

K.T.S.P. Mandal's

Hutatatma Rajguru Mahavidyalaya, Rajgurunagar

Rajgurunagar, Pune- 410505

SYBA (CBCS 2019 Pattern)

SEMESTER - III

SUBJECT- COMPULSORY ENGLISH

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Topic- poetry

Sub Unit- The Palanquin Bearers by Sarojini Naidu

Summary of Palanquin Bearers by Sarojini Naidu

Nightingale of India

When people can't express through tongue they choose to bleed through their pen, becoming a writer isn't easy though. Single emotion but innumerable styles, abundant ideas and infinite techniques of communicating; only a writer can do this and so was Sarojini Naidu, who was given the title of 'Nightingale of India' because of her major contribution in the field of poetry, which contained English words but an Indian soul. She was born on February 13, 1879, in Hyderabad. Her father Dr Aghornath Chattopadyaya, was the founder of Nizam College of Hyderabad and a scientist. Her mother, Mrs Varasundari, was a Bengali poetess and SaMrsni Devi inherited qualities from both her father and mother. She was a great patriot, politician, orator and administrator. Her interest in the field of poetry was an outcome of the disinterest in algebra. She wrote her first inspired poetry in the algebra book and then enthused by this "The Lady of the Lake", a poem of 1300 lines long was written by her.

Summary

There is a custom of carrying a bride in a palanquin by the palanquin bearers and the poem 'The Palanquin Bearers' is so finely woven around this custom, which expresses the joy and pride of the palanquin bearers in carrying the newlywed princess to her in laws house and while walking they are singing along happily.

According to the palanquin bearers the bride is so light that it feels like the princess is swaying, like a flower sways in the wind. She is sitting in the palanquin and is hearing their song. They consider the royal princess as a privilege instead of burden to them, since she is sitting and thinking about her future after marriage. Like a flower in the wind, the bride is moving from side to side.

They say that 'she is like the bird that skims on the foam of a stream' which means that a bird passes a stream skipping through the foam of the stream and the bride resembles of that bird because she is so delicate to carry.

She carries a mixed feeling as she is leaving her parents behind and moving onto a new phase of her life. She is happy and contented to live and start a new inning with her beloved.

They are carrying her like a pearl on a string since she is precious and delicate like a jewel. In the dew of their song the princess is hanging like a star. Like a ray of light is seen on the top of a tide, she appears to be jumping just like that. Tear rolls down the eyes of a bride, in the same way she falls. The bearers are carrying the princess as if she is dew or a tear drop. They are delighted to carry the bride and could not feel her weight because she is very tender.

The poem carries a number of similes: a flower, dew drop and the laugh, to show how delicate and light the bride is, by using such similes the poetess' intention is to get across that the bride is very tender and needs to be handled with care. The poetess is representing the bride as the heroine of the poem. She describes the gesture of the bride by using different words of movement like: sways, skims, floats and glide. The refrain gives the perception of consistent and steady movement of the palanquin. The poetess describes the bride as "she floats like a laugh" and then she writes "she falls like a tear". This creates a contradiction because the bride is in tears since she is separating from her family, but she is laughing because she is going to start a new relation with the love of her life.

Question -Answer Section

Q.No.1 What are the feelings of the palanquin bearers as they carry the princess inside the palanquin?

Answer: The palanquin bearers are delighted as they are carrying a royal bride to her in-laws. As they walk, they feel that she is as delicate like a flower who sways at their song. The palanquin bearers are so careful when they carry her as if she were a pearl on a string. This showcases that they have gained some respect towards her and actually treat her and her emotion delicately.

Q.No. 2 "Lightly, O lightly we bear her along; she sways like a flower in the wind of our song." What are these opening lines suggestive of? Do you think the palanquin bearers are sensitive to the presence of the bride?

Answer: These lines suggest that the bride inside the palanquin is very delicate and light. She is invaluable and also it is the most sacred and auspicious occasion for her.

The palanquin bearers are very sensitive to the presence of the bride as they handle her like a very precious jewel. They are so careful when they carry her as if she were a pearl on a string.

Q. No.3 What is the rhyme scheme of the poem? Pick out the pairs of rhyming words in the poem.

Answer: The rhyme scheme of the poem is aa, bb, cc

The rhyming words are along – song, stream – dream, sing – string, tide – bride

Q.No. 4. In line 4 the poet says, ‘She floats like a laugh from the lips of a dream’ and in line 10 she writes, ‘She falls like a tear from the eyes of a bride.’ Do you think that the poet has deliberately used the device of contrast? Why has she done so?

Answer: The contradiction is when the poet describes the bride as “she floats like a laugh” and then she writes “she falls like a tear”. It is deliberate because the bride is in tears at her separation from her family. But she smiles because she is happy over going to be united with the love of her life and start a fresh and exciting life.

Q.No.5. Simile: A figure of speech used to compare the qualities of two objects or things using words such as ‘like’ or ‘as’. For example

- a. The poet compares the bride to a flower.
- b. She hangs like a star in the dew of a song.

The poem is full of similes. Pick out all the similes used by the poet in the poem.

Answer: The poet has used various similes in the poem as given here as under:

1. She sways like a flower in the wind of our song;
2. She skims like a bird on the form of a stream,
3. She floats like a laugh from the lips of a dream.
4. We bear her along like a pearl on a string
5. She hangs like a star in the dew of our song;
6. She springs like a beam on the brow of the tide,
7. She falls like a tear from the eyes of a bride,

Q.No.6 Refrain: poets often use the device of the refrain. The refrain is a line or a part of a line or a group of lines repeated in the course of a poem. Did you notice that some words, lines/parts of lines are repeated in the poem?

Pick out these words or lines that are repeated. What effect does such repetition create in the poem?

Answer: The lines and words that are repeated in the poem are :

- i. Lightly, O lightly we bear her alone.
- ii. We bear her along like a pearl on a string.
- iii) Softly O Softly
- iv) Gaily O gaily

The refrain gives us the impression of a constant and balanced movement of the palanquin. It also adds in the rhythm of the poem.

Moreover, it bestows music to the song of palanquin bearer.