

VILLAGE SONG

Sarojini Naidu

SAROJINI NAIDU (1879-1950), the 'Nightingale of India', was a poet, nationalist, fighter for women's rights and nation-builder. Her three volumes of poems *The Golden Threshold* (1905), *The Bird of Time* (1912) and *The Broken Wing* (1912) were received warmly across the world. Commenting on her first volume of poems, *The Times* wrote, 'Her poetry seems to sing itself as if her swift thoughts and strong emotions spring into lyrics of themselves.' *The Glasgow Herald* observed, 'The pictures are of the east it is true, but there is something fundamentally human in them that seems to prove that the best song knows nothing of east and west.' Impressed with her second volume with 'a grayer music', *The Yorkshire Post* remarked, 'Mrs Naidu has not only enriched our language but has enabled her to grow into intimate relation with the spirit, the emotions, the mysticism and the glamour of the East.' The present poem is an avowal of the poet's firm faith in God. Sarojini Naidu expresses her inmost fear and prays to God to guide her through darkness.



A. Work in small groups and discuss these questions:

1. For some unforeseen reasons you are coming home late. You find yourself all alone. It is pitch-dark and you have no torch with you. What worries will haunt you? Will you feel afraid?
2. How do your family members respond when you come home late? Do they worry about you or remain indifferent?
3. Have you ever been rebuked for coming late?

VILLAGE SONG

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.



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B.1 Answer the following questions briefly :

1. What was the speaker carrying?
2. From where was she carrying it?
3. What made her stay longer on her way back?
4. How much passion did the girl have for song?
5. Whose cry did she hear with the fall of night?
6. Make a list of the thoughts that came to her mind on her way back?
7. Make a list of the sounds or voices that she hears on her way back?
8. How dangerous is a lightening? Explain. How would you avert it?

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 blackbirds in the sky...
 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.



15

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B.2 Answer the following questions briefly :

1. Who were anxiously waiting for her at home and why?
2. What did she surmise about her mother to have prayed for her?
3. What did her mother know about the Jamuna river?
4. What were the last two apprehensions on her way back?
5. Who is 'Thou' in the poem? What does she pray to Him?
6. Find out the rhyme scheme of the poem.

GLOSSARY AND NOTES

lone (adj): lonely, deserted

tempted (v): enticed, won over

tarry (v): to stay somewhere longer than one should

lured (v): drawn in, charmed

swiftly (adv): quickly and smoothly

tender (adj): gentle, caring

smite (v) : cut, slice

murmur (v): speak softly, make low, indistinct sound

linger (v): delay leaving

betide (v): to come to misfortune

succour (v): help

C. 1. LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. How has the poet pictured the fall of night? Give details.
2. What does the expression 'Ram Re Ram' suggest?
3. The poetess has used a number of homely images in the poem. Make a list of these images. What do these images really suggest about life?
4. Compare this poem with Robert Frost's poem 'Stopping by Woods....' What do these poems tell about human life and how?
5. How does your thought proceed when you perceive a danger?
6. Based on your experience give a description of the storm.

An **image** is a picture or likeness made with words and phrases to help the reader form a mental portrait. Poetic images are usually visual, but a poet may use images that appeal to the senses of sound, smell, taste and touch.

C.2. GROUP DISCUSSION

Discuss the following in **groups** or **pairs**:

- Temptation and fear are the major sources of our worry
- The more we suffer, the more we learn

C. COMPOSITION

- Write a letter to your father narrating how you were caught in a storm and how you felt at that time.
- Suppose you are the Mukhiya of your Panchayat. You find that staying on the riverbanks late in the evening is dangerous. Now write a notice in about 50 words warning the inhabitants of your Panchayat of the dangers that might befall them if they stayed at the river bank at nights.

D. WORD STUDY**D.1. Dictionary Use**

Ex. 1. Correct the spelling of the following words:

picler	faling	moonbeems
darknes	weap	quikly
thikly	unles	sucour

Ex. 2. Look up a dictionary and write two meanings of each of the following words – the one in which it is used in the lesson and the other which is more common:

swift	shadow	fall	call
cry	light	break	guide

D.2. Word-formation

Read the following lines carefully:

Swiftly the shadows of nights are falling

Hear, O hear, is the white crane calling.

Mark that '**swiftly**' which is an adverb is derived from '**swift**' which is an adjective by adding '-ly' to it.

Ex.1. Make adverbs from the adjectives given below and use them (adverbs) in sentences of your own:

clever quick beautiful light thick soft loud

D.3. Word-meaning

Ex.1. Match the words in **Column A** with their meaning in **Column B**:

Column A	Column B
area of shade	storm
snake	spirit
soul	serpent
whisper	shadow
give help to	murmur
violent weather condition	succour

D. 4. Phrases

Ex.1. Use the following phrases in sentences of your own, making their meaning clear:

rush by far off tempted to carry away bring up

E. GRAMMAR

Read the following lines carefully:

In the darkness a serpent **should bite** me

Or if an evil spirit **should smite** me

In the above lines modal '**should**' has been used to express supposition that may not happen.

Ex.1. Frame sentences using the following verbs to express supposition:

Fall drown betide break collapse

F. ACTIVITY

Visit a potter in your neighbourhood and find out:

What are pitchers used for?

What are they made of?

What are different models or designs?

How much does it cost to make a pitcher?

How much labour and skill does it need to make a pitcher?

Now do a project work on the art of pitcher making.

