

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS POINTS

Stanza-1

One of the most beautiful aspects of this poem is its balance of contrasting elements. 'Desiderata' is a carefully composed poem where different

aspects of life are considered while providing some sound advice for healthy living. The first stanza celebrates the placidity with which one can and should move amidst the noise and chaos of life. It also calls for a peaceful coexistence with fellow human beings, but does it after qualifying it within a certain parameter ('As far as possible, without surrender').

We see the poem allowing for peaceful coexistence without surrendering one's own self-respect and dignity thereby making the advice a realistic rather than an idealistic one. Speaking one's truth is balanced with listening to others, irrespective of their intellectual abilities because people have their experiences which may go beyond the domain of the intellect.

Stanza-2

In this stanza Max Ehrmann advises one to avoid loud and boastful people as they are troublesome and may spoil one's mood. Also, one must not compare oneself to ~~others~~ others as there will always be someone who is better or worse than us which makes us either unnecessarily proud or bitter. A very important piece of advice is provided in the last line of this stanza, that is, enjoying and cherishing our plans as well as our successes. This may sound like an odd advice in an age obsessed with celebrating achievements, but it must not be forgotten that often times the journey is as significant as the destination.

Stanza - 3

Holding fast to one's career is highlighted in this stanza as it provides one with a certain degree of stability in troubled times. It also advises one to be cautious in one's 'business affairs' because this world is filled with deception, but in doing so one should not shut out his/her natural goodness or virtue. The poet further acknowledges that many people continue with their remarkable and unremarked acts of heroism in their daily lives. The beauty of this poem lies in its balance and implicit acknowledgement of the limitation of its application.

Stanza - 4

This stanza encourages one to be true to oneself and maintain the unique peculiarity that one is gifted ~~on~~ with. Further, the poet urges never to make pretensions about love or be critical about it. He means to suggest that love is too sublime to be handled ordinarily, because it is a God like quality. A positive simile is used to describe the role of love during the hardships of life for it is one of the few things which thrives 'as perennial as the grass' even in the face of hopelessness and disillusionment.

Stanza-5

A metonymy (figure of speech) is used to describe the importance of wisdom and experience of old age ('counsel of the years'), which needs to be taken with a certain degree of ~~openess~~ openness and humility. Also, the poet emphasises on the fact that experience is the best teacher. He advises that in our youthful days we should be 'gracefully surrendering' all those aspects of youth like impulse, adrenaline, rush of blood, quick temper in order to accomodate the advices of the elderly. Though one must not be anxious, one must be prepared to take on the challenges of life as is highlighted by the alliteration 'nurture strength of spirit to shield you in sudden misfortune'. Once having disciplined oneself in a healthy manner, one must not be too hard on oneself either.

Stanza-6

This stanza contains one of the most striking lines in the entire poem. The positivity of the message in this stanza is unparalleled. It involves recognising oneself as a part of the universe in the same order of the trees and the stars. By placing the individual as a strand in the great fabric of being, the stanza affirms that the cosmos 'is conspiring to make things happen as it should, whether or not it may lie within our comprehension - we become wiser by the day.

Stanza - 7

This stanza builds on the previous one and encourages one to stay still and acknowledge that things happen according to the manner in which it is meant to be and that one should be at peace with God and with one's soul amidst the noisy confusion of life. This stanza establishes the superiority of God and one's acknowledgement that he is the supreme authority.

Stanza - 8

The last stanza celebrates perfection within the imperfection of the day-to-day life. While much of the world is replete with defects and shortcomings, it is nevertheless a beautiful world. In such a world as this, happiness is not a state but action - it is an effort and an attitude. Perhaps this is why the poem ends with the lines : 'Be cheerful / Strive to be happy'