

The voice of the rain

-Walt Whitman

Summary of the poem

In this poem, the poet asks the soft falling raindrops that who she is. It is strange that the rain answers, calling itself the poem of the Earth. The rain says that she cannot be touched and rises up in the form of vapor out of the land and deep sea and floats up to heaven, where it changes its form and becomes a cloud but its core existence remains the same. Then it falls back to the surface of the Earth to refresh (wash) the drought-filled land. The seeds which are dormant under the soil, grow (germinate) with its help. The Earth becomes vital and beautiful because it always gives new life to the Earth when it returns to its origin (mother Earth). It makes the Earth clean and green. The poet says that the rain returns to its birth place (the Earth) making complete its cycle. It does not care whether anybody pays heed or not, rain continuously does her own work.

Poetic Devices Used in the Poem

Personification: Although rain is non living thing yet the poet treats it like living thing. So the rain has been personified as it has been given a voice in the rain.

We see the **metaphor** in the line 'I am the poem of the Earth'

We see hyperbole in the line 'Bottomless sea'.

Imagery In the first line of the poem, 'Soft falling Shower' gives the reader an image of gentle rain.

Question and Answers

Q.1. There are two voices in the poem. Who do they belong to? Which lines indicate this?

Ans. The poem begins in a conversational tone. The two voices in the poem are the voice of the poet and the voice of the rain. The lines that indicate the voice of the poet and the rain are, "And who art thou? Said I to the soft-falling shower," and the lines that indicate the voice of the rain are, "I am the Poem of Earth, said the voice of the rain".

Q.2. What does the phrase "strange to tell" mean?

Ans. The phrase "strange to tell" means that it is quite strange for the poet to believe and express in words that the soft-falling rain replied to his question. At the beginning of the poem, the poet inquires the rain about its identity, to which the rain replies that it is the 'Poem of Earth'.

Q.3. There is a parallel drawn between rain and music. Which words indicate this? Explain the similarity between the two.

Ans. The lines, “I am the Poem of Earth”, said by the voice of the rain, reflects a connection between rain and poet. This connection becomes more easily visible in the final two lines,

“(For song, issuing from its birth-place, after fulfillment, wandering
Reck'd or unreck'd, duly with love returns)”.

In these lines, the poet draws similarities between rain and music observing that the life-cycle of rain and song are alike. The song issues from the heart of the poet and travels to reach others. It wanders and, whether heard and enjoyed or not, eventually returns to its creator with all due love. Similarly, rain originates from the earth, and after fulfilling its role of spreading beauty and purity, returns to its origin. Both are perpetual in nature. Moreover, the sound of the soft-falling rain is in itself a kind of music.

Q.4. How is the cyclic movement of rain brought out in the poem? Compare it with what you have learnt in science.

Ans. In the poem, the water rises from the 'land and the bottomless sea' to reach the sky. There, it transforms itself into vague formation of clouds, different in their structure than the water from which they originate. After wandering, these clouds descend to the earth in the form of rain to provide relief to the drought-ridden areas and infuse life into the unborn and latent seeds. The rain renders the earth with beauty and purity.

In science, we learn the cyclical process of rain in terms like evaporation, condensation, precipitation, flowing rivers, ground water and ocean water etc, while in the poem the same process becomes interesting and unusual. The rain speaks itself to describe its course.

Q.5. Why are the last two lines put within brackets?

Ans. The lines in the bracket indicate the reflections, observations and thoughts of the poet. He makes observations about the life-course of a song and draws similarities between the life-cycle of a song and rain.

Q.6. List the pair of opposites found in the poem.

Ans. 6. (a) Day, night

(b) Reck'd, unreck'd

(c) Rise, descend

Important meanings

Thou – you

Soft-falling – dropping gently

Shower – raindrops when they fall continuously on Earth

Eternal – everlasting

Impalpable – unable to be felt by touching

Bottomless – very deep

Upward – towards a higher level

Whence – from where

Vaguely – unclearly

Form'd- made into a specific shape or form

Descend – move or fall downwards

Lave – wash

Drougths – dry spells

Atomies – very tiny particles

Latent - dormant, inactive

Origin - source

Beautify - make beautiful

Issuing - originating/starting

Fulfillment - completing the cycle

Wandering - moving from one place to another

Reck'd - cared about

Unreck'd - uncared for

Duly - properly, rightly

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