

CHAPTER 01

The Voice of The Rain

—by Walt Whitman

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Central Idea of the Poem

The poem 'The Voice of the Rain' by Walt Whitman signifies the eternal role that the rain plays in nurturing, quenching and purifying the various elements of Earth.

The rain returns the favour to its place of origin from where it rises unseen from the depths of the water and from the land. The rain itself is explaining to the reader about its origin, work and its cyclic movement. A comparison has also been drawn between rain and music as both of them make the world more lively and return to their place of origin after fulfilling their purpose.

Stanzawise Explanation of the Poem

Stanza 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,

Word Meaning

thou - you; **soft-falling** - dropping softly; **shower** - raindrops when they fall continuously on Earth

Explanation The poem begins with the poet asking for the identity of the soft-falling rain. Much to the surprise of the poet, the rain replies to his question which the poet translates for his readers. The rain in its own voice tells the poet that she is the poem of this Earth. The rain is trying to say that, as music or poetry gives pleasure to human beings, the rain gives happiness to mother Earth.

Stanza 2

Eternal I rise impalpable out of the land and the bottomless sea, Upward, to heaven, whence, vaguely form'd, altogether changed, and yet the same,

Word Meaning

eternal - everlasting; **impalpable** - unable to be felt by touching; **whence** - from where; **vaguely** - unclearly; **form'd** - made into a specific shape or form

Explanation The poet says that the falling of the rain is an eternal process, but it takes different forms at different times. It rises from the land and the deep sea in the form of intangible water vapour and goes up to the sky. There it takes an indistinct shape in the form of clouds.

Although it changes in its form or shape, its core matter remains the same. The words 'impalpable' and 'eternal' indicate that nature is not fully understood and some part of it always remains beyond our reach.

Stanza 3

I descend to lave the droughts, atomies,
dust-layers of the globe,
And all that in them without me were seeds
only, latent, unborn;

Word Meaning

descend - move or fall downwards; **lave** - wash; **droughts** - dry spells; **atomies** - very tiny particles; **latent** - dormant, inactive

Explanation The raindrops pour down from above to wash away droughts and dust layers enveloping Earth. It satisfies the thirst of the dry Earth and heals everything that is degrading and is lying lifeless. The rain also helps in the germination of seeds which were lying dormant due to a dry spell. In other words, rain is responsible for making the Earth clean and green.

Stanza 4

"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.)

Word Meaning

issuing - originating/starting; **fulfilment** - completing the cycle; **wandering** - moving from one place to another; **reck'd** - cared about; **unreck'd** - uncared for;

Explanation The rain is involved in a continued process of giving life to Earth by providing water to dormant seeds and making the Earth more beautiful and full of greenery. Rain helps in enhancing the beauty of Earth as, in the absence of water, everything turns dull and lifeless.

The last two lines are the poet's own words and his reflections upon the answers given by the rain. The poet observes that the life of rain is similar to that of a song. A song or poem is creativity at its best. It has the power to calm, heal, rejuvenate, transform and thrill. In the same way, when the entire environment gets drenched in the rain, dust particles settle down and there is greenery everywhere which makes the whole Earth beautiful to look at.

Poetic Devices Used in the Poem

- **Personification** The rain has been personified as it has been given a voice in the poem.
- **Metaphor** "I am the Poem of the Earth". The poet uses a metaphor to compare how the rain leaves the ground to come back to the ground, giving back to it much like a person who leaves its home, only to come back after fulfilling its journey.
- **Parallelism/Simile** In the last two lines, the poet has drawn a parallel between the rain and the song of a poet.
- **Hyperbole** 'Bottomless sea' is an example of hyperbole. The poet describes sea as bottomless which is an exaggerated statement to bring out the desired effect.
- **Imagery** In the first line of the poem, 'Soft-falling shower' gives the reader an image of gentle rain or drizzle. During the dialogue between the poet and the rain, it creates an image of showers or drops of water falling down from the heavens to Earth and infusing it with greenery, purity and beauty.

Chapter Practice

PART 1

Objective Questions

• Multiple Choice Questions

1. Why does the poet get surprised when he gets an answer from the rain?

(a) Because he expected a reply from earth
(b) Because he did not expect rain to reply
(c) Because he wanted to be alone with his thoughts
(d) Because he was only dreaming

Ans. (b) The poet gets surprised when he gets an answer from the rain, as it is inanimate and cannot speak. In this poem, to the poet's and reader's amazement, the rain gives a reply which has been translated by the poet for the readers.

2. What answer does the rain give back to the poet?

(a) That he should leave for home
(b) That he should wake up
(c) That rain is a continuous process
(d) That this is not the Poem of Earth

Ans. (c) The rain answers the poet's question by telling him that it is the poem of Earth and is involved in a continuing process of going up and coming down.

3. How does the rain justify its claim 'I am the Poem of Earth'?

(a) By explaining its relationship with earth
(b) By talking to the trees
(c) By staying quiet
(d) By bringing a storm to the poet

Ans. (a) The rain calls itself the poem of the Earth because the poem rendered by the poet has the task of bringing joy, happiness, life to its readers. Similarly when the rain falls down over Earth, a rhythm or music is created. That's why the rain calls itself 'the Poem of Earth'.

4. Why does the rain call itself 'impalpable'?

(a) Because it cannot be felt by touching or seeing.
(b) Because it is afraid of the poet.
(c) Because it does not want to change its form.
(d) Because it is unsure of the future.

Ans. (a) Impalpable means something that cannot be felt by touching or seeing. When water takes the form of vapour, it is not visible to the human eye and nor can we feel its touch. Hence, the rain calls itself palpable.

5. Why does the rain say "without me were seeds only, latent, unborn" ?

(a) Because rain shelters the seeds.
(b) Because rain protects the seeds.
(c) Because rain provides shadow to the seeds.
(d) Because rain helps the seeds grow.

Ans. (d) The rain helps the seeds grow into plants and without it, the seeds cannot grow into plants and stay hidden.

6. Choose the correct statement(s) for the poem 'The Voice of the Rain'.

I. The poem is about rain, its eternal process and its benefits.
II. The rain is speaking through its own language, via the poet.
III. The poem is a reflection of the poet's dream.
IV. The poem translates the message of earth through the rain.
(a) I and II are correct.
(b) I, II and IV are correct.
(c) III and IV are correct.
(d) I and IV are correct.

Ans. (a) The poem is about the eternal process of rain and its benefits. Through the words of the rain, the poet has tried to bring out the importance of rain for Earth, for plants and for people. As the poet is translating what the rain is speaking through its own language (the sounds it makes when it falls), the whole poem is about the rain talking to the poet.

7. Why does the poet contrast music with rain?

(a) As rain is loved by the poet as much as music
(b) Because he was told by the trees to do it
(c) As rain makes rhythm with earth like music
(d) None of the above

Ans. (c) The poet contrasts music and rain as when rain falls down, it makes a rhythm with earth.

8. What is the similarity between the rain and music?

(a) Both abandon the poet
(b) Both come back to their origin
(c) Both talk with the trees
(d) Both are interesting to the poet

Ans. (b) The rain and music both come back to their origin afterwards. Thus, they are similar.

9. Identify the tone of the poem 'The Voice of the Rain'.

- (a) Chaotic
- (b) Conversational
- (c) Sympathetic
- (d) Idle

Ans. (b) The tone of the poem is conversational in nature. It helps to maintain continuity of thoughts and ideas of the poet and also bring clarity and vividness in expression.

10. Find the figure of speech in the line 'bottomless sea' from the poem, 'The Voice of the Rain'.

- (a) Personification
- (b) Alliteration
- (c) Hyperbole
- (d) Metaphor

Ans. (c) 'Bottomless sea' is an example of hyperbole. The poet describes the sea as bottomless which is an exaggerated statement to bring out the desired effect.

11. Which of the following uses the same poetic device as used in the lines 'I am the poem of the Earth'?

- (a) Her tears were a river flowing down her cheeks.
- (b) He felt like the flowers were waving hello.
- (c) They fought like cats and dogs.
- (d) The wind howled in the night.

Ans. (d) In the line 'I am the Poem of Earth' the poetic device used in these lines is personification. The rain addresses itself like a human being with the pronoun 'I'.

12. What does 'Reck'd or unreck'd' mean?

- (a) enrichment or no enrichment
- (b) cared for or not cared for
- (c) to purify or not
- (d) to wash or not to wash

Ans. (b) The rain states that it does not care for anyone or their opinions. She is only responsible for her work which she does and leaves.

13. Select the suitable option for the given statements, based on your reading of 'The Voice of the Rain'.

- (i) The poet finds the music created by the soft-falling shower to be rain's voice.
- (ii) In translating the voice of the rain the poet is describing the process and the purpose of rain.
- (a) (i) is false but (ii) is true.
- (b) Both (i) and (ii) are true.
- (c) (ii) is a fact but unrelated to (i).
- (d) (i) is the cause for (ii).

Ans. (b) The poet translates the music created by the falling rain to describe the process of formation of the rain and the importance of rain for Earth.

14. The poet draws a parallel between rain and song to

- (a) point out the artistic quality of rain
- (b) state the creative expressions of man and God
- (c) bring out the similarities between pleasures gained from them
- (d) state the healing qualities of both rain and song

Ans. (d) The parallel between rain and song presents the healing quality of both rain and song. The rain heals the Earth just like the song heals the hurt hearts and mind of man.

15. Which of the following is TRUE as per the poem?

- (a) The process of rain is an everlasting and ever continuous process.
- (b) Rain's purpose is to beautify and purify Earth.
- (c) Rain replying to the poet adds a sense of mystery to the poem
- (d) All of the above

Ans. (d) All the statements are true as per the poem.

• Extract Based MCQs

1. Read the extract to attempt the questions that follow.

"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,"

(i) What is the difference between the two 'I' in the given lines?

- (a) One is of the poet and the other is of the rain
- (b) One is with love and other is with surprise
- (c) One asks the question and the other answer
- (d) Both (a) and (c)

Ans. (d) 'I' in the first line is referred to as the poet asking a question. 'I' in the third line is the raindrop which answers the poet's question.

(ii) The poet specifically says that the answer was given by 'The Voice of the Rain'. The emphasis on voice of rain adds a hint of to the poem.

- (a) mystery
- (b) thrill
- (c) drama
- (d) doubt

Ans. (a) The reference to The Voice of Rain as emphasised in the poem adds a sense of mystery to the poem as the reader is left to wonder how can rain answer.

(iii) What do you understand by the phrase 'strange to tell'?

- (a) Unusualness of the answer for the poet
- (b) Stupidness of the answer for the earth
- (c) Ordinarity of the answer for the poet
- (d) Commonness of the answer for the raindrops

Ans. (a) 'Strange to tell' means that it is an unusual and extraordinary answer given by the raindrops to the poet who asked who 'it' was.

(iv) What role does the poet play?

- (a) To give voice of rain
- (b) Translator
- (c) Advocate of rain
- (d) None of the above

Ans. (b) The poet assumes the role of the translator for the reader as he translates what the rain tells him.

- (v) Select the suitable option for the given statements, based on your reading of the extract.

1. The poet is imagining the rain talking.
2. The rain calls itself the poem of the earth as it beautifies the world

- (a) (1) is false but (2) is true.
(b) Both (1) and (2) are true.
(c) (2) is a fact but unrelated to (1).
(d) (1) is the cause for (2).

2. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow.

“Eternal I rise impalpable out of the land and the bottomless sea,

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;”

- (i) From where does the rain originate?

- (a) Clouds and land (b) Land and sea
(c) Sky and sea (d) Sky and land

Ans. (b) The rain originates from the land and the bottomless (deep sea) in the form of water vapour.

- (ii) What happens to the raindrops in the sky?

- (a) They change their form
(b) They evaporate to become air
(c) They disappear from earth
(d) Nothing

Ans. (a) In the sky, the raindrops form the rain. Their form has changed but the essence has remained the same.

- (iii) With what purpose does the rain descend from the sky?

- (a) To destroy crop (b) To flatter the poet
(c) To entertain earth (d) To give life to the planet

Ans. (d) The raindrops fall from the sky in order to give life to the planet by removing the dry areas and washing the famine-stricken lands.

- (iv) What is ‘latent’ and ‘unborn’?

- (a) Flowers (b) Plants
(c) Earth (d) Seeds

Ans. (d) The seeds are dormant and unborn because of lack of water which is needed for them to germinate and form a new plant.

- (v) What quality of rain is highlighted in the extract?

- (a) Entertainer (b) Healer
(c) Preserver (d) Caregiver

Ans. (b) The rain assumes the role of a healer for the Earth. Before rain, the Earth is draughted and covered in dust. As rain falls, the dust and draught goes away and the land is covered with greenery.

PART 2

Subjective Questions

• Short Answer Type Questions

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

Ans. The poem, ‘The Voice of the Rain’, presents a dialogue between the poet and the rain itself. In this poem, the poet asks rain who it is. The poet gets an answer as the rain itself gives its introduction.

Hence, the two voices in the poem are those of rain and the poet. These are

- (i) **In the poet’s voice** and who art thou? said I to the soft-falling shower.
(ii) **In the voice of the rain** and I am the poem of the Earth, said the voice of the rain.

2. What does the phrase ‘strange to tell’ mean? (NCERT)

Ans. The phrase expresses the poet’s surprise at the rain’s ability to reply and use words. The belief is that rain cannot speak like living beings. The poet believes that the readers will also find it surprising and weird that the rain should speak and answer the poet’s question.

3. How does the rain justify its claim ‘I am the Poem of Earth’?

Ans. The rain calls itself the poem of the Earth because the poem rendered by the poet has the task of bringing joy, happiness, life to its readers.

Similarly when the rain falls down over Earth, a rhythm or music is created. That’s why the rain calls itself the ‘Poem of Earth’.

4. Describe the never ending cycle of rain.

Ans. Water rises unperceived in the form of vapour from land and water bodies on the Earth. It goes up, takes the form of a cloud, changes its shape and falls down on Earth in the form of water drops to bathe the small dust particles, land and sea. The water returns through rivers to oceans and seas after it rains on Earth.

5. Why does the rain call itself ‘impalpable’?

Ans. ‘Impalpable’ means something that cannot be felt by touching or seeing. When water takes the form of vapour, it is not visible to the human eye and nor can we feel its touch.

The vapour rises to the sky, condenses and forms clouds which cause rain. Though we are aware of its presence, the process remains invisible to us. Hence, the rain has rightly called itself ‘impalpable’.

6. What happens when it rains after a long hot spell?

Ans. After a long hot spell, everything is dried up on Earth. When it rains, all the dust that has accumulated on Earth gets washed away, giving a new fresh look to nature.

Moreover the seeds which were lying latent till now, get germinated with the help of rain and new trees and plants start growing.

7. Latent seeds get a life by rain. Explain.

Ans. The seeds lying on Earth require water to germinate and take shape. When it rains, the seeds start germinating and change into the form of saplings. In this way, the seeds which would have dried up or get wasted get a new lease of life by rain.

8. Why is rain essential for Earth?

Ans. If it doesn't rain then Earth will remain parched, droughts will follow and the dust-layers will not be washed away. There will be nothing to quench the thirst of the plants and trees and their seeds will die.

9. How does the rain become the voice of Earth?

Ans. In the poem, 'The Voice of the Rain', the poet describes how the rain falls on Earth. He also asks a question to the rain about it. He calls the showers of the rain as 'Poem of Earth' as the rain gives a new lease of life to the scorched and parched Earth and falls on Earth in a rhythmic manner.

Actually, it is the voice of Earth as the slowly falling showers produce a very soft music and Earth finds its expression only through the showers falling on it.

10. Why do you think the poet says the phrase 'reck'd or unreck'd'?

Ans. The words have been poetically drafted. 'Reck'd and unreck'd' stand for reckoned and unreckoned. The words literally mean cared and uncared for respectively. The poet says these words to emphasise the fact that when it falls on the Earth, we sometimes take notice of it or sometimes completely ignore it. But even if it is left uncared for, it completes its destiny and returns to absorbed where it started from.

11. Why are the last two lines put within brackets?

(NCERT)

Ans. The last two lines of the poem have been put within brackets as they do not form a part of the conversation between the poet and the rain. The lines in the brackets 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 the rain.

12. Justify the title 'The Voice of the Rain'.

Ans. The whole poem is about the eternal process of rain and its benefits. Through the words of the rain, the poet has tried to bring out the importance of rain for Earth, for plants and for man. As the poet is translating what the rain is speaking through its own language (the sounds it makes when it falls), the whole poem is about the rain talking to the poet. Thus, the title is justified.

13. Natural elements such as air and rain make no discrimination and bless everyone equally. Comment on class distinction and inequality, which is a totally human creation.

Ans. Man's existence on this Earth is short-lived but even in this short span, he has been responsible for many wrong doings against other human beings. God has created everyone as equal. But it is very unfortunate that man has divided this society on the basis of class, caste and other factors.

Man must learn from elements of nature which provide us fresh air, heat or water, without making any distinction. But in human society class distinctions and caste distinctions both exist and inequalities prevail in large numbers.

It is high time that man must learn lessons from nature and adopt universal brotherhood for the betterment of our society.

• Long Answer Type Questions

1. There is a parallel drawn between rain and music. Which words indicate this? Explain the similarity between the two. (NCERT)

Ans. The last two lines of the poem (in brackets) indicate the parallel drawn between rain and music (here it is called 'song', as a song always has music associated with it). In these lines, the poet observes that the life-cycle of rain and a song are alike. The song issues from the singer 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 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.

2. How is the cyclic movement of rain brought out in the poem? Compare it with what you have learnt in science. (NCERT)

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

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

3. The poem 'The Voice of the Rain' gives a hidden message that rain is essential for this Earth. Write an article describing the importance of rain.

Ans.

Importance of Rain

by Ali Jawed

As we all know, the three essentials for survival are water, food and air. The most important element of weather is water. We get water in different forms of precipitation but rain is the most beneficial of all types of precipitation.

Rain helps in harvesting our crops that give us food to eat. Without rain, no crops would grow and we would perish. Also, falling showers remove the dust in air, making our air clean, because we need clean air to breathe.

Rain water plays a key role in creating the climate of certain areas. Its presence in the atmosphere provides replenishment of the moisture in cloud systems.

The most well-known and most important effect of rain water is to provide us with water to drink. Without rain, there would be no life.

4. Rain is an eternal process benefiting mankind. Contrast it with human life which is short lived on this Earth. Should we disturb these eternal elements of nature?

Ans. The poem 'The Voice of the Rain' beautifully shows the continued process of rain which sounds like music to human ears, as it fulfils our needs.

It is an ever going process which sustains human life and provides us with food, pure air and green cover. On the other hand, human lives are mortal.

We come on this Earth for a short period and then depart without leaving any mark on this planet.

Moreover human beings, for their greed and selfish motives, indulge in destructive activities which may disturb these eternal processes of nature.

We must learn a lesson from nature. If we want peaceful co-existence, we need not disturb the balance of nature, otherwise the whole of humanity will be in danger.

We must learn a lesson from such eternal processes and do something good for humanity at large.

● Extract Based Questions

1. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow.

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,

Upwards to heaven, whence, vaguely form'd,
altogether Changed, and yet the Same.

- (i) What do you understand by the phrase 'Strange to tell'?
- (ii) How has the answer been conveyed to us and what is it?
- (iii) Why does the rain call itself 'eternal'?
- (iv) Explain 'vaguely formed'.
- (v) Explain 'altogether Changed, and yet the Same.'

Ans. (i) The phrase 'Strange to tell' means that it is an unusual and extraordinary thing to receive an answer from the inanimate raindrops.

(ii) To convey the answer, the poet has personified the rain drop and it is answering the poet's question by saying that it is the 'Poem of the Earth'.

- (iii) The rain calls itself eternal because the process formation of rain goes on forever.
- (iv) The phrase 'vaguely formed' refers to the formation of clouds that are full of rain water vapours. These clouds do not have a particular shape and thus the rain assumes a vague shape.
- (v) The given phrase means that in the sky, the rain drops form the rain. In doing so, their form has changed but the essence has remained the same.

2. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow.

I descend to lave the droughts, Atomies, dust-
layers of the globe,

And all that in them without me were seeds only,
latent, unborn;

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
fulfillment, wandering

Reck'd or unreck'd, duly with love returns.)

- (i) With what purpose does the rain descend from the sky?
 - (ii) How does the rain help the seeds?
 - (iii) Why has the poet compared the rain to a song?
 - (iv) Why are the last lines put within brackets?
 - (v) Where does the song return?
- Ans.** (i) The rain drops fall from the sky in order to give life to the Earth which is suffering from dryness and draught.
- (ii) Before the rain falls, the seeds are dormant and unborn because of lack of water. With rain they get the water which is needed for them to germinate and form a new plant.
- (iii) The poet has compared the life cycle of the rain drops to that of the song saying that they both return to their origin after fulfilling their tasks. On their journey they both heal and beautify the Earth and Man's heart respectively.
- (iv) The last lines are put in brackets because they do not form the voice of the rain or the poet. They only contain a general observation by the poet about the course of a song.
- (v) The song returns to the place of its origin i.e., comes back to the heart of poet.