device known as _____.**
 - a. Metaphor

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- b. Cataphora
 - c. Semaphore
 - d. Anaphora
9. In the poems of _____, hymns to the Divine are also prayers for the people.
- a. Naivedya
 - b. Geetanjali
 - c. Heaven
 - d. Noe of the above
10. In the final line of the poem “Freedom”, the poet addresses the _____ as ‘Father’.
- a. Landlord
 - b. God
 - c. Uncle
 - d. All of the above

◆◆◆◆

UNIT

III

SAROJINI NAIDU

STRCUTURE

- 3.1 Learning Objective
- 3.2 Author Introduction
- 3.3 Song of Radha: The Milkmaid
- 3.4 Indian Weavers
- 3.5 Review Questions
- 3.6 Multiple Choice Questions



3.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVE

After completion of this unit student are able to know about famous lady at the time of independence Sarojini Naidu. In this unit there is two poems from her collection which can be helpful for students for their way of living.

3.2 AUTHOR INTRODUCTION



Sarojini Naidu was born in Hyderabad on 13 February, 1879. Her father, Aghorenath Chattopadhyay, was a Bengali Brahmin who was the principal of the Nizam's College in Hyderabad. She was educated in Madras, London and Cambridge. Following her time in England, where she worked as a suffragist, she was drawn to Indian National Congress' movement for India's independence from British rule. She became a part of the Indian nationalist movement and became a follower of Mahatma Gandhi and his idea of swaraj. She was arrested, along with other Congress leaders

including Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Madan Mohan Malaviya for participating in 1930 Salt March. Sarojini was one of the major figures to have led the Civil Disobedience Movement and the Quit India Movement. She faced repeated arrestings by the British authorities during the time and even spent over 21 months (1year 9months) in jail. She was appointed the President of the Indian National Congress in 1925 and later became the Governor of the United Provinces in 1947, becoming the first woman to hold the office of Governor in the Dominion of India.

Her work as a poet earned her the sobriquet 'the Nightingale of India', or 'Bharat Kokila' by Mahatma Gandhi because of color, imagery and lyrical quality of her poetry. Naidu's poetry includes both children's poems and others written on more serious themes including patriotism, romance, and tragedy. Published in 1912, 'In the Bazaars of Hyderabad' remains one of her most popular poems. She died of a cardiac arrest on 2 March, 1949, at the Government House in Lucknow.

3.3 SONG OF RADHA: THE MILKMAID

I carried my curds to the Mathura fair...

How softly the heifers were lowing...

I wanted to cry, "Who will buy

The curds that is white as the clouds in the sky

When the breezes of Shravan are blowing?"

But my heart was so full of your beauty, Beloved,

They laughed as I cried without knowing:

Govinda! Govinda!

Govinda! Govinda!
 How softly the river was flowing!
 I carried the pots to the Mathura tide...
 How gaily the rowers were rowing!
 My comrades called, "Ho! Let us dance, let us sing
 And wear saffron garments to welcome the spring.
 And pluck the new buds that are blowing."
 But my heart was so full of your music, Beloved,
 They mocked when I cried without knowing:
 Govinda! Govinda!
 Govinda! Govinda!
 How gaily the river was flowing!
 I carried my gifts to the Mathura shrine...
 How brightly the torches were glowing!
 I folded my hands at the altars to pray
 "O shining one's guard us by night and by day"-
 And loudly the conch shells were blowing.
 But my heart was so lost in your worship, Beloved,
 They were wroth when I cried without knowing:
 Govinda! Govinda!
 Govinda! Govinda!
 How bright the river was flowing!

Summary

Sarojini Naidu in this poem tells us about the milkmaid, Radha's love for Lord Krishna. Radha, the milkmaid carried curd to sell at the Mathura fair. She describes how softly the calf's were lowing.

The third line gives the reader a feel that nobody is buying her curd. Sarojini Naidu beautifully compares the whiteness of curd to that of the clouds in the sky. Radha seems to be least bothered that her curd is not being sold. She seems to be lost in the world of her beloved Lord Krishna. She was so immersed in the worship of her Lord that she cries 'Govinda' several times. The river Yamuna flows on softly as if appreciating her chant.

The poet describes the boatmen to be in a very happy and joyous mood and call out to their companions to come and join them in their celebration by singing and dancing along with them. The boatmen are in a joyous mood as they celebrate the advent of spring. The people welcome the spring by wearing saffron clothes and pluck the newly formed buds. The people celebrate the advent of spring as it is associated with rebirth and life. Even



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during this time Radha seems to be thinking only about her Lord and again cries out 'Govinda'. The people around her mocked and jeered at her for her love for her Lord. The river Yamuna flows on joyfully regardless.

Instead of selling her curd, she carries it to the Mathura shrine and offers them as gifts to her Lord. She describes how brightly the shrine was lit up by the torches. She folds her hands to pray to the deity, encircled by snakes, and prays for protection while the conch shells are blown. Her heart is lost to the vision of her Beloved Lord and she calls out the name involuntarily. Others become angry. But the river Yamuna flows on while her water dazzles in the light of the torches.

Explanation

I carried my curds to the Mathura fair...

How softly the heifers were lowing...

I wanted to cry, "Who will buy

The curds that is white as the clouds in the sky

When the breezes of Shravan are blowing?"

But my heart was so full of your beauty, Beloved,

They laughed as I cried without knowing:

Govinda! Govinda!

Govinda! Govinda!

How softly the river was flowing!

In the first stanza, Radha says that she once carried curd for selling in Mathura fair. It is the same place where Krishna (her beloved) was born. On the way, she sees heifers (cows) lowing i.e., mowing very softly.

She had planned to sell curd by loudly saying, "Who will buy curd which is as white as white clouds which float in the sky because of blowing of Shravan (monsoon) breezes". Note that the poet comparing the beauty of two different things – curd and clouds of monsoon. However, she could not do what she planned. According to her, her heart was filled with the thoughts of beautiful Krishna (her beloved) and she started crying "Govinda" without knowing. Govinda is the other name of Krishna. Seeing her doing this, people around her, started laughing at her.

In the last line, Radha says that the river (in which her boat was floating) was flowing very softly. Radha says so because her love for Krishna makes everything around her look beautiful.

I carried the pots to the Mathura tide...

How gaily the rowers were rowing!

My comrades called, "Ho! Let us dance, let us sing

And wear saffron garments to welcome the spring.

And pluck the new buds that are blowing.”

But my heart was so full of your music, Beloved,

They mocked when I cried without knowing:

Govinda! Govinda!

Govinda! Govinda!

How gaily the river was flowing!

In this stanza, Radha again says that she carried the pots (full of curd) to Mathura tide i.e., on the river (in the boat). The rowers (boats) rowing (floating) in a cheerful manner. The comrades (those travelling with Radha) ask her to dance, sing and wear saffron garments to welcome the spring and also pluck new buds (of flowers) which were blooming around them. However, Radha was still in the thoughts of her beloved Govinda’s melodious music and she again started crying his name repeatedly which made others mock her. However, Radha does not seem to have been bothered by them. Instead, she watches the river flowing cheerfully.

I carried my gifts to the Mathura shrine...

How brightly the torches were glowing!

I folded my hands at the altars to pray

“O shining one’s guard us by night and by day”-

And loudly the conch shells were blowing.

But my heart was so lost in your worship, Beloved,

They were wroth when I cried without knowing:

Govinda! Govinda!

Govinda! Govinda!

How bright the river was flowing!

In the final stanza, Radha says that she carried her gifts (curd) to the Mathura shrine. The torches (candles) were glowing brightly. She then folded her hands in the temple to pray for her protection as well as of her beloved Govinda.

The conch shells (🐚) were blowing loudly. However, Radha’s heart was lost in the worship of her beloved Govinda. She again started saying the name of Govinda repeatedly which angers the priests in the temple. However again, Radha did not pay attention to them and instead says that the river was flowing brightly. The poem ends.

3.4 INDIAN WEAVERS

Weavers, weaving at break of day,

Why do you weave a garment so gay?

Blue as the wing of a halcyon wild,

We weave the robes of a new-born child.

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Weavers, weaving at fall of night,
 Why do you weave a garment so bright?
 Like the plumes of a peacock purple and green,
 We weave the marriage veils of a queen.
 Weavers, weaving solemn and still,
 What do you weave in the moonlight chill?
 White as a feather and white as a cloud,
 We weave a dead man's funeral shroud.

Summary

The 'Indian Weavers' is a small lyric in three stanzas of four lines each included in the "Folk Songs" section of *The Golden Threshold*. In each stanza, a question is asked in the first two lines, and it is answered in the remaining two lines. Weaving is one of the most important of the folk vocations in India, and the weavers are important folk characters. Sarojini Naidu has skillfully retained the simplicity and lilting music of a folk song, even though the lyric has a symbolic significance and a rich texture having layers within layers within of meaning.

In twelve lines, the poetess had provided a symbolic representation of man's journey from birth to death. The weavers are the Fates of Greek mythology weaving the web of life, or the Indian Trinity-Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh the Lord of man's destiny, those who create and regenerate through Death itself. Their process of creation is an endless one like the weaving of the weavers from morning till night. The poetess observes some weavers weaving a bright beautiful cloth at the break of day, and asks them why they are weaving such a gay cloth. The weavers reply that they are weaving it for the dress of a newly born child. That is why the cloth they weave of a blue colour, as blue as the wing of a Kingfisher. The dawn of daybreak symbolises the beginning of life, the birth of new life, and blue symbolizes the depth and colour of the ocean out of which emerge the white swan and the white Lotus in the Hindu creation myths. It also into this world. the newborn into this world. The newborn child is an expression of the creatives powers and the creative joy of Brahma, the supreme. Hence it is in the fitness of things the garment woven for him should be blue in colour, gay and bright.

At nightfall the poetess Sarojini Naidu finds the weavers, weaving a cloth, bright and multi-coloured, and asks them for whom they are weaving a cloth of such variegated colours. The weavers tell her that they are weaving a cloth of purple and green colour, magnificent and colourful like the feathers of a peacock, for the bridal dress of a Queen. Purple and green are the colours of blood and sap (the green fluid in the veins of trees and plants) and so symbolic of fertility and growth.

The plumes of the peacock (a symbol of the Dionysian God, Krishna, an avatar of Vishnu) represent the many-coloured splendour of life, and its perennial rhythm, the dance of being. The colourful garments, designed to be the marriage-veils of a Queen, are for Radha, the eternal bride. "They symbolize the marriage of heaven and earth, the sacred

union of Being and Becoming. The glory, the mystery, and the joy of life are all stressed as the expression of the joy of Vishnu in his creative mood. 'Night' symbolizes Vishnu's Yoga-Nidra, rising out of which he forces chaos into order.

In the cold moonlight, the poetess finds the weavers still at work. They are now silent and their mood is serious. They are now weaving a white cloth, as white as a bird's feather or a cloud, and to the question of the poetess, they reply briefly that they are weaving it for the funeral shroud of a dead man. The chill of the moonlight night is symbolic of death and is it befitting that the shroud should be of white colour, for white is the symbol of purity, of unity and possibility. Death means a re-union with the eternal and the possibility of regeneration. Thus, in this admirable lyric, the poetess has traced human life through the three most important stages that it passes birth, marriage and death. The texture is symbolic and yet the poetess has succeeded in retaining the simplicity of the folk song. As Srinivasa Iyengar points out, "The sentiment and imagery are perfectly suited to each other, and the management of rhythm and the internal and terminal rhymes is perfect." P.E. Dustoor rightly points out, "We are made to realize (in the poem) that the web of our life is of a mingled yarn, grave and gay together."

Even C.D. Narsimhaiah, no great admirer of the poet acknowledges: "Here, in twelve lines, is an elliptical allusive, and symbolic representation of life's journey from birth to death... It is not merely a competent poem, but a very distinguished one, for the poet here is in full possession of rare gifts a profound awareness of her own tradition, admirable poise, economy and an ear and eye for striking rhythm, image and symbol, all used to find an advantage to make poem most evocative".

Analysis

The poem 'Indian Weavers' is developed in three stanzas, in which the first stanza has eight lines, with the rhyming scheme of aa, bb, cc, dd and second stanza has, four-line with the rhyming scheme of ee, ff.

Naidu portrays the Indian weavers while working. As the poem opens weavers are shown to be weaving, at the break of day, beautiful garment of blue colour for a new-born child. The weavers are weaving, in night time, an attractive garment in purple and green colour like the plumes of a peacock, for the marriage veil of a Queen. Now in the moonlight night, a weaver's attitude is changed, as they are calm and serious, weaving the cloth of white colours like feather and cloud, for the funeral function of a dead man. The present poem 'Indian Weavers' expresses a major theme of human being's life cycle in a philosophic manner. It begins with a happy or jolly tone and describes childhood with its happy days. The second stage of human life is expressed through marriage which suggests the youth as the golden time of life, enjoyable and attractive.

The last stage of human life is the old age of person which ends at death and is serious. Thus the poem expresses a universal philosophy of human life which starts from birth and ends at death. Another theme is about the life or works of weavers. It is their fate that from morning to night they have to work, though there is happiness, enjoy seriousness around. In the poem, Naidu has used various images and symbols. Naidu has used birds as an image to show different stages of a human being. As in the beginning, she describes the



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wing of a falcon bird related to the happiness of early childhood. The plumes of peacock are referred to as the joy of youth, while a feather, which is of no use when it detaches from wing of bird signifies the old age leading to death. Colour imagery is used to refer to the various emotions as the blue colour is referred to happiness, green colour is referred to joy and white colour is referred to serious mood.

The search for Indian identity is continued further in the poem. The weavers' tradition was a part of social life of India. But due to industrialization, it was losing its colour and strength. Naidu through her poetic discourse has recreated this folk tradition with great reverence. Weavers constitute the part of the Economic structure of rural India and after industrialization was launched by the British, this Indian tradition was on the verge of dying. Naidu rightly captures the spirit of this Indian tradition so it naturally manifests in her poem. Prof. C.D. Narasimhaiah (1969:22) is highly impressed by the poem, "the poet here is in full possession of rare gifts – a profound awareness of her own tradition admirable poise, economy and an ear, eye for striking rhythm, image and symbol, all used to fine advantage to make the poem most evocative."

Explanation

Weavers, weaving at break of day,

Why do you weave a garment so gay?

Blue as the wing of a halcyon wild,

We weave the robes of a new-born child.

In the first stanza, the poet asks the weavers why they are weaving clothes early in the morning which seem to be quite beautiful and charming (gay). The clothes are blue as the wing of a halcyon wild. Halcyon is the other name of the kingfisher.

The wings of the kingfisher are bright blue in colour. In addition blue colour also symbolises loyalty. The blue colour thus symbolises something beautiful and precious. Hence, in this stanza, the clothes weaved by the weavers are quite special and this is why the poet is curious to know about them.

The Indian Weavers reply, we weave the robes of a new-born child i.e., they are weaving the beautiful dress for a young one who has just come to the world. In this stanza, a number of images are used to describe the first stage of human life like break of day, garments so gay, & blue as the wing of halcyon wild. This stage is full of happiness, freshness, hope, beauty etc. There is no sorrow in the stage.

Weavers, weaving at fall of night,

Why do you weave a garment so bright?

Like the plumes of a peacock purple and green,

We weave the marriage veils of a queen.

In the second stanza, the poet again meets the Indian Weavers, this time during the fall of night. It probably refers to the evening or dusk time when the sun sets and darkness paves the way. Moreover, it is also the time during which most of the Indian marriages take place.



The poet questions the weavers why they weave a garment so bright like the plumes of a peacock, purple and green. The garment at this time is bright and full of colours like feathers of peacock unlike the one colour-blue (during the morning time).

The weavers reply that they weave the marriage-veils of a queen, thus referring to the second or in other words adult stage of the life. During this stage, humans are quite active. They love each other, get married and quest for a better and prosperous life. The colours purple and green symbolise sorrow and happiness or struggle and ease in one's adult stage and these all colours or ups and downs of life make the adulthood bright.

Weavers, weaving solemn and still,

What do you weave in the moonlight chill?

White as a feather and white as a cloud,

We weave a dead man's funeral shroud.

In the final stanza, the poet finds the weavers solemn and still i.e., they are quite sorrowful, grieved and silent. They are weaving something weird in the moonlight chill i.e., in the dead of the night which is White as a feather and white as a cloud, i.e., colourless, lifeless.

As the poet fails to figure out what it is (the cloth) and why they are sorrowful and silent, she asks them what are they weaving rather than why are they weaving. They reply that they are weaving shroud (cloth put on the dead body) for a dead person.

Thus the 3rd and the final stage is death which is emotionless and lifeless like a white cloud or feather. In this way, the life which begins with life, joy, hope etc ends with sorrow and grief.

3.5 REVIEW QUESTIONS

SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS

1. Define the term Weaving.
2. Define the term Tailoring.
3. Describe in your own words the steps or measures that can be taken to solve the problems of the weavers.
4. Pick out two words used to describe the weavers in the last stanza. Also, state their importance.
5. Discuss the various products made by the weavers in the poem.

LONG ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS

1. Define Knitting and Embroidering.
2. Narrate how devotion and love are portrayed in The Quest.
3. The diction in the poem The Quest.
4. Describe the theme of The Quest.
5. Give brief explanation of given below lines:
I carried the pots to the Mathura tide...
How gaily the rowers were rowing!



My comrades called, "Ho! Let us dance, let us sing
And wear saffron garments to welcome the spring.

3.6 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. **Sarojini Naidu was born in _____.**
 - a. Delhi
 - b. Mumbai
 - c. Kolkata
 - d. Hyderabad
2. **Sarojini Naidu was born on _____.**
 - a. 11 February, 1879
 - b. 12 February, 1879
 - c. 13 February, 1879
 - d. 14 February, 1879
3. **Sarojini Naidu was educated in _____.**
 - a. Madras
 - b. London
 - c. Cambridge
 - d. All of the above
4. **Sarojini Naidu died of a _____.**
 - a. Bullet
 - b. Cardiac arrest
 - c. Jaundice
 - d. None of the above
5. **Book 'In the Bazaars of Hyderabad' was Published in _____.**
 - a. 1912
 - b. 1913
 - c. 1914
 - d. 1915
6. **Salt March was initiated in year _____.**
 - a. 1928
 - b. 1930
 - c. 1932
 - d. 1934
7. **"Indian weavers" is developed with the rhyming scheme of _____.**
 - a. aa, bb, cc, dd
 - b. bb, cc, dd, aa
 - c. cc, dd, bb, aa
 - d. None of the above
8. **Sarojini Naidu in this poem tells us about the milkmaid, _____.**
 - a. Devotion of Radha for Krishna

- b. Krishna's love for Radha
- c. Radha's love for Lord Krishna
- d. None of the above

9. **Second stanza of poem "Indian weavers" have, four-line with the rhyming scheme of _____.**

- a. ee
- b. ff
- c. aa
- d. Both A and B

10. **In Madhura shrine Radha gifts _____.**

- a. Milk
- b. Buttermilk
- c. Butter
- d. Curd

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UNIT

IV

NISSIM EZEKIEL

STRCUTURE

- 4.1 Learning Objective
- 4.2 Author Introduction
- 4.3 Enterprise
- 4.4 Night of the Scorpion
- 4.5 Review Questions
- 4.6 Multiple Choice Questions



4.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVE

After completion of this unit, student will be able to know about the different writings and poems of one of the famous poet Nissim Ezekiel and also know about his life and his struggles.

4.2 AUTHOR INTRODUCTION



Nissim Ezekiel (1924 - 2004) was educated in Mumbai and London. Returning home, he took up teaching and retired as Professor of English at the University of Bombay. A winner of Sahitya Akademi Award, Ezekiel has edited several journals including 'Quest' and 'Imprint'. His verse collections are A Time to Change (1952), Sixty Poems (1953), The Third (1959), The Unfinished Man (1960), The Exact Name (1965), Hymns and Darkness (1976) and Latter-day Psalms (1982). He also has the title Collected plays to his credit.

He emerged as a leader, encouraging new talent in modern Indian English Poetry. A poet with a professional attitude, his poetry is chiefly introspective and self - analytical and expresses modern concerns in contemporary voice and manner. Love, sex, death, loneliness and prayer are the themes in his poetry. The distancing of emotions and ironic perception are the major features of his poetry.

The critic Vinay Lal argued in 1991 that it is not surprising that a poet like Ezekiel brought about so much literary change in India: "It is perhaps no accident either that the first blossoms of the birth and growth of modern Indian poetry in English should have come from the pen of a poet who, while very much an Indian, belongs to a community that in India was very small to begin with, and has in recent years become almost negligible, a veritable drop in the vast ocean of the Indian population."

4.3 ENTERPRISE

It started as a pilgrimage

Exalting minds and making all

The burdens light, The second stage

Explored but did not test the call.

The sun beat down to match our rage.

We stood it very well, I thought,

Observed and put down copious notes

On things, the peasants sold and bought

The way of serpents and of goats.

Three cities where a sage had taught

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But when the differences arose
 On how to cross a desert patch,
 We lost a friend whose stylish prose
 Was quite the best of all our batch.
 A shadow falls on us and grows.
 Another phase was reached when we
 Were twice attacked, and lost our way.
 A section claimed its liberty
 To leave the group. I tried to pray.
 Our leader said he smelt the sea
 We noticed nothing as we went,
 A straggling crowd of little hope,
 Ignoring what the thunder meant,
 Deprived of common needs like soap.
 Some were broken, some merely bent.
 When, finally, we reached the place,
 We hardly know why we were there.
 The trip had darkened every face,
 Our deeds were neither great nor rare.
 Home is where we have to gather grace.

Analysis of Enterprise

Stanza 1

It started as a pilgrimage

Exalting minds and making all

The burdens light, The second stage

Explored but did not test the call.

The sun beat down to match our rage.

In the first stanza, the poet says that he went on a pilgrimage along with a number of other people. All of them were quite enthusiastic so their minds were full of joy and excitement for the pilgrimage.

This excitement made the burden of troubles very light. Thus all the problems and difficulties that they were yet to face seemed to be nothing before their enthusiasm. This was the first stage of their pilgrimage.

This stage can be compared to the early youth of man in which he is quite innocent and unaware of the problems and failures of adulthood.



With this enthusiasm and vigour, they enter the second stage of their pilgrimage. The second stage of their journey was full of troubles and difficulties. The sun that symbolizes harshness of nature was burning hot.

It tried to neutralize the fire of enthusiasm that was burning in them. However, it failed to kill their burning desire. The innocence of first stage withers away in this stage.

Stanza 2

We stood it very well, I thought,

Observed and put down copious notes

On things the peasants sold and bought

The way of serpents and of goats.

Three cities where a sage had taught.

In this stanza, the poet says that he thought that they succeeded well in facing all the difficulties coming in their way. On their way, they kept themselves busy by noting down the things sold and bought by the farmers.

They also noted down the ways of snakes and goats as well as the description of the three cities where a hermit was teaching lessons. However, they didn't notice what he was teaching.

In this stanza, the poet wants to tell how people get distracted from their goal when they are on the journey of their life. They waste their energy in doing useless things.

Stanza 3

But when the differences arose

On how to cross a desert patch,

We lost a friend whose stylish prose

Was quite the best of all our batch.

A shadow falls on us and grows.

Soon the pilgrims reached a stage where differences of opinions arouse among them arguing about how to cross the challenging landscape. As a result of one of the members of the group, who wrote the most stylish prose and was intellectual, leaves the group and goes his own way.

Thus the shadow of disagreement fell onto their enterprise and continues to grow. The ego of thus people weakens the integrity of pilgrimage.

Stanza 4

Another phase was reached when we

Were twice attacked, and lost our way.

A section claimed its liberty

To leave the group. I tried to pray.

Our leader said he smelt the sea.

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Now they reach another stage of pilgrimage where they divide into groups, each attacking the other forgetting all about the aspirations that united them for pilgrimage.

As a result, they lose their way. In other words, the goal and purpose of the journey are lost. Being unsatisfied with the leader some quit the group.

Poet being helpless could not do anything and thus starts praying. The leader feels that they were near to the sea i.e. the destination was near.

Stanza 5

We noticed nothing as we went,

A straggling crowd of little hope,

Ignoring what the thunder meant,

Deprived of common needs like soap.

Some were broken, some merely bent.

However soon they become aware of the fact that it was false hope from the leader as they find nothing on their way. They were now a group of aimless and hopeless wanderers. Their noble aspirations wither away.

They could not hear the thundering of inner-self nor could they interpret what it meant. They were now without even petty things like soap.

Being totally exhausted, some of them could not walk anymore, while some bent down with pain. Thus the enthusiasm fades away and their burden is unbearable.

Stanza 6

When, finally, we reached the place,

We hardly know why we were there.

The trip had darkened every face,

Our deeds were neither great nor rare.

Home is where we have to gather grace.

In this stanza, the pilgrims exhausted, tired and frustrated finally reach their destination or goal. However, there is no joy of fulfilment on their faces. Instead, they wonder why there undertook the journey as it now seems to be meaningless and unworthy of the undertaking.

They forget their noble aspiration. Everyone is hopeless. None of them finds anything heroic in their journey as a number of other pilgrims had already achieved the goal.

For the poet, living at home with inner-satisfaction is the biggest achievement of all. Hence the journey that started with enthusiasm ends with grief, despair, regret, and hopelessness.

Summary of Enterprise

'Enterprise' by Nissim Ezekiel is an allegorical poem describing the journey of life and the poet's realization at different stages of his journey.



In 'Enterprise' the poet, Nissim Ezekiel talks about going on a pilgrimage. He is not alone in the journey. There are other pilgrims too in that group. They have set out to reach a destination that is unknown to the readers. It is not disclosed even at the end of the poem. There is a hint in the poem that the place is somewhere near the sea. The poet divides their journey into some stages. In each stage, the path they have chosen is not that smooth. They have to face some difficulties in order to reach their goal. Some members leave the group for their difference of opinion. One such person is an intellectual and prose writer.

The situation worsens when they are close to their destination. But the ending is paradoxical. Even after suffering from hardships to reach their coveted goal, they feel dejected after reaching there. At last, the poet paradoxically remarks, "Home is where we have to gather grace."

Form and Structure of Enterprise

'Enterprise' by Nissim Ezekiel has a specific structure and rhyme scheme. The poet himself is the sole speaker in the poem. So readers can say it is a lyric poem. There are specific instances where the poet uses a first-person narrative technique to describe the journey.

The poem is 30 lines long. There are a total of 6 stanzas in the poem each containing 5 lines. The rhyme scheme is ABABA and it continues throughout the poem without any break.

If we scan the poem metrically we can find another regularity in the poem. The poem is written in iambic tetrameter. In a poem composed in iambic tetrameter, contains 4 feet in each line and the stress falls on the second syllable of each foot. There is an important variation in the last line of the poem. It is justified as the poet is in a paradoxical mood at the end of the long journey. The last line is in trochaic pentameter and the last foot is catalectic. The falling rhythm at the end is significant as per the mental condition of the poet.

Literary Devices in Enterprise

The first line is an example of sarcasm. The poet says that their journey isn't an ordinary one. It was like a pilgrimage for the group. It is meant to bring a sense of humor at the same time a smell of irony in the poem. There are some other instances where the poet uses the same literary device. Such lines are, "We stood it very well, I thought", "On how to cross a desert patch" and "...I tried to pray".

In the last line of the first stanza, the sun is personified. In the second stanza, "The way of serpents and of goats" is a metaphor. "Serpents" is a metonym of mischievous persons with whom the poet met during the enterprise. In the 4th stanza, readers can find another metonymy in the word "section". Here "section" stands for the persons in the poet's group. In the line "he smelt the sea", the poet uses another metonymy. Here the sea symbolizes the sea breeze.

In the last stanza, Ezekiel invests the abstract idea "trip" with the ability to blacken their face. It is definitely a use of personification. The last two lines of the poem contain a deep meaning which seems absurd to the readers at this juncture of the poem. Here the poet uses a literary device which is called epigram in the art of rhetoric.



4.4 NIGHT OF THE SCORPION

I remember the night my mother
 was stung by a scorpion. Ten hours
 of steady rain had driven him
 to crawl beneath a sack of rice.
 Parting with his poison - flash
 of diabolic tail in the dark room -
 he risked the rain again.
 The peasants came like swarms of flies
 and buzzed the name of God a hundred times
 to paralyse the Evil One.
 With candles and with lanterns
 throwing giant scorpion shadows
 on the mud-baked walls
 they searched for him: he was not found.
 They clicked their tongues.
 With every movement that the scorpion made his poison moved in Mother's blood, they
 said.
 May he sit still, they said
 May the sins of your previous birth
 be burned away tonight, they said.
 May your suffering decrease
 the misfortunes of your next birth, they said.
 May the sum of all evil
 balanced in this unreal world
 against the sum of good
 become diminished by your pain.
 May the poison purify your flesh
 of desire, and your spirit of ambition,
 they said, and they sat around
 on the floor with my mother in the centre,
 the peace of understanding on each face.
 More candles, more lanterns, more neighbours,
 more insects, and the endless rain.

My mother twisted through and through,
 groaning on a mat.
 My father, sceptic, rationalist,
 trying every curse and blessing,
 powder, mixture, herb and hybrid.
 He even poured a little paraffin
 upon the bitten toe and put a match to it.
 I watched the flame feeding on my mother.
 I watched the holy man perform his rites to tame the poison with an incantation.
 After twenty hours
 it lost its sting.
 My mother only said
 Thank God the scorpion picked on me
 And spared my children.

Analysis

'Night of the Scorpion', written with a touch of gentle irony, is a poignant and touching poetic portrayal of a rustic situation evocative of the Indian ethos. Written in free verse, the poem has a terse ending characteristic of the style of many modern Indian poets writing in English. It is believed that this poem is an expression of his childhood experience when his own mother was stung by a scorpion. He witnessed the drama of the aftermath of the scorpion bite. The poem is just a reaction of his experience.

Theme of the poem

Ezekiel narrates how the speaker's mother is stung by a poisonous scorpion. He juxtaposes the pain and horror of the event alongside a humorous depiction of the attitudes of simple and ignorant but concerned villagers. The poem depicts the supernatural elements that are strongly believed by the villagers. We come across some irrational beliefs prevalent in the rural society like the movement of the scorpion would speed up the movement of the poison in his mother's

body. It also highlights the concern of the villagers for even a small incident like a scorpion bite in the neighborhood. It also shows the affection a mother has for her children and the pain she undergoes silently as it assures the safety of her children.

Reflection of superstition in the poem

Through the poem, he emphasizes the hold of superstition on the Indian social psyche with rare insight and sensitivity. The poem conveys the typical superstitious attitude of the Indian peasants to life through an ordinary happening in which a scorpion stings the speaker's mother and the neighbors respond impulsively. The neighbors even in the dark are equipped with candles and lanterns to locate the culprit scorpion as they want to kill it. They believe that the



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death of the scorpion would nullify the effect of the poison in the victim's body. At the same time, the villagers were continuously chanting the name of God to paralyze the scorpion. They feel that the mother is suffering because of the sins of her previous birth or is reducing the sufferings of her next birth. They also believe that her suffering will reduce the sum of evil and add to the sum of the good in this world. It is believed that the poison will purify her soul from the material desires and her spirit of its ambitions. A holy man is also summoned to perform various rites to tame the poison with his incantations. Thus the poem is a lovely picture of a typical Indian scenario of a trivial incident like a scorpion bite and its post effects.

Traditional Approach versus modern approach

The poem shows the traditions and beliefs that the villagers possess at a scorpion bite. As mentioned earlier, the poem moves around the traditional approaches of the villagers to cure the mother of the poison of a scorpion bite. They try every possible traditional remedy like holy

incantations, hunting the scorpion for killing it, prayers and so on. On the other hand, we find only one rational figure amidst the chaos around, that is, the poet's father. He is skeptic and a rational person. Rather than believing in the curses and the blessings, he feels practical efforts are more fruitful. He tried every available powder, mixture, herbs and hybrid. He performed an experiment to cure his wife of the bitter poison. He poured a little paraffin upon her bitten toe and lighted it with a match. The toe was in flames and he expected the poisoned blood to burn up thereby curing her. Somehow after several efforts, she finally was cured after twenty long painful hours. The poem keeps moving between the traditional and modern approach for curing a victim of a poisonous scorpion bite.

Indian philosophy followed by the villagers

The poem depicts many beliefs prevalent in the Indian philosophy. One of the dominant ideologies of Indian philosophy is the 'karma' theory which believes in rewards or punishments inflicted upon an individual are the result of his own 'karma' or deeds. The villagers in the poem believe that the mother was suffering due to the scorpion bite because of the sins of her past birth or maybe she was reducing her sufferings of the next birth. They also feel that her suffering will balance the sum of good against that of the sum of the evil. The Indian philosophy of purification in suffering is highlighted in the poem. The villagers say that the suffering of the victim will purify her of her material bodily desires and ambitions. It will thereby bring her soul close to that of the Almighty God.

Paraphrase of the poem

The poem is written in a typical Indian convention using Indian English and Indian culture. It shows the reactions of a typical lower middle class peasant family upon a scorpion bite. The poem highlights the superstitions and beliefs that an average Indian possesses. The poet uses flashback technique to recall the incident. He remembers the night when as a child he witnesses the entire drama of scorpion bite. We find a variety of responses by the family and the neighbors. Most of the responses are irrational but at the same time

they depict the concern and fellow - feeling amongst each other. The poem highlights the helping nature of Indians.

The poem begins with the recalling of the poet of the incident of his mother being stung by a scorpion. The night was dark and dreary accompanied by the rains. It had been raining steadily for ten long hours. It was at this time that the scorpion had crawled near the sack of rice. The poet compares the scorpion to the Devil who has a devilish or diabolic tail. The scorpion comes out of his hiding and his devilish tale flashes in the dark. He risks the rain by coming out and bites his mother. Swiftly the scorpion moves out in the rain. At the very next moment, the neighbourhood peasants gather like swarms of flies into the poet's hut. The peasants are chanting the prayers to God to relieve his mother from the torturous pain. They had a belief that by doing so they could paralyze the scorpion poison. They also attempt together to find out the evil scorpion in the dark. The peasants are holding lanterns and candles and casting their giant scorpion shadows on the sun - baked walls. Unfortunately, their efforts are in vain. They were clicking their tongues in disappointment. Actually, they believed in the superstition that if the scorpion is found and killed, it will kill the poison in the body of his mother. But since it's not found, they believe that as the scorpion is moving around alive, its poison is moving in his mother's blood.

They start praying to God that the scorpion should remain still. For his mother, the peasants say that his mother is suffering due to the sins of her previous birth and they wish that these sins get burnt with her suffering that night. Also they believe that since she is suffering in this birth that will decrease the misfortunes of her next birth. They pray that her pain should balance the sum of evil balance in this world with the sum of the good. They firmly believe that the poison will purify her body and mind from the various desires and ambitions. The peasants had seated around the mother in pain and she was lying at the centre. Their faces were serene with peace and understanding.

As the number of people visiting increased, the number of candles, lanterns, insects and rain increased in torrents. The mother was twisting on the mat with endless pain. The poet's father was skeptic and rationalist but he tried every available herb, hybrid, powders, mixtures and also curses and blessings. He experimented scientifically on the bitten toe by pouring a little paraffin and lighting it. A holy man was ushered in to perform rites and rituals to nullify the effect of the poison with his holy incantations. Trying every possible remedy, everyone was incessantly engaged in saving the life of the mother. Finally their efforts did bear fruits after twenty hours and the effect of the poison disappeared. When the mother was back to life, she didn't curse or regret the disastrous scorpion - bite. Instead she thanked God for spacing her children from the deadly pain for she felt she could tolerate any pain to rescue her children from it. This shows the universal loving and caring nature of a mother towards her children.

In short, the poem depicts the Indian temperament in its lively tone. The use of present tense highlights the typical Indian manner of narration. The poem is a truthful representation of India in its true colors.





4.5 REVIEW QUESTIONS

SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS

1. How has Nissim Ezekiel used a “journey” as a metaphor for life?
2. What was the first phase of the journey?
3. Where was the scorpion hiding before he stung the mother?
4. Why is the scorpion’s tail called ‘diabolic’?
5. Why are the peasants buzzing the name of the God?

LONG ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS

1. On the basis of your reading of the poem evaluate the poet’s attitude towards life?
2. Bring out the theme of the poem “Enterprise”
3. Explore the implications of the central metaphor of “the journey” for life?
4. How did the villagers come to the aid of the woman?
5. How did the peasants view the stinging in a positive manner?

4.6 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. The mother was stung by a _____.
 - a. Scorpion
 - b. Bee
 - c. Crab
 - d. Black ant
2. The mother was stung on the
 - a. Foot
 - b. Ankle
 - c. Toe
 - d. Calf
3. How long had it been raining?
 - a. 5 Hours
 - b. 10 Hours
 - c. 15 Hours
 - d. 25 Hours
4. Where did the scorpion hide to escape the rain?
 - a. Behind the sack
 - b. Beneath the sack
 - c. Behind the trunk
 - d. Beneath the trunk
5. The peasants buzzed the name of God _____.
 - a. To kill the scorpion
 - b. To drive away the scorpion

- c. To paralyze the scorpion
d. To catch the scorpion
6. **The poem, “Enterprise” is _____ poem.**
a. Love
b. War
c. Allegorical
d. Nature
7. **In the poem, “Enterprise” a group of men set on a _____.**
a. Mission
b. War
c. Voyage
d. Pilgrimage
8. **In the beginning of the journey in the poem, “Enterprise”, the mind of the travellers is _____.**
a. Exalted
b. Sad
c. Nervous
d. Fresh
9. **Differences arise among the pilgrims in “Enterprise” on _____.**
a. How to cross a river
b. How to cross a lake
c. How to climb a hill
d. How to cross a piece of desert
10. **The travellers in the poem “Enterprise” lose a friend who is very skilful in_____.**
a. Writing poetry
b. Writing prose
c. Oratory
d. Cooking

◆◆◆◆

NOTES



UNIT

V

KAMLA DAS

STRUCTURE

- 5.1 Learning Objective
- 5.2 Author Introduction
- 5.3 An Introduction
- 5.4 My Grandmother's House
- 5.5 Review Questions
- 5.6 Multiple Choice Questions

5.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVE

After completion of this unit, student will be able to:

- Know about kamala das's life.
- Know about her writings and poems.
- Understand the depth of her poems.

5.2 AUTHOR INTRODUCTION

Kamala Das, Malayalam pen name Madhavikutty, Muslim name Kamala Surayya, (born March 31, 1934, Thrissur, Malabar Coast [now in Kerala], British India—died May 31, 2009, Pune, India), Indian author who wrote openly and frankly about female sexual desire and the experience of being an Indian woman. Das was part of a generation of Indian writers whose work centred on personal rather than colonial experiences, and her short stories, poetry, memoirs, and essays brought her respect and notoriety in equal measures. Das wrote both in English (mostly poetry) and, under the pen name Madhavikutty, in the Malayalam language of southern India.



Das was born into a high-status family. Her mother, Nalapat Balamani Amma, was a well-known poet, and her father, V.M. Nair, was an automobile company executive and a journalist. She grew up in what is now Kerala and in Calcutta (now Kolkata), where her father worked. She began writing poetry when she was a child. When she was 15 years old, she married Madhava Das, a banking executive many years her senior, and they moved to Bombay (now Mumbai). Das had three sons and did her writing at night.

Das's poetry collections included *Summer in Calcutta* (1965), *The Descendants* (1967), and *The Old Playhouse, and Other Poems* (1973). Subsequent English-language works included the novel *Alphabet of Lust* (1976) and the short stories "A Doll for the Child Prostitute" (1977) and "Padmavati the Harlot" (1992). Notable among her many Malayalam works were the short-story collection *Thanuppu* (1967; "Cold") and the memoir *Balyakalasmarnakal* (1987; "Memories of Childhood"). Perhaps her best-known work was an autobiography, which first appeared as a series of columns in the weekly *Malayalanadu*, then in Malayalam as *Ente Katha* (1973), and finally in English as *My Story* (1976). A shockingly intimate work, it came to be regarded as a classic. In later life Das said that parts of the book were fictional. In 1999 she controversially converted to Islam, renaming herself Kamala Surayya. She received many literary awards, including the Asian World Prize for Literature in 1985.

5.3 AN INTRODUCTION

I don't know politics but I know the names

Of those in power, and can repeat them like

Days of week, or names of months, beginning with Nehru.

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I am Indian, very brown, born in Malabar,
 I speak three languages, write in
 Two, dream in one.
 Don't write in English, they said, English is
 Not your mother-tongue. Why not leave
 Me alone, critics, friends, visiting cousins,
 Every one of you? Why not let me speak in
 Any language I like? The language I speak,
 Becomes mine, its distortions, its queernesses
 All mine, mine alone.
 It is half English, half Indian, funny perhaps, but it is honest,
 It is as human as I am human, don't
 You see? It voices my joys, my longings, my
 Hopes, and it is useful to me as cawing
 Is to crows or roaring to the lions, it
 Is human speech, the speech of the mind that is
 Here and not there, a mind that sees and hears and
 Is aware. Not the deaf, blind speech
 Of trees in storm or of monsoon clouds or of rain or the
 Incoherent mutterings of the blazing
 Funeral pyre. I was child, and later they
 Told me I grew, for I became tall, my limbs
 Swelled and one or two places sprouted hair.
 When I asked for love, not knowing what else to ask
 For, he drew a youth of sixteen into the
 Bedroom and closed the door, He did not beat me
 But my sad woman-body felt so beaten.
 The weight of my breasts and womb crushed me.
 I shrank Pitifully.
 Then ... I wore a shirt and my
 Brother's trousers, cut my hair short and ignored
 My womanliness. Dress in sarees, be girl
 Be wife, they said. Be embroiderer, be cook,
 Be a quarreller with servants. Fit in. Oh,



Belong, cried the categorizers. Don't sit
 On walls or peep in through our lace-draped windows.
 Be Amy, or be Kamala. Or, better
 Still, be Madhavikutty. It is time to
 Choose a name, a role. Don't play pretending games.
 Don't play at schizophrenia or be a
 Nympho. Don't cry embarrassingly loud when
 Jilted in love ... I met a man, loved him. Call
 Him not by any name, he is every man
 Who wants. a woman, just as I am every
 Woman who seeks love. In him . . . the hungry haste
 Of rivers, in me . . . the oceans' tireless
 Waiting. Who are you, I ask each and everyone,
 The answer is, it is I. Anywhere and,
 Everywhere, I see the one who calls himself I
 In this world, he is tightly packed like the
 Sword in its sheath. It is I who drink lonely
 Drinks at twelve, midnight, in hotels of strange towns,
 It is I who laugh, it is I who make love
 And then, feel shame, it is I who lie dying
 With a rattle in my throat. I am sinner,
 I am saint. I am the beloved and the
 Betrayed. I have no joys that are not yours, no
 Aches which are not yours. I too call myself I.

Summary

'An Introduction' by Kamala Das describes the poet's own mental and emotional state as she aged and pushed back against patriarchal society.

'An Introduction' begins with the speaker, Das, stating that she knows all the male leaders of India. Their names are a part of her, a tribute to their overwhelming power. This contrasts significantly with the lack of power she felt growing up and getting married at sixteen. She struggles with her identity and is finally able to step away from the traditional role of wife.

Das describes the way that men are able to move through the world with a solid identity. They are allowed their choices and emotions. In the last lines, she pushes back against this way of life by stating that she feels things that do not belong to the man she loves. She too can be "I."



Themes

Das explores powerful themes of feminism/equal rights, freedom, and marriage in 'An Introduction'. This poem is a very clear feminist statement that advocates for free choice for all women. This is in regards to every aspect of life, but the poet puts a special emphasis on marriage. She compares and contrasts the roles of men and women in society and explains for the reader how her life, the rules she's forced to obey, infringe on her freedom. Readers should be able to ask themselves while moving through the poem how, if at all, the things Das is talking about apply to their own life. If nothing matches up, they might ask themselves why and if some kind of unaddressed or unacknowledged privilege is making their lives better.

Structure and Form

'An Introduction' is a sixty-line poem that is contained within a single stanza. The lines range from three words up to eleven and do not follow a specific metrical pattern. Das also chose not to use a rhyme scheme. The lines also vary greatly in length and syllable number. This means that the poem is written in free verse. This style of writing allows the poet to explore various structures and make use of more sporadic rhymes. There are several examples of half-rhyme and internal rhyme in 'An Introduction'.

Literary Devices

Kamala Das uses techniques such as enjambment, repetition, and anaphora in 'An Introduction'. Repetition and anaphora are seen at the beginning of a number of lines, such as four and five. In this instance, the speaker is giving two conviction-filled statements about who she is. This is conveyed through the repetition of the pronoun "I". Later on, repetition is used again to define her language as both "English" and "Human". She is a human being, as equal and valuable as any other.

There are also several examples of allusion. She references specific a specific place and the name of a politician that requires some research in order to understand. Enjambment is another important technique. it can be seen throughout this poem, but one good example is the transition between lines fifty-eight and fifty-nine.

Analysis of An Introduction

Lines 1-13

I don't know politics but I know the names

Of those in power, and can repeat them like

(...)

Becomes mine, its distortions, its queernesses

All mine, mine alone.

In the first section of 'An Introduction,' the speaker begins by comparing her knowledge of politicians to the days of the week and months of the year. Although she does not have a firm grasp on politics itself, those in power have remained in her mind. This shows their power to be much greater than their role should allow. The first of these she is able to



recall is “Nehru,” who served as India’s first prime minister after the withdrawal of the British.

After these opening lines that set the scene, the speaker moves on to describe her own being. She is “Indian” and she is “very brown.” Lastly, she is from Malabar in southwest India. These are the basics of her life, but of course not everything. She adds that she is able to,

[...] speak three languages, write in

Two, dream in one.

She continues to describe language and the role it plays in her life by saying that she is judged for writing in English. It is not her “mother-tongue.” Whenever she is criticized for how she speaks and writes she feels as if she is alone. There is no one, not her friends or cousins, who back her up. They are critics “Everyone.”

She directs the next line at this group, asking them why they care what she speaks. She feels a deep connection to the words she uses and how, through “distortions,” her language can only be defined as her own.

Lines 13-25

It is half English, half Indian, funny perhaps, but it is honest,

It is as human as I am human, don’t

(...)

Funeral pyre. I was child, and later they

Told me I grew, for I became tall, my limbs

In the next twelve lines of ‘An Introduction,’ the speaker goes on to describe herself as “half English, half Indian.” She sees the humor in this combination and acknowledges that fact as it is “honest.” This seems to be one of the most important parts of her, a desire for authenticity and honesty. Her identity, as seen through her voice, is “human” just as she is human. It should be held under that single defining category and no other.

Das describes the control she has over her voice, whether through speech or text. It can display all of her emotions and her,

[...] mind that sees and hears and

Is aware.

Human speech is to humans as roaring is to lions. It is intelligible, unlike the roaring of a storm or the “mutterings of the blazing fire.” The speaker defines her freedom through the use of her voice. In the next lines, she explains to the reader that there are other circumstances in her life that infringe on that freedom. They are out of her control.

She introduces this section by stating that she only felt older as she grew because she was told of her own physical changes.

Lines 26-38

Swelled and one or two places sprouted hair.



When I asked for love, not knowing what else to ask

(...)

Be a quarreller with servants. Fit in. Oh,

Belong, cried the categorizers. Don't sit

Her unhappiness is defined in the next section of lines of 'An Introduction' and is directly related to a need for freedom. When she was young, she "asked for love," because she didn't know what else to want. This ended with her marriage at sixteen and the closing of a bedroom door. Although her husband did not beat her, her,

[...] sad woman-body felt so beaten.

This line of An Introduction is interesting as she is placing her own body in one of the categories, she rebelled against in the first stanza. It is due to this simplification of a woman as nothing more than a body that led her to marriage at sixteen. She also places blame on her own body for leading her to this place. Her distinctly female parts, "breasts and womb" are a crushing weight on her life. The pressure placed on her by her husband and by her family led to an emotional and mental shrinking. It was a "Pitiful" process. But it ended.

She goes on to state that a change came over her. She decided to put on her "Brother's trousers" and cut off her hair. The speaker is ridding herself of the female image that has harmed her. Now that she is remaking her identity, she is able to say no to the traditions of womanhood. These include fitting in and dressing in "saris." The "categorizers" might tell her not to,

[...] peep in through our lace-draped windows

But she is not going to listen. She chose to move her life beyond the traditional and therefore expand her presence in the world.

Lines 39-50

On walls or peep in through our lace-draped windows.

Be Amy, or be Kamala. Or, better

(...)

Of rivers, in me . . . the oceans' tireless

Waiting. Who are you, I ask each and every one,

In the first two lines of the next section of 'An Introduction,' it becomes clear that the speaker is truly meant to be the poet herself. She wonders at her own identity and marvels over the fact that she can now be,

Amy, or be Kamala. Or, better

Still, be Madhavikutty.

It is by this final name that the poet, Kamala Das, came to be known and is still called. Das added another few reminders on behalf of the "categorizers." She shouldn't "play pretending games" or "cry embarrassingly loud." Her role as a woman is supposed to be meek, quiet, and contained.



She goes on to describe a time in which she met and loved a man. This person is referred to as “man,” he is not named. This strips him of some of the agency he is so in control of in the next lines. Additionally, the name is of little importance as he is meant to represent every man in the world who uses women as he pleases.

At one point, at the height of her emotions, she asks the “man” who he is. He replies “it is I.” The “I” represents the agency he has in the world. Men make their own decisions and have the ability to use the pronoun in order to get what they want.

Lines 51-61

The answer is, it is I. Anywhere and,

Everywhere, I see the one who calls himself I

(...)

Betrayed. I have no joys that are not yours, no

Aches which are not yours. I too call myself I.

‘An Introduction’ begins its conclusion with the speaker acknowledging the constant presence of “I” around her. In the world, she’s a part of there are “I” men everywhere she looks. A person of this nature is able to go and “Drink... at twelve” and stay in “hotels of strange towns.” As the lines continue the division between the speaker and the “I” is blurred. Eventually, a reader comes to understand that she is trying to come to terms with her own independence and identity as both “saint” and “sinner.”

She is trapped between her own need for free life and the world which tries to keep her contained. The final statement is one of protest and resistance. Das states that she has “Aches” which belong to no one but herself. She too can be “I.”

5.4 MY GRANDMOTHER’S HOUSE

There is a house now far away where once
 I received love..... That woman died,
 The house withdrew into silence, snakes moved
 Among books, I was then too young
 To read, and my blood turned cold like the moon
 How often I think of going
 There, to peer through blind eyes of windows or
 Just listen to the frozen air,
 Or in wild despair, pick an armful of
 Darkness to bring it here to lie
 Behind my bedroom door like a brooding
 Dog...you cannot believe, darling,
 Can you, that I lived in such a house and

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Was proud, and loved.... I who have lost
 My way and beg now at strangers' doors to
 Receive love, at least in small change?

About poem

The poem, 'My Grandmother's House', first appeared in Kamala Das's first anthology of verse titled *Summer Time in Calcutta* (1965). It is also an autobiographical poem in which the poet's longing for her parental house in Malabar is movingly described. She is reminded of the ancestral house where she had received immense love and affection from her grandmother.

The poet's feminine sensibility finds its clearest loveless relationships in it. A note of pessimism runs throughout the action of the poem. It reveals the poet's painful unfulfilled desire to visit her grandmother's house to which she is deeply and emotionally attached. The poet is shocked to learn that the house is all in ruin after the death of her grandmother. She suffers in silence due to the wear and tear it has undergone in her absence. A death-like silence reigns in her grandmother's house.

Moreover, the intensity of her grief is suggestively conveyed by the ellipsis in the form of a few dots in this section of the poem. It was her disenchantment with her loveless marriage that reminded her of her grandmother's pure and selfless love. Her heart is itself like a dark window where the fresh air does not blow. The image of the house has stuck to her mind. The poet has also used the similes of a brooding dog to show her inability to pay a visit to her grandmother's house. She has also used suggestive visual imagery of 'blind eyes of the windows' and 'the frozen air' to convey the idea of death and desperation.

My Grandmother's House Analysis

Lines 1-5

There is a house now far away where once

(...)

To read, and my blood turned cold like the moon

The poem, 'My Grandmother's House', which can be read in full here, shows Kamala Das's intense love and attachment to it. She suffers from an acute sense of alienation after having left this place after her marriage.

The poet now lives in a big city after her marriage, a remote place from her grandmother's house. She is reminded of her grandmother's house where she spent her memorable childhood. Ironically, it is the only place where she received love from her grandmother. The death of the grandmother is even mourned by the house to which she was emotionally attached. A death-like silence reigned in the house after her exit from this world. It seems that the grandmother was the very soul of this house. Being deserted, the snakes could be seen among books in the library of the house. At that point in time, she was too young to read those books which looked quite horrible and repulsive like snakes. She was almost frozen with fear at the passing away of her grandmother and seemed cold like the moon.

The very opening lines of the poem capture alive the poet's mood of nostalgia. She is reminded of the happiest days of her childhood which she spent in the company of her grandmother. She was deeply attached to her grandmother who was very caring and affectionate to her. She was emotionally destabilized after the death of her grandmother and felt almost heart-broken. The intensity of her grief is suggestively conveyed by the ellipse in the form of a few dots in this section of the poem. It was her disenchantment with her loveless marriage that reminded her of her grandmother's pure and selfless love.

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Lines 6-12

How often I think of going

(...)

Dog...

In the above lines of the poem, 'My Grandmother's House', the poet defines her relationship with her grandmother in a very moving manner. Kamala Das is reminded of the happiest days of her childhood which spent with her grandmother. The poet was deeply attached to her grandmother who was very caring and affectionate to her. She was emotionally shattered after the death of her grandmother who had been the chief source of inspiration in her life.

The poet often longs to visit her grandmother's house to which she was emotionally attached since her childhood. It has been a place of security and protection which is sadly missing in her new house in the city. She would like to peep through the dust-ridden or coloured panes of windows that were shut after the death of the grandmother. She would like to listen and feel the still atmosphere prevailing in the house. It is this longing to revisit her grandmother's house that adds to her sense of frustration and hopelessness. The darkness of her grandmother's house can have no terrifying impact on her. She would like to gather some darkness, some memories of the grandmother's house and bring them to her present city residence. The very memories of her grandmother's house will have a soothing impact on her loveless and hopeless married life.

The poet is in a mood of reminiscence and recreates the plight of the grandmother's house after her departure from the scene of life. She gives us the very feel of the house in its state of neglect and desertion. The poet has used the simile of a brooding dog to show her inability to pay a visit to her grandmother's house. She has employed suggestive visual imagery of 'blind eyes of the windows' and 'the frozen air to convey the idea of death and desperation.

Lines 12-16

you cannot believe, darling,

(...)

Receive love, at least in small change?

In these lines of 'My Grandmother's House', the poet says how her frustration and disenchantment in the marital life forced her to go into for an extra-marital relationship. The poet often longs to visit her grandmother's house to which she was emotionally

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attached since her childhood. Unlike her miserable city life with her husband, it had been a place of security and genuine love for her.

Here the poet informs her dear husband that he can never believe the intensity of love that she received from her grandmother. He can never realize that she was extremely proud of her grandmother's house where she was deeply loved by her grandmother. It is her separation from her grandmother's house after marriage that has ruined her life forever. It is loveless and hopeless married life that has crippled her sense of pride and love which she used to have in her grandmother's house. She has become a beggar for love who knocks helplessly at strangers' doors to receive at least in a small measure. She has almost lost her way in search of genuine and selfless love.

Kamala Das exposes the futility of loveless and hopeless marital relationships in these five concluding lines of the poem. It shows the agony and humiliation of a married woman who is forced to seek extra-marital relationships to seek love for her emotional satisfaction. It is the mood of nostalgia that dominates the closing phase of the poem. The poet is reminded of her grandmother's house where she received love and safety in her childhood. She has lost all her identity and freedom in her loveless relationship.

Summary of 'The Grandmother's House'

Kamala Das provides us detailed information regarding the genesis of this poem in Chapter 33 of her Autobiography, *My Story*. She writes:

"After the sudden death of my grand – uncle and then that of my dear grandmother the old Nalpat House was locked up and its servants disbanded. The windows were shut, gently as eyes of the dead are shut.

My parents took my great grandmother to the house called Sarvodaya where she occupied noiselessly the eastern bedroom on the ground floor, shaded by the tall mango trees through the leaves of which was visible the beloved house. The rats ran across its darkened halls and the white ants raised on its outer walls strange totems of burial."

The grandmother has been a source of affection and inspiration to the poetess but her death has rendered her sorrow – stricken and desolate. The house looks totally deserted, now inhabited by snakes and rats. Kamala feels lonely and depressed. During one of her illnesses – during her nervous breakdown in the noisy city of Bombay – she had taken shelter in Malabar and nursed back to perfect health by her anxious grandmother, but, alas, she is now no more alive. The expression 'blind eyes of windows' and 'the frozen air' reinforce the idea of death and desperation.

The grandmother's house is associated with an impenetrable sense of security and protection, which is now missing in her married life. Even the 'darkness' of the grandmother's house was secure for her instead of terror or violence. Kamala Das rather wants that darkness to be lifted bodily and shifted to her new married home flooded with light (but with no security). She expresses this feeling of hers through an evocative image:

"Pick an armful of

Darkness to bring it here to lie

Behind n\my bedroom door like a brooding

Dog ...”

A ‘dog’ is a trusted companion keeping an unerring eye on the door to scare away the strangers and the enemies and to safeguard the inmates with all main and might.

The last few lines are addressed to the ‘darling’, i.e. her husband.

Kamala Das tells him that:

“I lived in such a house and

Was proud, and loved ...”

How nostalgic and pathetic these lines are! The sense of pride and love she once had in the house of her grandmother is now no more her property, since she has become a beggar for love who knocks helplessly at strangers’ doors to receive it at least in a small measure. She has lost her way in quest of true love. This situation is in utter contrast to her previous life lived in the soothing company of her grandmother. Kamala Das tells us that she has often remembered her with a sense of nostalgia and beggarliness. That her present life is sans love, sans pride, is emphatically conveyed by her begging for love at ‘strangers’ doors. There can possibly be no worse pathetic situation for a married woman than this.

Desire

The poet expresses her desire to go to her grandmother’s house because she is emotionally attached to it since her childhood. She wants to look through the “blind eyes of windows” of her grandmother’s house. The term “blind eyes of windows” means that there is no one (in other words, her grandmother) in the house to look for. She also desires to listen to “the frozen air” of that house. “Frozen Air” probably means that that the house is locked and the fresh air has not moved in.

In my views, the poet desires to move into her thoughts which are buried deep inside her heart and no air has blown into it. Thus, the grandmother’s house here is rather a sweet memory that she wants to recall. The poet further says that she wants to bring the darkness of her grandmother’s house with her “in wild despair” i.e., in her troubled life. The line makes it clear that her grandmother was very protective. And now that she feels insecure, even the darkness of her grandmother’s house, which is though unpleasant like cold moon comforts her.

Begging for Love

In the final lines, the poet is in conversation probably with her husband or her readers. The poet says that one won’t believe that she had some of the best memories of her grandmother’s house and she is quite proud of it. Now that she has lost her grandmother, she begs at strangers’ doors for love. She knows well that you won’t be able to get that much love but she still hopes for at least a part of it. Hence the poet ends with hope and despair. In her poem, My Mother at Sixty-Six the poet is struggling with similar feelings. Please refer to this doc for further reading. Here are some important questions and answers to this poem.

NOTES





5.5 REVIEW QUESTIONS

SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the theme of isolation and womanhood that Kamala Das expresses in the poem “An Introduction”.
2. Discuss the poetic style of Kamala Das as reflected in the poem “An Introduction”.
3. How does Kamala Das criticize the male in her society in the poem?
4. What happened to the house after the grandmother died?
5. Why was the poet not able to read the books?

LONG ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS

1. What is the significance of the title of the poem “An Introduction” by Kamala Das?
2. Analyse Kamala Das’s “An Introduction” as a confessional poem.
3. Write a critical note on Kamala Das’s craving against patriarchy in the poem “An Introduction”.
4. Find out the autobiographical elements in the poem “An Introduction.”
5. The poet thinks of her past. How is her present different from the past?

5.6 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. **My Grandmother’s House** has been composed by _____.
 - a. Kamala das
 - b. John Donne
 - c. John Keats
 - d. D.H. Lawrence
2. **Summer in Kolkata** is a collection of poems by _____.
 - a. Kamala das
 - b. Keki N. Daruwalla
 - c. D.H. Lawrence
 - d. John Keats
3. **Kamala Das** was born in _____.
 - a. 1933
 - b. 1934
 - c. 1935
 - d. 1936
4. **Which figure of speech** has been used in “My Grandmother’s House”?
 - a. Metaphor
 - b. Personification
 - c. Epic simile
 - d. Simile

5. **The speaker of “My Grandmother’s House” is proud of _____.**
- Her parent’s house
 - Her grandmother’s house
 - Here uncle’s house
 - None of these
6. **Kamala Das, _____ pen name Madhavikutty.**
- Pet
 - Bengali
 - Malayalam
 - None of the above
7. **_____ name of kamala das is Kamala Surayya.**
- Muslim
 - Bengali
 - Malayalam
 - None of the above
8. **The Descendants was published in year _____.**
- 1968
 - 1966
 - 1967
 - 1675
9. **Kamala das received the Asian World Prize for Literature in _____.**
- 1999
 - 1988
 - 1987
 - 1985
10. **In _____ kamala das controversially converted to Islam.**
- 1998
 - 1999
 - 1993
 - 1990

♦♦♦♦

NOTES



ANSWER KEY

UNIT I

QUES.	ANSWERS	QUES.	ANSWERS
1.	a.	6.	a.
2.	b.	7.	c.
3.	d.	8.	a.
4.	c.	9.	b.
5.	d.	10.	d.

UNIT II

QUES.	ANSWERS	QUES.	ANSWERS
1.	b.	6.	b.
2.	c.	7.	c.
3.	c.	8.	d.
4.	b.	9.	a.
5.	c.	10.	b.

UNIT III

QUES.	ANSWERS	QUES.	ANSWERS
1.	d.	6.	c.
2.	c.	7.	a.
3.	d.	8.	c.
4.	a.	9.	d.
5.	b.	10.	d.

UNIT IV

QUES.	ANSWERS	QUES.	ANSWERS
1.	a.	6.	c.
2.	c.	7.	d.
3.	b.	8.	a.
4.	b.	9.	d.
5.	c.	10.	a.

UNIT V

QUES.	ANSWERS	QUES.	ANSWERS
1.	a.	6.	c.
2.	a.	7.	a.
3.	b.	8.	c.
4.	d.	9.	d.
5.	b.	10.	b.

Suggestive Reading

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