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Harp of India summary, themes, and critical analysis.

The Harp of India Introduction:

Henry Derozio is the first English Indian poet who also headed the Young Bengal Movement. Despite having little Indian blood in his veins, he loved India.

He was a child of Indo-Portuguese father and a British mother.

The Poem The Harp of India is a nostalgic poem by Henry Derozio. It

celebrates the magnificent Indian past and laments over the loss that is caused by the

British Rule.

The poem ends with a hope that one day India will regain its glory

. The word Harp is used by the poet for the famous Indian poets who under

the British Rule are now suffering.

The poem is an unconventional sonnet having a rhyming scheme ababbabcdcdcbb. The poem is divided into two main parts. In the first part, the poet laments

on the magnificent past while in the second part, he hopes for the glory to be regained.

The Harp of India Summary:

Part 1

The speaker begins with the question of “Why hang’st thou lonely on yon withered bough?” The word “Thou” speaks of the “harp” and more specifically the

people of India. The poet is wondering over the lonely hanging harp on the dry and dead bough and asks for the reason.

Hence, the poem begins with melancholy and a sad tone. The speaker, in the next line, suggests that it (the harp) will forever remain with a dead bough

without strings. Just like the dead branch, the harp is also dead.

Furthermore, the speaker is nostalgic and refers to the past when the music of harp was quite meaningful and sweet. When it was not unstrung, it would have

sweet melodies. Now the strings are removed, it cannot have any music and no one listens to it anymore. The harp is too old to be played now.

Start:

Moreover, the harp cannot wake up by the breeze or air that passes by it. Simply, in other words, the words are useless to play it. It is now dead by the

silence or unmusicality. As a very old cenotaph in the desert, it is subdued, abandoned and ruined.

Part 2

The second part of the poem begins with a morning tone, yet end with hope. The speaker shifts his interest from the harp (musical instrument) to the one

who used the harp to sung melodies (poets). The speaker points out the past poets before him whose poems were more worthy and melodious than his. He says

that those poets produced outstanding poetry that would make the listeners enjoyable.

Though these poets are now dead, yet their works have kept them, alive and immortal. Because of their work, they are always honored and will be honored

in the coming ages. Hence, even after their death, they are still alive just as the flowers still blossoms on their graves.

At the end of the poem, the poets refer to past poets and called the Cold Hands. However, the speaker desires to revive the past literary works of those

poets and hopes that by reviving that work, the India glory will also be revived.

aswift\_3 frame

aswift\_3 frame end

The Harp of India Themes:

Colonization:

The only reoccurring theme of the poem is colonization. The poem is written in the nineteenth century. During that Era, the world, particularly India was

going through the period of colonization. The British Raj or Rule has drastic impacts on the people and literary developments. The poet in the poem refers

to the instruments as withered (dead). He says that they are untouched for years resulting in its rusting.

Before the arrival of the British Empire, the poetry produced in India has an idealistic tone, making the music beautiful. Yet after they are empowered

by “others”, the beauty is lost and the poets have stopped practicing due to the restrictions imposed on them. The poet highlights the importance of a

culture that was lost because of colonization. With the loss of culture, the beauty and worth of those poets also diminished.

The development and modernization by the colonizers made the colonized to adopt their way of living and assimilate in their foreign culture. The natives

have lost their identities and are oppressed.

aswift\_4 frame

aswift\_4 frame end

 The Harp of India Critical Analysis:

Part 1

Harp in the port The Harp of India refers to that past, dead India poets who once sung the melodious and sweet poetry and then lost their magnificence in

the tiring British Rule in India. Hence, they are unstrung poets and nobody wants to listen to their worthy and meaningful poems. This all is caused by

the new developments and modernity by the British. According to pet, the past poets are so dead and silent that the little breeze (referring to the struggle)

is not enough to put life in them.

The poet uses the word “Silence” that refers to the metaphorical death of the poetry of these poets. The British restricted them from writing that made

them like the old, neglected, silenced and ruined monument in the desert.

Part 2

The word “hands” in the second part of the poem refers to the poets before the poet. Those poets wrote amazing poetry. Though these poets are now dead,

yet their works have kept them, alive and immortal. Because of their work, they are always honored and will be honored in the coming ages. Hence, even

after their death, they are still alive just as the flowers still blossoms on their graves. The poet desires to revive the past literary works of those

poets and hopes that by reviving that work, the India glory will also be revived.

Literary Devices in “The Harp of India”

Why hang’st thou lonely on yon withered bough? (Personification)

Unstrung forever, must thou there remain; (personification)

Thy music once was sweet – who hears it now?

Why doth the breeze sigh over thee in vain? (Personification)

Silence hath bound thee with her fatal chain; (personification)

Neglected, mute, and desolate art thou,

Like ruined monument on the desert plain: (Simile)

O! many a hand more worthy far than mine (synecdoche)

Once thy harmonious chords to sweetness gave,

And many a wreath for them did Fame entwine

Of flowers still blooming on the minstrel’s grave:

Those hands are cold – but if thy notes divine (synecdoche)

Maybe by mortal wakened once again,

Harp of my country, let me strike the strain!

Love and Death

by

Sarojini Naidu

I dreamed my love had set thy spirit free,

Enfranchised thee from Fate's o'ermastering power,

And girt thy being with a scatheless dower

Of rich and joyous immortality;

Of Love, I dreamed my soul had ransomed thee,

In thy lone, dread, incalculable hour

From those pale hands at which all mortals cower,

And conquered Death by Love, like Savitri.

When I awoke, alas, my love was vain

E'en to annul one throe of destined pain,

Or by one heart-beat to prolong thy breath;

O Love, alas, that love could not assuage

The burden of thy human heritage,

Or save thee from the swift decrees of Death.

In “Love and Death,”

 Sarojini contrasts the promise of dream with the panic of fact.



It is evident that the self, acting in romantic agony and fancy, should find the naturalistic heritage of life more an obstacle, than a stimulus to action.



This sonnet from ‘The Bird of Time.’

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It is one of Sarojini's finest poems.



Its form is Petrarchan, with the rhyme scheme abbaabba ccdeed.



Probably, the speaker of the poem is female.



The octave depicts the ideal of love; like Savitri.



The poet dreams that her love has freed her beloved from death.



The speaker imagines that her love gives her beloved the matchless dowry of immortality which surrounded him from the cruel hands of overmastering Fate.



She dreams that her love has ransomed him from Death itself, like Savitri had saved Satyavan.



But the sestet reveals the hard and cruel reality which forces the poet to accept that her love hasn't been able to mitigate even one throe of pain, let

alone bring the beloved back from death.



On the 9th line, the poem turns.



Dream over, the poet wakes up to the harsh reality: her love has been unable to annul even one throe of predestined pain, to prolong her lover's breath

even by one heart-beat.



The poem is modern in spirit in that it refutes the ideal represented by Savitri.

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Savitri manages to win back life for her dead husband Satyavan.

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Sarojini's poem makes an interesting comparison with Toru Dutt's "Sita" and Sri Aurobindo's Savitri.

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Love and Death contains an argument, a debate.

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The debate is between a certain ideas of love, which asserts that love conquers all odds, even triumphing over death.

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To all appearances, then, this is a sad, pessimistic, even brutally realistic poem.

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It shows that Sarojini was capable of some hard-headed, even heart-rending, engagement with reality.

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Instead of regarding her as an incurable romantic or light-hearted warbler of innocent rhymes, we are invited by poems such as these to reassess our understanding

of her poetic oeuvre, indeed to take her more seriously as a poet who was actively engaged with the real world in which she lived.

Unit II

ANALYSIS OF POET, LOVER, BIRDWATCHER BY NISSIM EZEKIEL

Poet, Lover, Birdwatcher

By Nissim Ezekiel

To force the pace and never to be still

Is not the way of those who study birds

Or women. The best poets wait for words.

The hunt is not an exercise of will

But patient love relaxing on a hill

To note the movement of a timid wing;

Until the one who knows that she is loved

No longer waits but risks surrendering –

1. In this the poet finds his moral proved

Who never spoke before his spirit moved.

The slow movement seems, somehow, to say much more.

To watch the rarer birds, you have to go

Along deserted lanes and where the rivers flow

In silence near the source, or by a shore

Remote and thorny like the heart’s dark floor.

And there the women slowly turn around,

Not only flesh and bone but myths of light

With darkness at the core, and sense is found

But poets lost in crooked, restless flight,

The deaf can hear, the blind recover sight.

Analysis:

list of 26 items

◾ We have to do things actively instead of waiting for it – But poetry is different, it comes from the heart.

◾ In poetry, imagery refers to all the five senses – Smell (olfactory), sight (visual), taste, (gustatory), touch (thermal), hearing (auditory) – poets

rely on imagery rather than statements – In this poem, sight is the main imagery used.

◾ Good literature cannot be paraphrased. It would destroy its mood.

◾ Persona/Writer: Traditionally understood to be a poetic person. Solitary, dreamer, thinker.

◾ Tone of the speaker: expresses the feeling/mood – calm, soft and sweet.(Your tone should be according to the feeling you want to evoke in the reader).

◾ Nissim Ezekiel is an Indian poet.

◾ This poem is about writing poetry.

◾ Attitude – if you are patient, words will come to you.

◾ Line 1: Have to be careful.

◾ Line 2: Study means not just watching.

◾ Line 4: The kind of hunter to whom the prey will come itself.

◾ Line 5: Attitude towards his object of study (relaxing).

◾ Line 6: You have to approach the idea of your study tenderly otherwise you will never have it.

◾ Line 10: You should not force words to come to you – the poet never speaks until he is inspired.

◾ Line 12: To write a rare kind of poetry.

◾ Line 15: Internal journey.

◾ Line 16: A feminist would never appreciate this – this poem has sexism (biased language).

◾ Line 17: Not just body but soul too.

◾ Line 20: Moment of inspiration – Sudden, rare (deliberate poems are recognized easily).

◾ Line 5 and 14: These lines are supportive of each other, the poet is alone and can think much more clearly.

◾ Conclusion: Writing poetry is a solitary activity.

◾ Birds and women – sensitive and beautiful.

◾ Setting: Urban/rural.

◾ If we put in another place instead of a hill, the theme/mood would not connect with the poem. The message will not be conveyed properly – It is the setting

that inspires the idea.

◾ The poet uses images such as birds and women. He uses their similarities, that they are shy and beautiful and in the description, he has actually associated

that the course of nurturing an idea and forming a beautiful poetry around it. He has shown us how patience and meditation can bring words to your heart

that knit an intricate poem together,

◾ Only a writer himself knows how he builds up an idea in his head and writes a poem about it so to share that personal experience, he needs to compare

it with things that are familiar to a general audience.

4. Of Mothers, Among Other Things

The poet creates a vivid picture of his mother in this poem using images and words that evoke the senses and contrasts her youth with her present state.

The first section of the poem portrays her in her youth. The second section deals with her middle age and the final section describes her old age.

The twisted blackbone tree evokes, in the poet, olfactory images of his mother when she was young. The word 'twisted' suggests that the tree is now old

like his mother and was probably tended by her when it was a young tree. Her youth is compared to ‘silk’ and a ‘white petal’, both of which are soft and

tender and exactly opposite of the old and rough twisted blackbone tree. The sparkle of the diamond studded in her ear rings is compared to needles being

splashed. The metaphor pictures mother as beautiful, bright and lively like the splashes of light of the diamonds. He can recall his mother full of energy

running from the rain, probably engaged in some work, to the cradles to tend to her children. The rain is pictured as sewing loosely with its lengthy drops

the tasselled blackbone tree. The rain symbolises difficulties in life that try to stitch in and contain one’s energy and enthusiasm in life. Yet his mother

faced them resolutely. This is indicated by the comparison of her dexterous hands to an eagle's black pink-crinkled feet with talons that are effective

and precise.

The second section continues with the comparison but introduces a shift in mother's abilities. One of her fingers (talon) has been crippled by a rat trap,

a handicap indicating lessening of efficiency as she got older. The next lines show that the vagaries of life and motherhood have had their effect on her

as a middle-aged woman. This is pointed out by the statement that her saris do not cling to her, instead, they hang loose. She has become thin and weak

denoted by the metaphor ‘loose feather of a one time wing'

The final stanza begins with the poet stating that he experiences a gut level, raw feeling/taste (‘tongue licks bark in the mouth’) of the incomprehensible

'motherness' of his mother even in her old age when he sees her slowing moving her four still sensible fingers to pick a grain of rice from the kitchen

floor. This shows that she is still mentally agile though physically weakened and is in charge of the affairs of the house.