

A CASE STUDY ON ASPECTS OF INDIANNESS REFLECTED IN THE POEM PALANQUIN BEARERS BY SAROJINI NAIDU

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Abstract

Sarojini Naidu is a political activist and a mesmerizing poetess, also known as "The Nightingale of India". She is one of the most prominent personalities and the pride of the country. This is a study on the reflection of the rich traditions and customs of Indian culture and the aspects of Indianness reflected in the poem *Palanquin Bearers*, first published in Sarojini Naidu's first poetry collection, "The Golden Threshold," which was published in 1905. There are diverse civilizations, spiritualities, and ideals abounding throughout India. The main feature of the poem is its vivid imagery, presented through the blending of several visual images. The poem is an extract from a time in India's history when palanquins could be seen all over the streets. The poet purposefully applied contrasting emotions of joy and tears in the poem *Palanquin Bearers*. The bride is emotional since she is going away from her family, but she is also overwhelmed because she is beginning a new chapter of her life with a new family at the same time. Historically, women were perceived as a burden in Indian culture. However, because of the pleasant atmosphere, the bride's palanquin bearers do not feel burdened when they carry her after she is married. Being a royal bride's palanquin bearer was regarded as an honor.

Keyword: Tradition, History, Reflection, Indianness, Culture, Customs, Literature, Imagery.

INTRODUCTION

India is a country outstanding for its Indianness, with diverse cultures, different traditions, and being devoted religiously. Every concept of tradition has not only devotional reasoning but also personal emotions filled with desires and love, which have been maintaining the beauty of the Indian heritage. There's a blend of languages, customs, traditions, and faith that characterize the Indian essence. The traditional celebrations are the most inspiring part, which contributes to making the country what it is. Some traditions have become history with time and are no more, but they are still alive through literature. History was saved by literature; every written piece holds and preserves the aspects of Indianness that are reflected in literary works. One of the classic masterpieces is *Palanquin Bearers*, a poem from a poetry collection named "The Golden Threshold" by Sarojini Naidu, published in 1905. She is the most renowned, optimistic, and inspiring poetess and a political activist for the country of India. Her poems are highly appreciative in terms of imagination and sensibility, which made her the greatest poetess in Indian history. She earned herself the title of 'The Nightingale of India' or 'Bharat Kokila' from Mahatma Gandhi. Her poems are deeply expressive, filled with joy and optimism, and also based on serious themes like patriotism and feminism, which fills the readers with a great deal of inspiration and respect for Naidu and the country. In *Palanquin Bearers*, Sarojini Naidu used the theme to reflect the customs and tradition and beautifully created a pictorial view of a young royal bride being carried on a Palanquin to the groom's house. The poem is in an amusing song structure divided into two stanzas each of six lines, and the rhyming scheme of the poem is *aabbccdd*. The Palanquin is a mode of transportation that was very commonly visible in the 19th and early 20th centuries, and even nowadays it is rarely seen only in North India due to the hillside. How sincerely Sarojini Naidu has displayed palanquin bearers, turning wearing responsibility into a joyful experience.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

This research is a case study on aspects of Indian traditional and cultural essence reflected in the setting of ancient India in the poem *Palanquin Bearers* by Sarojini Naidu. Identification of the poetess's method of expressing the message and application of song like structure, rich similes, and imagery.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Literary analysis: Close reading, Line by line analysis to identify themes, imagery.

Examination of structure: rhyme scheme, stanzaic form.

Cultural and historical research: Historical context, sociopolitical sense from the late 19th to early 20th century.

Reflection of Indianness and the poetess's message conveyed in *Palanquin Bearers*:

Palanquin Bearers illustrates the sentiments of Indian culture where a bride is being carried to a groom's house. The poem is rich in imagery and similes. There is a beautiful expression of contrasting impressions of happiness and sadness, which are common emotions in marriage. The use of imagery is presented very elegantly: "*She floats like a laugh*," which expresses the feelings of delight, excitement, and curiosity for the new beginning; "*She falls like a tear*," along with the sadness of leaving the family and childhood home. Traditional Indian culture is highly valued when it comes to marriage, from the rituals to the attire; everything holds great value. The poetess captures the essence of an emotional period of a woman's life. The bearers are carrying the palanquin lightly, delicately, and singing songs with their movements, and the bride is being compared with different precious things -

Lightly, O lightly we bear her along,
She sways like a flower in the wind of our song;
She skims like a bird on the foam of a stream,
She floats like a laugh from the lips of a dream.
Gaily, O gaily we glide and we sing,
We bear her along like a pearl on a string.
Softly, O softly we bear her along,
She hangs like a star in the dew of our song;
She springs like a beam on the brow of the tide,
She falls like a tear from the eyes of a bride.
Lightly, O lightly we glide and we sing,
We bear her along like a pearl on a string. (Naidu)

Sarojini Naidu, a prominent female representative of Indians, has never missed an opportunity to convey the simplicity of Indians, whether in times of public speaking or through her writings. She utilizes imagery, sensibility, and, most importantly, the perspective of life in India in every means through which Indianness can be demonstrated. The title of the poem "*Palanquin Bearers*" identifies the Indian essence in which Naidu has vividly portrayed the working-class men of India who admire the bride by singing songs while they carry her in the palanquin with lots of care and respect. The use of pictorial elements applied with minimal details where the bearers glorify the young bride in the line "*we bear her along like a pearl on a string*".

CONCLUSION

The artistic quality is identified even in the simplicity when the bride is compared with a flower, a bird, a pearl, and a star. The main feature of the poem is its vivid imagery, presented through the blending of several visual images. It used to be a great honor for a bearer who carried palanquins; despite hardships, they were so lively and unaffected. Everything seemed to be going well. The bearers never thought of it as a burden but as a responsibility—a duty, and they were very considerate and moved smoothly. There are diverse civilizations, spiritualities, and ideals abounding throughout India. Tradition comes with values and responsibilities, whether one is a palanquin bearer or not. If traditions are not considered burdens but a valuable duty, it beautifies the culture and maintains the Indianness of Indians.

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