

The poem. the body conditions of the people

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The poem ' Blessing' by Imtiaz Dharker is written in 1989. The poem is structured in four stanzas of unequal length, perhaps reflecting the small drops of water followed by the ' gush' of water from the broken pipe. The poem is about how the people in a deprived slum city in the outskirts of India, a third world country, dealing with a ' municipal' pipe that bursts in an area where the land is so dry that skin ' cracks like a pod'. Dharker invites the reader to question humans of their basic needs. The literary techniques used in the poem emphasises the poverty of the people and how important and sacred drinking water is to these people.

This essay will discuss the geographical location of the poem and the wealthiness of the people in the poem, the preciousness of water, and the blessing of the people from God. Dharker draws our attention to the geographical location of this poem. The body conditions of the people are described as ' The skin cracks like a pod'. She uses an environmental imagery by using a simile to compare the skin to a pod. When a pod cracks, it is usually referred to a seed pod and how it releases its seeds and cracks open in the scalding hot weather.

We, readers are left to wonder in mind with a drought stricken hot land where these people are scorched by the sun. We feel worried and sympathize these people, how the high exposure to the sun could make their skin be chafed and chapped, and their body to redden. The simile is further reinforced with ' There never is enough water'.

It tells us readers that we are dealing with a country which is not just hot, but also thirst is common. We now believe that the country also has a large

deprived population, apart from the hot and dry weather. This situation of large deprived population makes it very difficult for the people to get water supply as the demand is so high throughout the area whereas water supply is limited, making some people with no accessibility to it.

This perhaps applies to the other basic needs the people are entitled to, where there is a limited amount for the whole community to share, and of course some people would suffer as there is not enough to share. We now know that this poem is set in a third world country, where it is very deprived and everyone is very poor. Based on Dharker's background, we, readers feel that she wrote the poem for a place in India as India is very poor and fiery hot all year round. In India, the outskirts of India are usually the poorest. This statement 'There never is enough water' also delivers a stark message to us as readers and makes us consider what this would be like if we were there, and seems experiencing the same situation. The effect of this is that we, as readers, would feel grateful for what we have and would not take everything for granted. Therefore, the imagery can present a very poor area that is set in the outskirts of India with a high population density, and provides the readers with an idea how dry the land is and how painful it must be to live somewhere where water is so scarce with the sweltering heat.

Dharker focuses on the preciousness of water throughout the whole poem. She begins the second stanza by asking readers to imagine 'the drip of it', to imagine water dripping into a cup and the 'small splash' as the water droplet hits the bottom of the cup. This imagery further reinforced when the tiny droplet of water creates an 'echo' in the mug.

This indicates that the mug is almost entirely empty, and that the people will finish every drop of water in days, weeks and months as it is too precious, which they feel water should not be wasted at any costs before they refill it again. We readers are left thinking what the people are doing is like a drop of cool water hitting a parched tongue. We can tell that the people care for each other and their shared municipal water pipe. They will not be selfish and get as much water as they want.

Instead, they will finish every drop of valuable water before they refill it in their mug so that everyone gets a chance for a water refill. The poet then compares the water to precious metal when she writes 'silver crashes to the ground'. If caught in the right light, water can look like silver, or a highly polished mirror. The writer uses the word 'silver' purposely to emphasise how precious a commodity it is. An interesting metaphor and synecdoche is seen by us readers when the 'sudden rush of fortune', like someone winning jackpot on a slot machine and the money rushing out of the machine, begins to flow and drain away until it finds a 'roar of tongues'. The word 'roar' refers to a group of people who roar with thirst. Since everyone has only one tongue, therefore the plural 'tongues' suggests a group. We readers are picturing that the tongues are 'roaring' with thirst, or maybe that people are merely shouting and their combined voices constitutes the 'roar' of a large crowd.

We readers believe that the poet is being purposefully ambiguous to make readers thinking about the idea of thirst while reminding us that there are lots of other people involved in this event. We readers understand that the people are starting to rush out from their huts with pots. A power of 3 '
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brass, copper and aluminum' is showing how these people cannot afford proper material but these type of metal, plastic or just hands to collect as much water as they can. We can conclude that the ' roar of tongues' is actually a shout of alarm and panic to tell people that they are needed to try and collect as much of the water as possible.

The literary techniques used demonstrates that water is priceless for people, which cannot be replaced with anything - it is even more precious than gold and silver. Without water, humans cannot survive. The use of God in this poem has portrayed blessing for people. The last line of the second stanza personifies the echoing splash of the water as ' the voice of a kindly god', which not only makes the water seem even more precious and divine but also part of God and therefore something miraculous and deeply special. This personification is further reinforced with the word ' congregation'.

The word congregation has reference of a group of people in a church being given religious instructions. It has effect on how the people should save the spilling water as a kind of religious ritual for God, to carry on being blessed and appreciate what God has done to them. This is also further evidence that these people are religious people and that they see accidents as acts of God trying to bless them and make them happy, and not just random occurrences. The personification is further reinforced when ' the naked children' becomes perfect, with the help of God and water. They stand in the " liquid sun" and are turned to gold, in which they are blessed by washing their body with clean water, making them ' polished to perfection'. The poet piquets our interest in a way that she uses this beautiful image of ' polished

to perfection' to portray the significance of water and how it could help us in many ways.

In this case, water washes the people and people also drink it to stay alive. She shows how absolutely indispensable a commodity water is, and how a “rush” of water can be a miracle and a gift from God for the people in the outskirts of India who are not fortunate enough to be born in a country where it is taken for granted. The broken pipe from God provides people with an exhilarating and happy moment, and has blessed the people's wishes. To conclude, this essay discusses that: the poem is set in a dry and hot city in the the slum outskirts of India where the people are very deprived and poor; the water is priceless towards the people, nothing can replace it; and that God blessed the people and provided them with a substantial amount of water. Dharker is expressing to us, first world countries, that the symbol of water in the poem should make us think about how much we take our basic needs for granted, not just water, and how, we readers, very often squander around with the Earth's resources. We should treasure our Earth's resources and use it wisely, and be blessed of what we have in our daily life, because some third world countries, such as India, are scarce of water.