

Indian Weavers

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.

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.

Weavers, weaving solemn and still,
What do you weave in the moonlight chill?..
White as a feather and white as a cloud,
We weave a dead man's funeral shroud.

Critical Appreciation:

Like Tagore and Aurobindo Ghosh, Sarojini Naidu too was more than a poet; she was one of Mother India's most gifted children, readily sharing her burden of pain, fiercely articulating her agonies and hopes, and gallantly striving to redeem India. She was a creature of emotion and memory who sensed beauty in colour and odour and song and movement. The panorama of India's ageless life fascinated her without end. Hard labour is the lot of the masses in India, but what has made this life bearable- and occasionally even enjoyable –is the stimulus given by the songs and rhythmic movements. In her early poems, Sarojini Naidu tried to catch and reproduce in English Literature the lilt and atmosphere of folk-songs.

The poem "Indian Weavers" by Sarojini Naidu also contains the philosophy of life and

living. In the short poem “Indian Weavers” the Indian Weavers sing that, at break of day, they weave the robes of a new-born child, at fall of night a queen’s marriage-veils, and in the moonlight chill, “a dead man’s funeral shroud.” Sarojini Naidu summarizes the human life succinctly showing the cycle of birth, youth and death.

In the first stanza, the poet enquires about the weavers who sing as they weave and asks them what they weave so early in the morning while the rays of sunlight hit the earth. The garment that they seem to be preparing is colourful and vibrant and the weavers too appear to be in happy mood. The weavers answer by saying that they are making a garment for a “new-born child” which is of the colour blue- that blue, which the halycon bird has been dipped in – gay, merry, bright and innocent in appearance. The fact that weavers weave at the break of day is very important. The start of a new day has been used as a metaphor for the start of a new life. The halycon bird (a mythical bird) has been used as a simile, to suggest the majestic royalty because a child is the apparition of God Himself. Thus, the occasion of being born on earth is being celebrated signifying the arrival of new hope in the world.

The second stanza of the poem is significant as it deals with that part of human life which is a period of youth and energy. It is a period of life that seeks a lot of labour, activity, responsibilities that need to be bore and dreams that are to be fulfilled. Human beings are most active during this part of their life, each as if capable of conquering the world. As the weavers weave a garment of bright colour towards the fall of day, the poet asks them the purpose of the garment. The weavers announce that they are making the “marriage-veils of a Queen”, that is to be feathery thin, and “Like the plumes of a peacock, purple and green”. Purple signifies the extravagance of the Kings and passion; while green is a colour of nature signifying youth, health and beauty. The marriage-veils suggest the stepping of the youth into adulthood.

The last stanza takes the readers to the last stage of life which leaves the readers brooding over the ultimate end. The poet asks the weavers why they weave at the dead of night, when nature is still and it is very cold and chilly. The weavers appear quiet and composed and reply in lower tones that they are weaving the death –shroud for funeral of those that have died. On this saddening and grieving occasion, the weavers are making the “dead man’s shroud”, which is as white as a bird’s feather, and white as a cloud. The weavers work in resolute silence and solemnity out of respect to the departed soul. The word “feather” denotes that as the body is lifeless, there is no weight contained in that man. “Clouds” indicate the domain of God that is supposed to be beyond and through the clouds.

Indian Weavers and their loom has occupied the imagination of the Indian poets for long. The Poet and Seer *Kabir* used to weave his poems, couplets around the handloom, the tapestry and the process of weaving. The weaving of cloth is alike spending days of

life carefully taking care that the threads do not break and the weaving is smooth. *Kabir* had insisted that the cloth of life is quite delicate and pure and the wearer should try to maintain the purity of life. Weaving metaphorically suggests the process of creation as well where colours, designs and patterns are made in various ways and the creator is a privileged and powerful one.

According to Greek mythology, the Fates were personified as three very old women who spin the threads of human destiny. Their names were Clotho, Lachesis and Atropos. Clotho spun the 'thread' of human fate, Lachesis dispensed it, and Atropos cut the thread (thus determining the individual's moment of death). Thus, the poem "Indian Weavers" can be called as an amalgamation of both the Greek and Indian mythology, responding to man's cycle of life- the makers of destiny. With its broadness of view, the poem accommodates both the personal as well as the universal, in one knot, that life is.

In this poem, Sarojini Naidu digresses from the theme of the majority of her poems that revolve around India, love for India and patriotism and focuses more on the philosophy of life and its truth. The sentiments and imagery and the perfect management of the rhythm and the internal and terminal rhymes has made this song one of the most popular of Sarojini Naidu's poems.

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