



COLOUR,CULTURE,AND TRADITION OF INDIA IN THE POEMS OF SAROJINI NAIDU

(With reference to the poems *Indian Weavers, The Bangle Sellers & In Praise of Heena*).

Prof. Vanashree Godbole Asstt .Prof of English
Govt.M.L.B Girls'P.G.College Indore. (M.P.)



Colour represents various moods of life. It is powerful means to communicate human feelings. Wide varied colours diversify each moment of our life. The sense of colour is as extended as the sense of LIFE. The folklore of a culture includes the stories, songs, and poems that people pass along from generation to generation. The word folklore meant “the Lore of the People.” It included all rituals, customs, traditions, and beliefs of unknown origin that expressed the concerns of the life ordinary people. Poetic imagery is a technique that is used to express feeling. In the visual, literary, and performing arts ‘Expressionism’ is a movement or tendency that strives to express subjective feelings and emotions rather than to depict reality or nature objectively. Sarojini Naidu was among the pioneer women poet, who was fascinated by the amazing diversity of Indian life, culture and tradition. Naidu. (1879 – 1949), was an Indian independence activist and poet. She was the second Indian woman to become the President of the Indian National Congress and was honored as ‘The Nightingale of India’ (Bharatiya Kokila). Being one of the most famous heroines of the 20th century, her birthday is celebrated as “National Women's Day”. Naidu voiced the dreams and aspirations of the making of the nation. She wrote mainly on the rural i.e. the folk aspects of Indian culture and women's experiences.

Naidu`s poems are remarkable for their richness of colour, grandeur, lyrical magic and romantic beauty. Her works include ‘The Golden Threshold’, ‘The Bird of Time’ and ‘The Broken Wing’, besides other equally significant collections. Her poetical works are not time bound instead they are Timeless. Her poetry has a vivacious and enthusiastic touch of optimism and faith. She paints the panorama of Indian life with all the shades of colours and moods. Through various professions Naidu has portrayed the association of various Indian culture and tradition. She painted beautiful pictures of various occupation alongwith the important aspects of Indian Life :- such as Fisherman, The Bangle Sellers, Indian Weavers, Palanquin Bearers, Wandering Singers. The most striking feature of Naidu`s poetry is that its flavor is native. Naidu employed the device of trinity in her writings as in a stanza patterns, in the ideology, the philosophy, and in social customs and behavior. She has written lyrics on the various professions of Indian people it echoes the melody and rhythm of rich folk traditions and customs. “India is a land of diverse cultures.” As Naidu was sensitive towards Indian folk culture, her folk poetry is simple and contains vocabulary and imagery from everyday life and sights which showed her sense of integrity with folk life as it is lived. She was a keen observer of folk life that inspired her to write poetry which beautifully captures celebration of folk life. Her poetry is unique and qualitative. Her poetic themes are native and bear the spirit of India. She had a fresh, innovative and original approach towards objects. The setting in her poems is rural. As Naidu is a multidimensional poet she deals with themes that are real, mystical, spiritual and mythical. Association of colours with the feelings of human beings particularly of women is highlighted in her poems. She has made



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use of colour and colour associated words to symbolize various aspects of life. Naidu's poetry reflects all the stages of woman's life that masculine domination has sentimentalized. She sings so far as Indian womanhood is concerned, the contribution to the total harmony.

“*Indian Weavers*” (Philosophy of Life) “*The Bangle Sellers*” (Expression of Stages in woman's life) and “*In Praise Of Henna*”. (Ritual and Tradition) are the poems selected for a special mention in the perspectives of colour, culture and tradition of India.

Basic colours have common symbolic meaning as Green is the colour of life. It is the color of seasonal renewal, green symbolizes hope and immortality. Green is also associated with regeneration, fertility, and rebirth due to its connections with nature. It is also associated with death, sickness, or the devil. It can also describe someone who is inexperienced, jealous, or sick. Red is the color of fire and blood and have both positive and negative connotations: bloodshed, aggression, war, and hate are on one side, and love, warmth and compassion on the other side both with greater intensity. Yellow is associated with sunshine, knowledge, and the flourishing of living creatures, but also with autumn and maturity. The yellow sun was one of humanity's most important symbols and was worshiped as God in many cultures. The radiant yellow light of the sun personified divine wisdom. White represents freedom, purity, and innocence, the color Black represents death and illness. The high contrast between white and black is often used to represent opposite concepts, such as day and night, and good and evil. In human color psychology, purple is associated with royalty and nobility and maturity.

The poem “*The Bangle Sellers*” was first published in the year 1912 by Sarojini Naidu in her collection of poems called “*The Bird of Time.*” The poem *Bangle-Sellers* is associated with bangles and the implementation of roles assigned to a woman in a traditional Indian society. Sarojini Naidu makes strong connections between the bangles and their role in giving happiness to daughters, wives and mothers. A group of bangle sellers is on its way to the temple fair to sell their bangles. One of them is the narrator of this poem. The bangles they sell are of religious and symbolic importance. No Indian widow is permitted to wear bangles. Hence the wearing of bangles is considered to be very auspicious and of great symbolic value for married women and aspiring brides. The significant factor of the poem is that the bangle seller does not say a word about their poverty, nor do they say anything about the profit or loss, their focus is only on the human element associated to bangles. The poem ‘*Bangle Sellers*’ is a lyric which depicts the social and cultural life of Indian women through various images associated with ‘bangles’. Bangles is an ornament that are worn in the wrist. In India on the occasions of various festivals and religious ceremonies women buy bangles. Its colours represents the stages in a women's life and also expresses the feelings of a woman. They are not just a series of beautiful imagery, but a symbolic representation of the various stages in the life of a typical Indian woman. Her maidenhood, state of being a bride and motherhood are poignantly and lyrically portrayed in four stanzas. Sarojini Naidu has emphasized the auspiciousness and the symbolic value of the custom of wearing bangles by repeating the word “happy.” The resultant feeling is one of fulfillment and contentment. Thus, the multi-hued bangles celebrate the beauty and meaning of womanhood.



Images are used here for describing the colors and textures of the glass bangles being on sale in the temple fair. As in the lines from the first stanza:-

*Rainbow-tinted circles of light?
Lustrous tokens of radiant lives,
For happy daughters and happy wives.*

Colour associated word rainbow include seven colours that gives the effect of all shades of life particularly the happy moments, as the season in which rainbow is seen is pleasant and happy. Also the word radiant express in the bright glow emanating joy and happiness. Each of the next three stanzas deal with the three stages in the life of an average Indian woman - a virgin maiden, an expectant bride and finally a mature matriarch. Silver and Blue color here stands for mist in which nothing is clearly visible the unknown future in which an inexperienced girl's life is advancing. She is compared to a bud yet to unfurl.

'Silver and blue as the mountain mist, Some are flushed like the buds that dream'

In the following stanzas lush and natural imagery describe the beauty of the bangles and their representation of these ideals help to increase their precious value. Some of these descriptions conjure the intensity of passion in marriage fire.

'Some, like the flame of her marriage fire', Tinkling, luminous, tender, and clear,

gives the meaning of softness of the feelings of a bride compared to the laughter and happy tears.

In the last stanza, the socially accepted role of women is described.

'Some are purple and gold flecked grey For she who has journeyed through life midway,'

The purple and gray flecked bangle is meant to symbolize a woman who by serving her family has gain the pride to sit with her husband to worship God .

"Serves her household in fruitful pride, and worships the gods at her husband's side."

To conclude in this poem various Colours of bangles symbolically represents a particular stage in a woman's life. Misty silver and blue colour is used for a maiden, virgin who aspires for bright future and golden yellow colour represents the expectant and passionate bride, and for the mature married woman it is a "purple and gold flecked grey". Sarojini Naidu's poetic imagery describes the longings of an Indian woman according to each stage of her life. Indian women through a sequence of images associated with 'bangles' representing various stages in the life of a traditional Indian woman. Most of the images used here for describing the colours and textures of the glass bangles are visual, Phrases like "shining loads", "circles of light", "silver and blue as the mountain mist", "flushed like the buds that dream", "Like fields of sunlit corn", "like the flame of her marriage fire", "Purple and gold-flecked" – all can be categorized as the Visual Imagery. The only auditory image used is "tinkling" which comes into use only when the



bangles are worn. Metaphors used to describe the colors of bangles such as Rainbow-tinted circles of light, Tinkling, luminous, tender, and clear, Similes are also used like 'Some are flushed like the buds that dream,' 'Some are like fields of sunlit corn,' 'Silver and blue as the mountain mist'. Vivid imagery is exploited to the poetic effect as in the above stanzas different colours of bangles represent different moods in human life.

As the title suggests the Poem 'In Praise of Heena' Naidu has mentioned the importance of Henna, how it is used and symbolic meaning associated with it. A short poem but is of great importance because of its intense relation to woman's feelings. Henna is considered very auspicious in Indian home where festivals are celebrated with full gusto. A green leaves plant whose leaves are grinded and a paste is made and applied on palms, which after washing hands, gives red colour, the darkness of red colour symbolize the intensity of love a woman's husband have for her. Henna is considered very auspicious in festivals related to husband's love and for husband's long life like Karwa Chauth and Hartalika Teez. As in the lines from first stanza:-

*Grind them in mortars of amber and gold,
The fresh green leaves of the henna-tree*

Woman are asked to hurry and collect the green leaves, here Green colour is the color of life. It is the color of seasonal renewal green symbolizes hope and immortality. Red symbolizing love, warmth and compassion into a woman's life. Even if the form of the leaves is changed the continuity of life remains.

But, for lily-like fingers and feet. The red, the red of the henna-tree .

Naidu has picked up the passion in woman's life and beautifully presented in the poem this shows her keen observing nature. Not a single experience of woman is left unattended. It a simple poem and a sort of instruction given to prepare for the ritual. In the poem "Indian Weavers" colours are prominently used to represent three stages of life. The "Indian Weavers" symbolize the three stages of human life –birth, youth and death. She successfully presents as in the following lines:-

*Weavers weaving at break of day,
Why do you weave a garment so gay?
Blue as the wing of a halcyon wild,
We weave the robes of a new-born child.*

The poetess says that Weavers started their work in early morning and they make bright garments in blue colour as the wings of the Kingfisher. When the poetess ask the question, Weavers tell that they weaving the garment of a new born Child. It relates to the childhood of a person. As blue is the symbol of love and innocence so is a new born baby, and the halcyon stands for the breeding bird whose wings are blue.



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*Weavers, weaving at fall of night,
Why do you weave a garment so bright?...
Like the plumes of a peacock, purple and green,
We weave the marriage-veils of a queen.
What do you weave in the moonlight chill?*

The night time the Weavers weaving attractive garments in purple and green colour like the plumes of a peacock. When the poetess asks the question, they tell that it's a marriage veil of a Queen. This suggests the youth of a human being. Youth is the golden period in one's life, energetic, enjoyable and attractive. So that's why here used the expression.

*Weavers, weaving solemn and still,
White as a feather and white as a cloud,
We weave a dead man's funeral shroud.*

The plumes of a peacock symbolize love , purple maturity and green' representing life. In the moonlight night the Weaver's attitudes changed, they become serious and calm. The garment is white colour like feather and cloud. They are weaving the cloths of a Dead man's funeral shroud. It clearly indicates the old age of a person. The white coloured feather and cloud are carrying to the statement that the end of life, feather had come out from the wing now it has no use and the cloud is moving, after few minutes we can't see the cloud in the actual place. Thus "Indian Weavers" presents the picture of weavers, who weave handloom cloth in variegated colours and patterns. The sensibility of the poet is at the core of the poem, it is a description of stage by stage progress of man's journey of life. A complete picture of man's life, happiness and sorrow is visualized from dawn to sunset. "The strongest feature of Sarojini's Poetry is her vivid imagery. Her most memorable lines are those in which she has beautiful and graphic pictures by fusing together several visual impressions. It should be stressed, once again, that these images can be appreciated only by those who have retained their sensitivity to subtle stimuli which come from the Indian environment, and those who still have a feeling for Indian aspects of life."

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