

Poem No.

6

A Sindhi Woman

(Jan Stallworthy)

Bare foot, through the bazaar,
 And with the same undulant grace
 As the cloth blown back from her face,
 She glides with a stone jar,
 High on her head
 And not a ripple in her tread.

Watching her cross erect
 Stones, garbage, excrement and crumbs
 Of glass in the Karachi slums,
 I, with my stoop, reflect:
 They stand most straight
 Who learn to walk beneath a weight.

Theme

This poem is a tribute to a working woman. Work creates rhythm in life. Work keeps a person strong and vigilant. An idle man will soon decay. This poem also portrays realistically the slums of Karachi in a few words. The poet praises and appreciates the working woman who has practically turned her work into an art. The woman walks softly with the delicacy and rhythm of a dancer's feet.

Paraphrase

A Sindhi woman is going through a bazaar with bare feet. She is walking impressively and there is a rhythm in her movement which can be seen in her swaying body and floating dress. The wind pushes the cloth from her face. She is carrying stone jar on her head. She walks as smoothly as the wave of a stream. She is passing through stones, garbage, pieces of bread and the broken glass. This is the scene of a Karachi slum. The poet meditates and sees his own body that is bent by time. He observes that only those who bear the burden of life and carry its hardships through life are strong and straight.

Glossary

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| undulant | wave like motion or look |
| glide | move along smoothly |
| tread | walk |
| garbage | waste, worthless or rubbish |
| excrement | waste matter expelled from the body |

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| crumbs | small pieces of dry food |
| slums | a heavily populated area of a city having much poverty, with poor facilities |
| stoop | bend forward / downwards |

EXERCISES

1. Add two more rhyming words in the blanks with each word.

- a) grace _____
- b) tread _____
- c) crumbs _____
- d) weight _____

2. Write down the missing rhyming words in each verse.

- a) High on her _____.
 (i) red (ii) head (iii) body (iv) foot
- b) As the cloth blown back from her _____.
 (i) mouth (ii) head (iii) face (iv) hair
- c) Watching her cross _____.
 (i) bridge (ii) street (iii) road (iv) erect
- d) I, with my stoop, _____.
 (i) walk (ii) run (iii) think (iv) reflect

3. Give a summary of the poem in your own words.

4. What did the poet reflect when he saw the woman?

5. What is the main idea of the poem?

6. What picture of the Karachi slums do we get after reading the poem?

7. Choose the correct answer.

- a) The woman in the poem was passing through the _____.
 (i) market (ii) bazaar (iii) crowd (iv) street
- b) She was carrying a _____ on her head.
 (i) a bundle of sticks (ii) a stone jar
 (iii) a bundle of books (iv) nothing
- c) Those who carry weight stand _____.
 (i) straight (ii) bend (iii) idle (iv) fall
- d) Her walk was _____.
 (i) smooth (ii) difficult (iii) slow (iv) fast

8. Mark the statements true / false.

- a) She was bare footed. T/F
- b) She had a stone jar on her head. T/F
- c) She was a Baluchi woman. T/F
- d) She did not have a ripple in her walk. T/F