

Blessing-Imtiaz Dharker

MATCHES:

Night of the Scorpion, What Were They Like? -Insight into other countries
Two Scavengers in a Truck, Nothing's Changed-Wealth and Poverty

IMTIAZ DHARKER(Asian female poet):

1. Imtiaz Dharker was born in Pakistan in 1954. She grew up in Glasgow, Scotland and now lives in Mumbai (previously called Bombay), India. Her poetry is therefore influenced by many cultures.
2. On the outskirts of Mumbai is a place called Dharvi, which is a temporary dwelling place for millions of migrants.
3. During the dry season in Dharvi, temperatures can soar as high as 40 Degrees Celsius. As Dharvi is not an official area for living in there are many water shortages.
4. In this poem Blessing, Imtiaz Dharker tries to show westerners what it is like to be short of water. Dharvi is where the poem Blessing is set.
5. Her outspoken role as a social commentator is mirrored by her free speech like poetry.
6. When asked about the area, Dharker says, “...when a pipe bursts or a water tanker goes past, there is always a child running behind trying to catch drips of water. Water is like currency, it's like money. In a hot country in that kind of climate, it's like a gift. It really is very precious. When the water comes it's like a god.”

SETTING AND CONTEXT:

1. No country is specified, though the details of Dharker's personal experiences as well as the details in the poem of where the action takes place imply a developing country like India, namely Dharvi.
2. **Municipal** piped water and the large number of people surrounding the burst pipes in line 8 suggest it is a shanty town.
3. A break in a water pipe brings unexpected joy.

FORM AND TECHNIQUES:

1. The poem is made up mostly of free verse and rhymes occasionally.
2. The title of the poem, **Blessing**-suggests religious ideas as blessing is considered something special and precious, something thought to be given by God.
3. Lines 6, 12 and 22-**kindly god...congregation...blessing sings**- all are words with religious associations. The congregation refers to a crowd gathered possibly for prayer. Here the congregation are the crowds of people gathered to worship the water. Again there are suggestions here as to how important water is to the people of Dharvi.
4. The first two lines show us the normal conditions of the people living in Dharvi.
5. Line 1-**pod**-refers to a seed case that splits along its side when it is ripe. There is a suggestion here that their skin is ripe/ready for water or deprived of water.
6. Lines 1-2 are made up of two short sentences. One is a simile; the other is a statement. **The skin cracks like a pod.** (Simile)**There is never enough water.** (Statement) This shows us what it is like to be without water.

7. Line 2- **There is never enough water.** Extra emphasis is achieved by placing **never** in front of the verb.
8. Lines 3-6-...**drip...small...splash...tin...mug...god...** Onomatopoeic effect is achieved in the sounds of the monosyllabic (one syllable) words used in stanza two.
9. Line 6-**kindly god**-when the poet imagines water, it is so special it is compared to a god.
10. Lines 5, 9 and 15-**tin...silver...brass, copper , aluminium**-many references to metal.
11. Line 8-**municipal**-public supply, belonging to the town.
12. Line 8-**The municipal pipe bursts**-we are shown how the community responds; they collect as much water as possible.
13. Line 9-**silver crashes to the ground**-the water is seen as a precious metal such as silver; silver is chosen as that is how it appears in the sunlight.
14. Lines 7-17-The mood changes in the third stanza when the pipe bursts, shown by the flowing verse with plenty of detailed description, the occasional rhyme and the length of the stanza when compared to the other two.
15. Line 10-**flow has found**-alliteration used to show the water has found its way to the surface.
16. Line 11-**roar of tongues**-means a roar of voices can be heard as the water flows.
17. Line 7-9-**rush of fortune...silver**-water is associated with wealth.
18. Line 15-17-...**with pots/brass, copper, aluminium,/plastic buckets, /frantic hands**-the frantic scramble for water is shown by this list of things used by people to try and gather as much of this precious liquid as possible.
19. Lines 15-17-**brass...hands**-a list of words are crammed together to increase the pace of the poem as well as to suggest the rush there is to salvage what water they can.
20. Line 18-20-...**naked children/screaming in the liquid sun/their highlights polished to perfection**-children are transformed as they play in the liquid sun (water). Water and light and the importance of both for survival are combined well in these images. Alliteration is used here ‘**p**’ for poetic effect. The children enjoy the water and play in it.
21. Line 22-**as the blessing sings**-personification is used here as the blessing sings, comparison to the comfort as other may give to a child by singing it to sleep or relax it.
22. Lines 22-23-**as the blessing sings/over their small bones.**-this is a striking image in this stanza. The blessing/water flows *over their bones not their bodies*, again an indication by the poet of the hardship the people of Dharvi have to put up with; mal-nourishment and lack of water.
23. Lines 11-23 are one long sentence with many short phrases-this reflects the excitement of the moment when compared to the first stanza.

THEME AND INTERPRETATION:

1. The sudden appearance of water brings ‘riches’ and an almost religious joy.
2. The developing world setting of Dharvi, India is not described in detail but can be inferred from the reaction of the burst pipe as well as knowing a little about the poet’s background.

3. The poem does not comment explicitly on the situation rather expresses the joy of the people in the area when they see the water which they see as a blessing.
4. However there is an implicit comment on the poverty that causes this reaction in the first place.

STRUCTURE AND LANGUAGE:

1. The poem is split up into four stanzas of different lengths.
2. New thoughts/stanzas are started at lines 3, 7 and 18.
3. There are five full stops as far as line 11 and then there is only one full stop from line 11 to the end of the poem.
4. The reason there are no more full stops from line 11 on as the poet ups the pace of the poem to convey the excitement of the people of Dharvi at the sight of the water. The full stops before this slow the poem down and are used at the end of a sentence where the poet want you to stop and think.
5. Short stanzas with short abrupt sentences express what it is like to be without water.
6. Long flowing stanzas with long flowing sentences show what it is like to suddenly have water and the rush of excitement that goes along with that.
7. Stanza three refers to the men, women and children who rush when they see the pipe burst.
8. Stanza four ends with the focus being on the children playing in the **liquid sun**. The children play whereas the adults worry about using the water for more practical things in the home.
9. Dharker leaves us with the playful image of the children in the poem, however a darker meaning can be drawn out from it as she refers to their small bones not bodies. They are not yet fully developed and living in a place like this it is unlikely that they ever will fully develop.

IMAGERY AND SOUND:

1. The poem opens with a striking image of dryness-**The skin cracks like a pod**-a harsh crunching sound can be imagined. The earth cracks dry when it is not moistened by water. It also reminds us of the pain we feel when our skin cracks.
2. The drip of the water in the tin mug is described as a **metaphor** as **the voice of a kindly god**-Line 6.
3. Water itself is referred to as **fortune...silver...the blessing**-water is seen as something that is precious, it is wealth.
4. When the water appears we hear words like-**rush...burst...crash...flow...roar**-these words are onomatopoeic(they sound like what they mean) They are also words we would associate with a raging river, which is what is happening in the eyes of the people of Dharvi.