

**STUDY MATERIAL FOR P.G., SEMESTER III (ENGLISH),
CC-13, INDIAN LITERATURE IN ENGLISH & IN TRANSLATION**

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VILLAGE SONG

(A by Poem by Sarojini Naidu)

The poem **Village Song** is a lyric written by the great Indian poet Sarojini Naidu who is popularly known as the Nightingale of India. Sarojini Naidu is a prominent personality in India. She is known for her contributions in the different fields. She is an eminent poet and a great patriot. She is remembered for her immense contributions as a nation builder. She actively participated in India's struggle of freedom and also contributed in the social, cultural and spiritual reawakening and reshaping of India. She was influenced by the different cultures and tradition existing in India. Sarojini Naidu who was from Bengal, grew up at Hyderabad and received education in England. She became active in Indian National Movement. She spoke many languages like Bengali, Hindustani and English. She was influenced by leaders like Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore and others. In her literary works she has perfectly blended the different colours of Indian tradition.

The Golden Threshold, The Bird of Time, The Broken Wings and Feather of the Dawn are volumes of her poetry collection. Some of the famous poems are, **The Bangle Sellers, The Indian Weavers, The Coromandal Fishers, The Palanquin Bearers, Pardah Nashin, In The Bazars of Hyderabad**, and many others. The poems written by her are rich in imagination. They exhibit the pure and true Indian sensibility. She writes on a variety of themes like love, nature, faith, patriotism and folk tradition. The myth and legends also becomes an important subject of her poems. She has also written poems on Muslim art and culture. Like most of the Indian poets, Sarojini Naidu is also influenced by the romantic poets like Shelley and Keats.

'Village Song' by Sarojini Naidu depicts the social and cultural elements of Indian village life. She also explores the philosophical reality present in the poem. She portrays the hardships and difficulties of the villagers, especially, of a woman who has to perform all the hard tasks of household work. The girl in the poem has gone to Jamuna river to fetch water in her pitcher. This was a common scene in the villages of India. As she was on her way back to home she hears the song of a boatman that tempted her to stop there. The song kept her spell bound and so much engrossed that she failed to realise that it was already dark. The girl is scared as she realises the dangers of darkness that might harm her. The lines **'Swiftly the shadows of night are falling, / Hear, O hear, is the white crane calling, / Is it the wild owl's cry?'**, vividly describe the darkness spread all over. She is also afraid of the dark and lonely way she has to cover. There was **'no tender moonbeams'** that would help her find her ways through darkness. The poet shares the experience of fear and concern of the village girl

in this poem. A sense of guilt also seems to be revealed in the poem when the girl queries herself, '*Why, O why was I tempted to tarry/ Lured by the boatmen's song?*'

The poet further describes the condition of the girl that leaves her in a situation of uncertainty and helplessness.

*If in the darkness a serpent should bite me,
Or if an evil spirit should smite me,
Ram Re Ram! I shall die.*

The lines above not only express her fear of being bitten by a snake or being harmed by some evil spirit but also her desperation when she says, '*Ram Re Ram! I shall die*'. This line truly depicts faith and devotion of the girl in the existence of God, The Ultimate Reality.

The girl further ponders over the situation of her brother and mother who are worried as she gets late. Out of concern her brother may be complaining on her being late and saying, '*Why doth she linger?*' The girl can very well understand her mother's condition who would not only be weeping for her but she must also be praying for her safety thinking that the deep water at Jamuna River may lead her to some danger. The line, '*The Jamuna's waters rush by so quickly,*' gives an impression of sudden and quick danger.

*My mother will wait and weep,
Saying, "O safe may the great gods bring her,
The Jamuna's waters are deep' ...*

The poet has very keenly portrayed the difficulties of village life and at the same time has unveiled the feelings of concern, love and affection.

The girl describes the darkness of evening growing more intense. It seems that the sky is covered by the blackbirds. The image of 'blackbird' perfectly depicts darkness in the environment.

*The shadows of evening gather so thickly,
Like blackbirds in the sky ...*

Her thought of fear deepens when she thinks of the sudden breaking of storm or lightening that would make her journey more difficult. She wonders how she will be protecting herself and where she will get shelter.

*O! If the storm breaks, what will betide me?
Safe from the lightning where shall I hide me?*

However, the girl finds hope in Almighty. She believes that it is only the Almighty that could come to her rescue and lead her out of this critical situation. She prays God for his guidance as that was the only relief for her or else she would have died in fear. The words '*Ram re Ram*' is like the magical guiding light that would give her strength to move in the darkness and conquer all fears and uncertainty that comes in her way.

*Unless Thou succour my footsteps and guide me,
Ram Re Ram! I shall die.*

The poem '*Village Song*' has a great philosophical significance. With the flavour of a folk song the poet tries to explore the deeper meaning of the journey of life. The words, 'Why, O why' and 'Ram re Ram' give a movement to the poem and add to the effect of folk

song. This journey of life has certain goals and mission to be realised but temptation and attachment mislead a person from ones mission. The mission is realisation of reaching the ultimate reality. Amidst temptation and fear only faith can help us to reach the Almighty.

The poem '**Village Song**' is an excellent and superb work of art. The poem is rich in images and symbols. The poet has created a suitable environment of village life. The opening lines, '*Full are my pitchers and far to carry, /Lone is the way and long,*' gives the effect of village life. The words like '*owl's cry*', '*crane calling*', the '*shadows of night*', *black bird* and *no tender moonbeams* give a perfect effect to darkness. The words like '*serpent*' and '*evil spirit*' symbolise the presence of danger. Other nature images like '*storm*' and '*lightening*' also depict the various difficulties present in the villages.
