

Father Returning Home

Dilip Chitre

My father travels on the late evening train
Standing among silent commuters in the yellow light
Suburbs slide past his unseeing eyes alienated
His shirt and pants are soggy and his black raincoat
Stained with mud and his bag stuffed with books is
falling apart. His eyes dimmed by age sympathy for father
fade homeward through the humid monsoon night.
Now I can see him getting off the train d
Like a word dropped from a long sentence. simile : as he is unimportant word
He hurries across the length of the grey platform, i.e. no longer relevant

Crosses the railway line, enters the lane, hurry to warm home...
His chappals are sticky with mud, but he hurries onward.
Home again, I see him drinking weak tea, alienated at his own home
Eating a stale chapati, reading a book. basic dietary requirements are not met by his family
He goes into the toilet to contemplate
Man's estrangement from a man-made world. not belong
Coming out he trembles at the sink, trembling because of cold water and also
The cold water running over his brown hands, A few he is worn out broken down
droplets cling to the greying hairs on his wrists. His
sullen children have often refused to share
childrens share jokes with their parents, but here he is alienated too much
Jokes and secrets with him. He will now go to sleep
Listening to the static on the radio, dreaming Of his
ancestors and grandchildren, thinking Of nomads entering
a subcontinent through a narrow pass. relief from his mundane peace.

In the poem, life is not so easy any longer –
the father has become a figure of pathos and has lost his raison d'être.

The major themes include:

Alienation
Rootlessness
Old age in a modern society
Isolation
Cultural identity
The generation gap
The future of the individual in the city

Literary Devices Used

'Father Returning Home' is a free verse poem, that is, there is no set rhyme scheme and no dominant meter (metre in UK).

There are two twelve-line stanzas, 24 lines in total.

Note the use of the present participle ... Standing/unseeing/getting off/eating ...

Note the use of language to convey a mood. For example: unseeing/soggy/falling apart/
dimmed/dropped/stale/estrangement/sullen.

Enjambment is used – when a line carries on into the next without punctuation, continuing the sense – see lines 1 - 6, 8 in first stanza. And lines 15, 20 - 23.

The simile Like a word dropped from a long sentence in line 9 is powerful and worth exploring.