

Palanquin Bearers by Sarojini Naidu

Lightly, O lightly we bear her along,
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.
Gaily, O gaily we glide and we sing,
We bear her along like a pearl on a string.

Softly, O softly we bear her along,
She hangs like a star in the dew of our song;
She springs like a beam on the brow of the tide,
She falls like a tear from the eyes of a bride.
Lightly, O lightly we glide and we sing,
We bear her along like a pearl on a string.

The palanquin bearers are carrying a royal bride in a palanquin. They are singing a song while moving. Their song is related to the situation of the bride. They say that they are bearing the bride lightly. The bride is swaying like a flower in the wind. She is gliding like a bird on the froth of a stream. She is floating quietly like a laugh from the lips of a dream. They are singing and carrying her happily. They are carrying her like a pearl on a string. They are moving gently and cheerfully. She is hanging like a star in the dew of their song. She rises like a ray of light seen on the top of a tide. She falls like a tear from the eyes of a bride.

Analysis

In ancient days the royal brides in India were carried in ornate palanquins. The men who carried them were called palanquin bearers. The palanquin bearers considered it a privilege to carry the bride.

Palanquin Bearers is a musical poem. The vivid description of the journey makes us experience the soft and gentle swaying movements of the palanquin.

The palanquin bearers carry the palanquin gently. The swaying movements of the palanquin are compared to a flower moving in the wind. The palanquin bearers carry the bride so softly and delicately as if she were something very delicate, soft, and precious. They carry her like a pearl on a string.

The bearers do not feel the burden and move with quick steps like the birds that skim across the river without touching the water. The palanquin bearers are aware of the presence of the beautiful bride they are carrying in the palanquin.

The poet uses two images deliberately to convey the contradictory feeling of joy and sadness. In the first stanza the poet says that 'she floats like a laugh'. This conveys the joy of anticipation as she is going to her husband's house. Her heart is full of excitement as the palanquin moves towards the house of her soul mate. In the second stanza the poet compares the bride to a tear falling from the eyes of a bride to lend a touch of sadness to the description. This aptly describes the state of bride's mind as she is sad at separation from her parents and family.

The poet has used variety of literary devices. The poem is full of descriptive similes. She is compared to objects known for their beauty, delicacy, worth and brightness. The variety of similes used lend modesty and beauty to the sweet occasion when the brides being carried to her husband's house. The poet used repetition to give musicality and sweetness to the poem. The rhythm of the poem is even but swift. The close rhyme scheme adds to the lyricism. Alliteration, pictorial quality, and imagery are some of the other devices used in the poems to create a mesmerizing effect on the reader.

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