

THE VOICE OF THE RAIN

Walt Whitman

Main Theme

The poem is in the form of a conversation between the poet and the 'rain'. The poet asks the rain 'who are you?'. To this question, the rain replies that it is the poem of the earth, it rises continuously in the form of vapour and returns back to earth in the form of rains. It says that it purifies earth and also gives life to it. It returns back to earth exactly like a song, which finally return to its singer in the form of appreciation after it is heard everywhere round the globe.

Extract wise word meanings and explanation**Extract-1**

And who art thou? said I to the soft-falling shower,
Which, strange to tell, gave me an answer, as here translated:
I am the Poem of Earth, said the voice of the rain,
Eternal I rise impalpable out of the land and the
bottomless sea,

Words / expressions with their meanings–

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| 1. <i>who art thou?</i> | <i>Who are you?</i> |
| 2. eternal | never-ending / immortal / continuous |
| 3. impalpable | something that cannot be touched or understood |

Explanation –

In the above given lines, the poet asks a question to the soft-falling rain 'Who are you?' (*assuming the rain as a person*). The answer, which the rain gives, is strange to express but it is still translated or explained here.

The rain replied 'I am the poem of the earth. I rise continuously from the land and from the bottomless oceans in the form of vapour, which cannot be touched by anyone (*inferring that the vapour form the rain cannot be touched, seen and understood by anyone*).

Questions

- Q.1** Who is 'I' in first line?
Q.2 Explain the poetic device used in the phrase 'Poem of earth'
Q.3 How does the rain take its birth?
Q.4 Explain: 'I rise impalpable'

Extract-2

Upward to heaven, whence, vaguely form'd, altogether
changed, and yet the same,
I descend to lave the droughts, atomies, dust-layers of
the globe,
And all that in them without me were seeds only, latent,
unborn;

Words / expressions with their meanings–

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| 1. whence | where |
| 2. <i>vaguely form'd</i> | <i>not properly formed / not clearly made</i> |
| 3. <i>I descend</i> | <i>I come down</i> |
| 4. <i>to lave</i> | <i>to wash</i> |

- | | |
|-------------|---------------------------------|
| 5. droughts | dry situations |
| 6. atomies | small particles |
| 7. latent | hidden / present but not active |

Explanation–

The rain says that in the form of vapour it keeps rising up towards the sky, where it changes its form i.e. it condenses into tiny water droplets but is not clearly formed. The rain says that though its form gets changed but it is still the same (*the vapour in the sky gets converted into water which falls on earth in the form of tiny water droplets*). It says that it falls down on earth to provide water and greenery to the dry areas. It washes away small particles and dust from the surface of earth. The rain gives life to the seeds, which are hidden under the layers of earth. The seeds grow up to become plants only because of the rain and in this way it gives life to earth.

Questions

- Q.1** Who is ‘I’? What does ‘I’ do on descending?
Q.2 Explain the contrast ‘altogether changed and yet the same’.
Q.3 Explain the meaning of the last line.

Extract-3

And forever, by day and night, I give back life to my
 own origin,
 And make pure and beautify it;
 (For song, issuing from its birth-place, after fulfilment,
 wandering
 Reck’d or unreck’d, duly with love returns)

Words / expressions with their meanings–

1. *Reck’d or unreck’d* *ruined or not ruined (here)*

Explanation–

The rain says that throughout day and night, it keeps rising in the form of vapour and provides life, enrichment and greenery to the place from where it originated i.e. earth, the rain’s birth-place. By soaking the earth and again preparing a fresh life cycle for itself, rain keeps on enhancing the beauty and purity of the earth forever.

(The ‘rain’ is like a song which originates from its birth-place i.e. the heart of the singer and travels everywhere round the globe and returns back to the singer in the form of adulation or acclaim. The rain is the song of earth because it also wanders everywhere and then returns back to where it belongs after its fulfillment. It returns back in whatever condition it is, whether it is ruined or not, it returns back with a lot of love to its birth-place)

Questions

- Q.1** What does ‘I’ do day and night?
Q.2 How does ‘I’ give life to its origin?
Q.3 Explain the comparison with song.

Other Important Questions

- Q.1** What does the rain do to the earth?
Q.2 How do rain and song make the places of their origin more beautiful?
Q.3 How did the poet look at the rain? What did he ask it? What problem did the poet face in telling the rain’s answer?
Q.4 What essentially does the poet want to say in ‘The Voice of The Rain’?