

Jinnah's Typewriter by Shadab Zeest Hashmi, Summary and Analysis

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Text of the Poem

Your typewriter has been found
in a tangle of seaweed

clacking over the waves of the Arabian Sea
in sand-grit staccato

for sixty odd years
churning the same speech

first in the key
of partition trains rattling
with the dead
then the massacre of '71
the "hunter-killer"
MQ-nines

The sea
smooth as carbon paper
clones a speech with every wave:

Unity, Faith, Discipline

What was spilled
came back as hardened coral:

Each time a still-birth

Your typewriter keeps time
with the beggar-women
sobbing
by the shore

Main idea

The poem, Jinnah' Typewriter is written by Shadab Zeest Hashmi. She is an American poetess who hails from Peshawar, Pakistan. The poetess is feeling sad about the Pakistani nation's lame way of acting and neglecting the sagacious advice of our leader, Quaid e Azam, Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

It is quite hurting and pinching for the poetess while discussing the partition of 1947 or the separation of East and West Pakistan in 1971 and also alarming us if we want to avoid any type of event like we should not ignore the golden rules of our Quaid. The famous words of our leader, 'Unity, Faith, and Discipline' have been blotted out by us. The poem revolves around the unfortunate attitude of the nation towards its heartfelt leader.

Summary

The poetess is directly addressing the soul of a great leader, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, who founded Pakistan back in 1947, telling him that your typewriter has been found entangled among the algae in the sea. The typewriter is sailing with the sea sand on the waves of the Arabian Sea. Moreover, while banging with the waves it is creating a disjointed rhythm.

The mechanical sound coming out of the typewriter is, in fact, reminding us of our leader's words once he spoke i.e. 'Unity, Faith, and Discipline'. These words are more vocal and needed in the time of not only during partition but in the time of separation of East Pakistan and West Pakistan in 1971, and also in modern times of drone attacks.

The whole sea is acting like carbon paper thereby making more and more copies of the Quaid's saying not only propagating but also spreading as its waves stretch out towards the shore. But our nation has forgotten and ignored these quotes turned into hard hollow shells that perished under water cementing reefs.

Quaid's sayings are facing the destination of a stillbirth. These waves carrying pearls of wisdom are dying before they reach the shore or to their point of disembarkation.

In the last lines, the poetess again addresses Quaid e Azam, that his typewriter is facing the same cold attitude from his nation, the way people pay no heed to a weeping bagger sitting beside a seashore or a road collar.

Tone

The tone of the poem is gloomy, dejected, and disappointing when one sees the people of Pakistan who have forgotten the teachings and tribulations taken by their Quaid to get them a separate homeland.

Structure

This beautifully structured poem consists of three halves. The first one contains an introduction. The second one comprises painful historical events and the last one ends with a hopeless note. The poem is in a descriptive style. It is in free verse.

Diction

The diction of the poem is not as simple. The poetess uses words other than the English language. Moreover, most words are taken from the sea world like 'seaweed' and 'hardened coral'.

The word 'Staccato' is taken from the Italian language, showing the poetess' knowledge about languages besides English.

Imagery

The title of the poem in fact stands symbolically for the struggle against colonial powers to bring Pakistan into reality. The typing of the keys is a small step taken in the way to achieving Pakistan. The sound of the clicking of the keys of the typewriter signifies the painful voice of people who suffered during the partition. The word, 'sand -grit' is used to describe the valuelessness and worthlessness of the typewriter. The Sea or ocean carries multiple symbolic meanings. Starting from mystery, hope, and calmness to formlessness, chaos, and unfathomable.

The alliteration of, 't' in, "of partition trains rattling" epitomizes the scene of the barbaric assassination of the innocent passengers in the trains.

The juxtaposition of, "sixty-odd years" is used very beautifully. Although sixty is an even number the poetess used this to create stress in her argument and to deal with the ordeal she wants to depict in her poem.

The use of imagery of, 'Carbon paper' for a sea is to emphasize the need for Quaid's words in modern times. As seawater is making copies of these words shows how important it is for a nation to follow his long-forgotten speeches

'Hardened coral' symbolizes society's hard attitude towards Quaid's dictums for success.

‘Stillbirth is rightly used to symbolize people’s heedless attitudes.

In the end, the ‘sobbing bagger woman’ personifies on one hand the wretched position of Quaid’s speeches at the hands of his nation, and on the other hand, it encapsulates the cold behavior of his people.

Critical analysis

Once in his statement, Quaid e Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah said, “I alone with the help of my Secretary and my typewriter won Pakistan for Muslims” has compelled Shadab Zeest Hashmi to speak out or protest against the Pakistani nation’s demeanor towards their Quaid’s guidelines to become a successful nation. Quaid e Azam throughout his struggle set the directions of his nation but after his death, we throw his principles into the sea as that typewriter is found in ‘The Arabian Sea’.

The poetess in her true goodness reminds us of the two dreadful events we already faced and at the same time warns us of modern warfare but still can’t encompass failures and are unable to fulfill our leader’s dreams thereby making Pakistan an invincible country with an unflinching defense line. This is only possible if we follow the rules written by our Quaid through his typewriter.

Although the historical events discussed in the poem are related to Pakistan only if we talk from a larger perspective, the poetess is discussing the war zones, the massacres done during wartime have been changed from conventional killings to modern-day killings through drone attacks. The nations always learn from their history but we Pakistanis are ignoring and disregarding our great leader.

The pathetic situations increase manifold when the poetess synchronizes Quaid's maxims with bagger women's sobbing. No one bothers the bagger woman and her sobbing the same way the nation is inert towards Quaid's sayings.

