

1-1w

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Summary of the Poem

An old beggar woman catches hold of the sleeve of the speaker and insists on getting a fifty paise coin in alms. She tags along with him and catches hold of his shirt. She promises that she will take him to the horseshoe ~~shrine~~ temple. If he tells her that he has already seen the temple, she hobbles along with him and catches hold of his shirt tightly and again insists on getting a fifty paise coin. She will not let him go. Like all other old women, she too sticks to him like a burr (prickly seed case of plants which stick to clothes). He turns around and wants to get rid of her. In order to end this useless activity, he tells her firmly to leave him. When she remarks,

"What else can an old woman do
On hills as wretched as these"

He looks right at the sky in contemplation. As he looks at her, he finds that the cracks that begin around her eyes have spread beyond her skin. The decay of the old woman has spread to the hills and the temples and in our lives. The old woman stands here alone. And he is reduced to a small change in her hand.