

Societal Constraints and Connection with Nature in Sarojini Naidu's *Village Song*

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ABSTRACT

The Paper represents a dialogue between a mother and daughter. It explores the conflict between domestic duty, freedom and connection with nature. The paper enhances the quest for self identity, pastoral life, feeling of nature and young woman's yearning for freedom. It explores the tension between societal norms of marriage and to escape from the sorrow. It depicts the social and cultural elements of Indian village life. She also explores the philosophical reality and the tension between desire and societal constraints.

Keywords: mother and daughter, sorrows, sufferings, beautiful, love and God

INTRODUCTION

This is a multi-dimensional poem with interplay of the real, mystical and mythical. It expresses a maiden's fear of crossing a long and lonely path, which she has to cover after filling her pitchers from the Yamuna. At a deeper level, it is a song of the soul craving for union with the divine. The soul is caught in the vicissitudes of this temporal world. On the mythical level, this is the archetypal love-cry of Radha for the divine flute player; Krishna. The poem is so elemental in its power of evocation that its usual impression recalls the medieval paintings of the Kangra School on the Saga altar. There are two eleven-line stanzas with a distinct rhyming pattern. The imagery is spontaneously Indian, drawn from the world of nature. The image of the bird dominates.

This song beautifully expresses a maiden's fear in a long and lonely way. She is allured by the boatman's songs, and stops, not caring for the long and lonely way she has to cover. Her pitchers are full and she has to take them far. The shadow of night has begun to fall and the moping owls have also begun to hoot. In such a desolate and dark atmosphere the maiden trembles with fear and imagines that her death by snake-bite or by the charm of some evil spirit would definitely occur. She thinks of her brother fretting over her delay and her mother weeping and saying:

“Full are my pitchers and far to carry,
Lone is the way and long.
Why, O why was I tempted to tarry?
Lured by the boatmen's song?
Swiftly the shadows of night are falling,
Hear, O hear, is the white crane calling.
Is it the wild owl's cry?
There are no tender moonbeams to light me,
If in the darkness a serpent should bite me,
Or if an evil spirit should smite me,
Ram Re Ram! I shall die” (Ramachandran Nair, 1987)

A village young girl goes to the tank to bring water. She is delayed to hear the sweet song of the boatman. She has to cross a long and dreary way alone. It was dark night and even moon was not visible. She is afraid that some snake or wicked spirit would harm her. God can alone save her. The girl was tempted by the sweet song of the boatman. She became late and felt that her family members would be worried. Her brother would gamble and feel angry. Her murmur would indicate his resentment. Her mother would be waiting and begin to weep at her absence home safely. She feels the depth of Jamuna

water and the rapid movements in the night from time. She would pray God that her daughter should reach of it water terrify her. Like the black birds, the shadows of night had covered the sky.

“My brother will murmur, 'Why doth she linger?'
My mother will wait and weep,
Saying, O safe may the great gods bring her,
The Jamuna's waters are deep'..
The Jamuna's waters rush by so quickly,
The shadows of evening gather so thickly,
Like black birds in the sky...” (Ramachandran Nair, 1987)

Just as black birds hover in the sky, in the sky, similarly the shadows of night might have covered the sky with darkness. The village girl felt the loneliness of the night. She had become very late and she feared that her family member would be worried for her. Her mother would weep at her absence in the night. Like the black birds hover in the sky, the shadows of night had covered the sky with darkness. H.M. Prasad rightly holds the view: “Sarojini Naidu writes instant poetry when images and metaphors come rolling ready on the hot plates of imagination. Her poetry is intensely emotional, at times passionate to the point of eroticism and always has a spring- like lyricism” (Prasad HM 22)

The darkness prevailed on all sides and the shadows of evening verged up the sky. The water of Jamuna is flowing and it indicates the approach some of the storm. The lonely village girl is worried at the approach of storm, because nobody would protect her in a dear place. The thunder and lightning would of some storm. Being despaired she prays to God to help her and carry her to some safe place. She would die if God does not help and direct her paths during the fierce storm. The thunder and lightning would increase her terror and she would seek shelter against storm. She is the meanwhile sees dark clouds looming large in the sky and her fear on such an occasion knows no bounds. She prays to God:

“O! If the storm breaks, what will betide me?
Safe from the lightning where shall I hide me?
Unless Thou succour my footsteps and guide me,
Ram Re Ram! I shall die” (Ramachandran Nair, 1987)

Ram re Ram is a typical exclamation used by Indian women flute player and the girl then would be Radha out to meet song of the boatman puts us in mind of Krishna, the eternal lyric is provided by the popular Radha-Krishna myth which is Krishna and delayed by him. The background to the exquisite known to all even in the remotest villages, Jamuna forms the background of the story of Radha and Krishna and in the present Sarojini does not refer to the Ganges in her poetry and this lack song, it is to this river that the maiden goes to fill her pitchers. of love for the rivers is surprising in the case of the Indian poetess. The heroine has fears not only for her own safety, but is also troubled by the thoughts of worry her delay must be causing to her parents and brother waiting for her at home In a suggestive and evocative image the increasing darkness has repetition of Rame Ram intensifies the Indian flavor of the folk song.

The comment of Shrimati P.V. Rajyalakshmi on the lyric is significant, "The shadows rise-like black birds in the sky. The serpent represents the phallic fears of an innocent maiden. Jamuna's waters rush by, a storm and lightning produces a chircasuro effect. The dark river projects the mystic canvas on which Radha's quest for the recognition of the cosmic being is unfolded. The poem is so elemental in its power of evocation that its usual impression recalls the medieval paintings, of the Kangra School on Raga Malhar. These depict Radha in the role of *Abhisarika* tremulously awaiting Krishna against a stormy background” (Rajyalakshmi P. V (1977). This lyric is entirely faithful to the spirit of an Indian folk-song.

The love of pastoral life is shown in this life. The young village boy, who is introduced here, gives up all poems. It is 'however' unspoiled by the sorrows and sufferings of the worldly pleasures and near and dear ones, and goes to the forest:
“Where upon the

Champa boughs, the
Champa bods are blowing
To the koil-haunted isles
Where lotus lilies glisten” (Hari Mohan Prasad, 23)

His mother tries her level best to stop him from going away by presenting before him the rosy picture of life. The world abounds in pleasure of "bridal songs and cradle songs and sandal scented leisure. His bridal robes are in the loom and his bridal cakes are on the hearth. He is advised not to give up this joyous and colorful world.

“HONEY, child, honey, child, whither are you going?
Would you cast your jewels all to the breezes blowing?
Would you leave the mother who on golden grain has fed you?
Would you grieve the lover who is riding forth to wed you?” (Hari Mohan Prasad, 23)

The Village Song' is a folk-lyric in the form of a dialogue between a mother and her daughter. The daughter is a romantic who wants to escape from the sorrow and suffering of the real, the actual and the present to the romantic world of nature and the super-nature.

The mother addresses her sweet daughter, and asks her where she is going to? Would she throw away all her jewellery into the wind that is blowing, and would she leave her mother who has fed her on 'golden grain, Le, brought her up with such affectionate care? Would she also break the heart of the lover who is coming on horseback to marry her, and thus cause him intense grief?

“Mother mine, to the wild forest I am going,
Where upon the champa boughs the champa buds are blowing;
To the köil-haunted river-isles where lotus lilies glisten,
The voices of the fairy folk are calling me: O listen!” (Hari Mohan Prasad, 23)

But the daughter who is fed up with the harsh realities of the mundane world is determined to go away. She would go away to the beautiful forests where the sweet-scented champa flowers are shining in all their beauty and the koels are singing. The fairies are calling her to the beautiful forest and she must go. She hears their call, and she invites her mother also to listen to them. “the poem revolves around the love of a girl for the nature and her manipulated flee from the domestic boundaries, yet a somehow deeper pondering leads a reader towards the contrast that exist between the mental approach of old generation and the thinking style of youth” (www.poemhunter.com) .

The boy probes deeper into reality. He discovers a strong under-current of deep sorrow in all the gay pageants of life. The lure of the forest call is really irresistible and more powerful than all the brilliant externals of life. “The Village Song" is a poem by Sarojini Naidu about the mindset of two generations, represented by an old woman and her daughter” (Ray, Mohit K.; Kundu, Rama: 126)

“Honey, child, honey, child, the world is full of pleasure,
Of bridal-songs and cradle-songs and sandal-scented leisure.
Your bridal robes are in the loom, silver and saffron glowing,
Your bridal cakes are on the hearth: O whither are you going?” (Hari Mohan Prasad, 23)

The mother continues her attempts to make her stay in her own world. The world is full of pleasures, there are sweet lullabys and sweet marriage songs, and there is also plenty of leisure and fragrance of sandal sweet wood. Her bridal dress, of beautiful and bright white and saffron prepared. The delicious bridal-cakes are also ready. Therefore, she should not go away leaving behind all these pleasures and causing intense sorrow to her mother and to her bridegroom. Thus the mother seeks to counter romantic escape-world imagined by the daughter with a romantic picture which they inhabit.

“The bridal-songs and cradle-songs have cadences of sorrow,
The laughter of the sun to-day, the wind of death to-morrow.
Far sweeter sound the forest-notes where forest-streams are falling;
O mother mine, I cannot stay, the fairy-folk are calling” (Hari Mohan Prasad, 23)

But the daughter is not to be stopped. The call of the fairies is much powerful. She frankly tells her mother that the pleasures of this w short-lived. Bridal songs and cradle-songs have an under-current of and the pleasures she refers to are fleeting. The sun-shine of joy is darkened in no time by the wind of death. The songs of the forest are much more than the songs of the world, and they are also more lasting. So she will the forest and enjoy the sweet music of the birds and the streams. She can no longer stay with her, but must go, for the fairies are calling her. “The poem's exploration of the tension between societal expectations and personal desires reflects the changing social norms of Naidu's time in India. Women were typically expected to marry and raise families, but the poem suggests that there were also women who sought a life outside of these traditional roles” (allpoetry.com)

This charming lyric gives a vivid and forceful expression to the eternal longing of the human heart for the remote, the distant and the unfamiliar, for a world which is not subject to the fluctuations of the human joy and sorrows, which is eternally beautiful and sweet. The poetess has succeeded capturing the simplicity and the spirit of the folk-song. Commenting in poem P.V. Rajaylakshmi writes, "The daughter is like the sublunary f in the poet's reverie, Nilambuja,

standing on the edges of her temperament, thirsting after the eternal beauty of the Universe. She is poet-soul, whose instincts of awakening womanhood for the intoxication love and joy of life were deeply interfused with the more urgent and intimate need for a perfect sympathy with its incommunicable vision, its subtle an inexpressible thought"(Rajayalakshmi P. V 1977)

CONCLUSION

The more urgent and intimate need of the sensitive maiden's personality cannot be understood by the mother who nurture le own sense of loss and separation. The daughter explains her own irresistible fidelity to the charms of the fairy world. The poet dramatizes the tension between the mother's traditional view of life and the daughter's romantic view of individuality, by adapting the folk-idiom, with its concern for soc gradation and ritual, to contrast with the highly subjective flavour daughter's volatile temperament. *The Village-Song* is a folk-version poet's "Nilambuja"; and as a folk-song it fits naturally into the background action and sentiment, germane to the racial consciousness.

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