

An Unknown Girl

In the evening bazaar
studded with neon
an unknown girl
is hennaing my hand.

She squeezes a wet brown line
from a nozzle.

She is icing my hand
which she steadies with hers
on her satin-peach knee.

In the evening bazaar
for a few rupees
an unknown girl
is hennaing my hand.

As a little air catches
my shadow-stitched kameez
a peacock spreads its lines
across my palm.

Colours leave the street
float up in balloons.

Dummies in shop-fronts
tilt and star

with their Western perms.
Banners for Miss India 1993,
for curtain cloth
and sofa cloth
canopy me.

I have new brown veins.

In the evening bazaar
very deftly
an unknown girl
is hennaing my hand.

I am clinging
to those firm peacock lines
like people who cling
to the sides of a train.

Now the furious streets
are hushed.

I'll scrape off
the dry brown lines
before I sleep,

reveal soft as a snail trail
the amber bird beneath.

it will fade in a week.

When India appears and reappears

I'll lean across a country
with my hands outstretched

longing for an unknown girl
in the neon bazaar.

Comment [i1]: Repeated three 3 times. It divides the poem into 3 sections: girl/henna process: India and where she is: how she wants to stay.

Comment [i2]: Connotation of mysterious. It is mysterious like India.

Comment [i3]: Suggests that it is temporary: she is trying to adopt Indian culture but it is temporary.

Comment [i4]: Suggests decorating, delicate, beauty, superficial but it won't last long.

Comment [i5]: Enjambment. Suggests everything is fast.

Comment [i6]: Suggests exotic. It represents India; beautiful, needs to be opened up/explored.

Comment [i7]: Suggests fake. Indian people are influenced by the west, tourists who don't realise how beautiful India is.

Comment [i8]: Connotation of awkward. She feels that they are out of place.

Comment [i9]: Fake. They are the worst example of western influence.

Comment [i10]: Short sentence. It represents short definite and sense of pride.

Comment [i11]: Metaphor. It is apart of her body, her blood.

Comment [i12]: Desperation, doesn't want to let it go.

Comment [i13]: Suggests that India is a lively and chaotic city.

Comment [i14]: Suggests that she is digging deeper into India.

Comment [i15]: Connotation of slow. She want the time to pass slowly.

Comment [i16]: Sibilance. Suggests gentle and smooth.

Comment [i17]: It suggests that no matter how hard she tries it will still fade.

Comment [i18]: Image. 1. opening herself up 2. never get enough 3. begging and desperate to stay.

Comment [i19]: Suggests desperation.

Comment [i20]: Repetition of "unknown". It suggests 1. the henna artist 2. the unknown side of the poem. Also it emphasises mystery.

Comment [i21]: All lines are short and there is no stanza. It shows that India is spontaneous, non western. Also it also shows that she has a short time in India and she doesn't want to end.

It is a cycle because first words are similar to last words. It suggests: coming and going, process will happen again and again.