

Village Song

Sarojini Naidu

A. Lead-in :

Marriage is an important event in a person's life. Parents want to see their children happily married and settled. In this poem, however, a young girl does not wish to get married. Read the poem to find out why the girl takes such a decision.

B. Let's listen to the poem :

- Your teacher reads the poem aloud. Listen to him/ her without opening the book. Mark the teacher's voice, tone and expressions. S/He reads the poem again.
- Now open the book and try to follow him/ her. Mark the words, phrases and expressions that appeal to you. Add more words and phrases that occur to you as relevant to the context.
- Read the poem silently. You may refer to the notes and glossary to understand the text.

C. The Text :

Honey child, honey child, whither are you going?

Would you cast your jewels all to the breezes blowing?

Would you leave the mother who on golden grain has fed you?

Would you grieve the lover who is riding forth to wed you?

Mother mine, to the wild forest I am going,
Where upon the champa boughs the champa buds are blowing;
To the koil-haunted river-isles where lotus lilies glisten,
The voices of the fairy folk are calling me: O listen!

Honey child, honey child, the world is full of pleasure,
Of bridal-songs and cradle-songs and sandal- scented leisure.
Your bridal robes are in the loom, silver and saffron glowing,
Your bridal cakes are on the hearth: O whither are you going?

The bridal-songs and cradle-songs have cadences of sorrow,
The laughter of the sun to-day, the wind of death to-morrow.
Far sweeter sound the forest-notes where forest- streams are falling;
O mother mine, I cannot stay, the fairy-folk are calling.

D. About the Poet :

Sarojini Naidu (1879 – 1949) was a child prodigy, freedom fighter, and poet. She was born in Hyderabad on February 13, 1879. She was a prolific writer. She gave up her literary career to join the freedom struggle led by Mahatma Gandhi. She was the first Indian woman to become the President of the Indian National Congress and the first woman to become the Governor of Uttar Pradesh. She was popularly known as The Nightingale of India. The poem, “Village Song” appeared in her book titled *The Golden Threshold* (first published by Dodo Press, London, 1905). She passed away in 1949.

E. About the Poem :

India has a long tradition of folk poetry, which has largely been oral. It deals with customs, beliefs, traditions, superstitions, simple joys and sorrows of people, particularly those living in a rural setting. These are treated with directness and simplicity. Folk poetry aims at presenting collective life. It was usually nurtured by wandering minstrels; hence, it was recitative. Folk-lyrics do not make excessive demands upon the reader, and their simplicity, vocabulary and imagery are drawn from everyday scenes and sights. Sarojini Naidu has captured all these qualities of traditional folk poetry in her poems. In this poem are presented the voice of a mother pleading with her daughter to wait for her betrothed to arrive and that of the daughter who wishes to run off to the forest and remain a child.

F. Notes and glossary :

| | | |
|-----------------|---|---|
| Honey child | : | The mother addresses the girl affectionately. |
| breeze | : | wind |
| golden grain | : | delicate dishes |
| champa | : | name of a flower |
| koil | : | a song-bird, black in colour |
| bridal songs | : | marriage songs |
| cradle songs | : | lullaby |
| bridal robes | : | wedding dress |
| cadence | : | rhythm, pace |
| laughter of Sun | : | happiness; pleasure of living |
| wind of death | : | loss or sorrow |
| forest notes | : | music of nature |

F. Let's understand the poem :

1. The poem appears to be a conversation between two persons. Who are they?
2. Where does the "honey child" go?
3. Why should she leave the mother and grieve the lover?
4. How does the child describe the "wild forest"?
5. What does the expression "the world full of pleasure" mean ?
6. What is common about bridal songs and cradle songs?
7. How does the poet describe happiness and sorrow?
8. How does the poet compare forest notes with bridal songs and cradle songs?

H. Let's appreciate the poem :

1. The first four lines of the poem pose four questions. What does the mother want to tell her daughter?
2. Does the mother's appeal have any effect on the girl? What does the girl find irresistible?
3. How are the worldly pleasures compared with the pleasures of the fairy land?

I. Let's do some activities :

1. How many times does the word "would" occur in the poem?
2. How many questions are asked in the poem? Who—the mother or the daughter—asks the questions?
3. The adjective "bridal" is used in the following expressions: "bridal songs", "bridal robes" and "bridal cakes". Can you use the adjective in any other expression?
4. In line 3 and line 4 of the first stanza the word "who" is used to qualify the nouns "mother" and "lover". Use the word to qualify other nouns in sentences of your own.

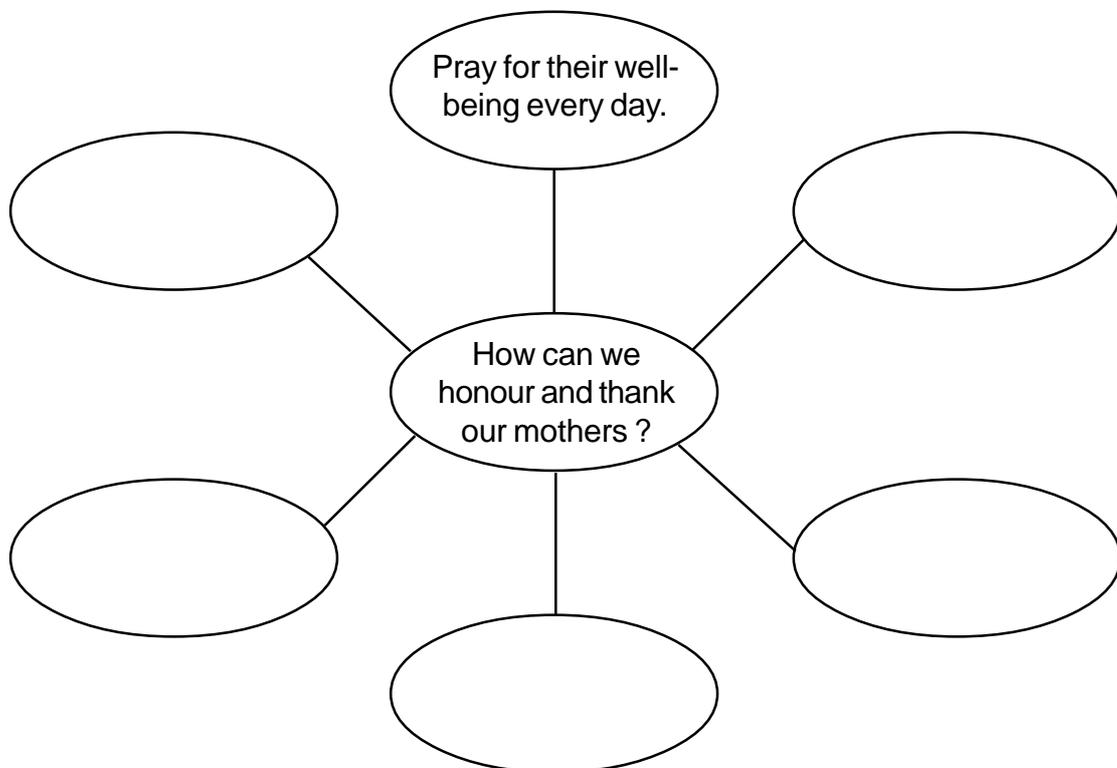
5. Rearrange the following phrases in the sequence in which they occur in the poem:
*the champa buds are blowing; bridal cakes are on the hearth; lotus lilies glisten;
koil-haunted river isles; bridal robes are in the loom.*
6. Mark the rhyming words in each stanza. Find out the rhyming words ending in 'ing' form. Discuss with your friends how many are common and what effect they have on you when you read the poem alone.

J. Let's speak :

Someone said, 'God couldn't be everywhere, so He created mothers'.

Work in groups of three or four and discuss what we can do to honour and thank our mothers.

When you finish your discussion, your teacher will collect the opinions of the different groups and create a web chart like this :



K. Let's write :

1. How does the mother dissuade the girl from going to the forest?
2. Why does the girl want to go there?
3. Given below is a table. Write in the table the words / expressions from the poem that you think appropriate in each column.

| Worldly pleasures | Pleasure in Nature |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| | |

After the exercise, the teacher can divide the class in four or five groups and ask them to speak a few sentences on each word/ expression.

4. Now prepare a note on the atmosphere of fairy land as described in the poem.

