

P.G. DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
MAHARAJA COLLEGE, ARA
B.A SEM -III
MJC-English

Q. Reflect on the style, themes and structure of Palanquin bearers by Sarojini Naidu

"Palanquin Bearers" can be found in The Golden Threshold, Sarojini Naidu's renowned collection of poetry. It appears in the Folk Songs section and is the volume's first poem. The palanquin's bearers are singing this tune. The word "Palanquin" is exclusively connected to India. It is a covered sofa that is carried on two horizontal poles and is intended for passengers, particularly brides and married women. Four or six strong bearers typically carry it. They mentally ease their load by singing together as they carry the palanquin.

There are two verses in "Palanquin Bearers." The carriers' careful handling of the box and their singing while doing so are described in the first stanza. They use a number of metaphors to exalt the traveler. For instance, in their lovely song, they liken the woman to a flower dancing. She floats like a laugh from dreamers' lips and skims like a bird on the sea. The bearers are content to carry her as though she were a priceless pearl hanging from a pole's strings.

Naidu describes the woman using a similar pattern in the following poem. The lady hanging on the palanquin is the subject of the bearers' song. The woman is described as both a tear and a beam. As a refrain, the final two lines are repeated.

The poem's title, "Palanquin Bearers," connotes an Indian quality. The song that palanquin bearers sing when transporting a female passenger is the subject of this composition. Naidu examines how they exalt the woman as though she were a priceless object in this poetry. Additionally, it shows how much men respect the woman. She is as tender as a flower to them. As a result, they must tolerate her. They are not dissatisfied with their jobs. They thus restate that they are delighted

to be the bride's fellow passengers. This charming little song beautifully captures the lady's attractiveness and the palanquin's flowing motion. The poem "Palanquin Bearers" has two stanzas. There are six lines in each stanza. In other ways, the number of lines suggests how many men are transporting the woman to her final destination. This poetry is structured like a song. Every verse in it ends with a refrain. In both verses, Naidu employs a similar sentence form. Additionally, the carriers' point of view is used in the writing of this work. A poetic element is brought out in this composition by the musicality and the use of first-person speakers.

Rhyme Scheme

This piece contains a set rhyme scheme. It is AABBCDD, meaning each verse consists of three rhyming couplets. For example, the first two lines form a couplet that contains the following rhyming pair of words: "along" and "song".

The same scheme is followed in the second verse. There is only one exception. It occurs in the last two lines. In these lines, "sing" and "string" rhyme imperfectly. However, these terms end with a similar consonant sound.

Meter

Most of the lines of this poem contain eleven syllables. While a few contain ten syllables. After grouping the syllables into units of two/three syllables, there will be a total of four feet in front of readers. They need to stress the second/third syllable of each foot. Hence, the overall poem is composed in anapestic tetrameter with a few iambic and trochaic variations.

*Light-ly,/ O light/-ly we bear/ her a-long,
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.
Gai-ly,/ O gai/-ly we glide/ and we sing,
We bear/ her a-long/ like a pearl/ on a string*

Poetic Devices & Figures of Speech

Naidu uses the following poetic devices in "Palanquin Bearers".

- **Repetition:** It occurs throughout the poem. For instance, the beginning of the first line is repeated in the fifth line. Besides, line 2-4 follows a similar beginning.
- **Anaphora:** It occurs in the second, third, and fourth lines of each verse. These lines begin with the pronoun "She".
- **Simile:** It occurs in lines 2-4 of both the stanzas. For example, Naidu compares the lady to a flower, bird, and laugh in these lines.
- **Metaphor:** This device is used in the lines where simile occurs. For instance, the phrase "the wind of our song" contains a metaphor. Here, the flow of the song is compared to the wind. Another important metaphor of this piece is "a pearl on a string". Naidu compares the woman to a pearl and the poles of the palanquin to a string.
- **Refrain:** The last two lines of each stanza act as a refrain.
- **Alliteration:** It occurs in "She sways", "She skims", "Gaily, O gaily we glide", "She springs", etc.
- **Imagery:** Naidu makes use of visual imagery to compare the lady to a number of things. She also uses kinesthetic imagery in order to depict the movement of the palanquin.

Themes

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The act of palanquin bearing and feminine beauty are the central topics of "Palanquin Bearers." The themes of nature, music, and Indianness or orientalism are also explored by Naidu. An oriental country environment is depicted in this poem. It is now uncommon. But Naidu transports readers back to a period when Indian women rode palanquins. She uses imagery to illustrate the palanquin's movements in this poem. She seems to be comparing a bird soaring with the wind or a store floating on the sea. In addition, she identifies the essence of music with this physical action, which combines beauty and activity, effort and pleasure. It doesn't even appear from the carriers' tone that the act has worn them out. Instead, they relish the procedure as

but taking a precious pearl safely to its destination.