

# BANGLE SELLER

## **The Bangle Sellers by Sarojini Naidu: About the poem**

Written by the prominent Indian poet and politician Sarojini Naidu, '*The Bangle Sellers*' is a poem exploring the life of Indian women, the Indian culture and traditions revolving around women. In most of her poems, Sarojini Naidu writes on the theme of Indian culture and people. Her poems are focused on Indian settings and this poem makes no exception. In its Indianness, the poem resembles another poem of hers, *In the Bazaars of Hyderabad*.

The poem revolves around bangles, which is an important ornament for 'embellishment' of women in Indian Society. In the poem, the bangle sellers are at the temple fair and they shout out to the people passing by to have a look at their bangles. They urge them to buy bangles for their daughters and wives.

## Form and language of the poem

The entire poem has a structure where each stanza focuses on a particular theme. The first stanza depicts the merchants touting at the temple fair to attract the attention of the people passing by. The consequent stanzas focus

on bangles of various colours the seller have for women of all different ages.

The poem *The Bangle Sellers* has a simple rhyme scheme of aabbcc for each stanza. With mostly octasyllabic lines the poem has no distinctive metre, but one has an apprehension of the same due to the use of easy language and a general fluidity of words. Use of clever similes has made it a beauty.

### **The Bangle Sellers: Explanation by stanza**

Stanza One:

Bangle sellers are we who bear  
Our shining loads to the temple fair...  
Who will buy these delicate, bright  
Rainbow-tinted circles of light?  
Lustrous tokens of radiant lives,  
For happy daughters and happy wives.

The poem begins with the speakers introducing themselves as bangle sellers who sell their articles at the temple fair. They call out to the people to buy their bangles. These hawkers describe their bangles as delicate, bright, rainbow-tinted circles of light. They advertise by questioning who will buy these bangles for their daughters and wives.

It is important to note here that though the speakers of the poem are several, it appears as if there is a single speaker. This is due to the fact that they all have the same purpose and are thus seen singularly as a ‘class essence’. Also, the Bangles here are called ‘*lustrous tokens of radiant lives*’. It shows us the Indianness of the poem, where bangles are bought on special occasions and are associated with happiness and prosperity.

Stanza two:

Some are meet for a maiden’s wrist,  
Silver and blue as the mountain mist,  
Some are flushed like the buds that dream  
On the tranquil brow of a woodland stream,  
Some are aglow with the bloom that cleaves  
To the limpid glory of new born leaves

The second stanza onward, the speakers talk of the kinds of bangles they have. Some of these bangles are suited for a maiden’s, that is, a young unmarried woman’s wrist. They are Silver and Blue in colour like the mountain mist. Some of them are ‘flushed’, that is pink and light red in colour like flower buds growing beside a woodland stream. Still others are green and glowing like the transparent beauty of new born leaves.

In Indian society, bangles have an important cultural and religious place. Different coloured bangles are worn by

women in different stages of life. Blue, Silver, and Green are generally worn by young maidens. It is interesting to note that the poet here uses the words ‘flushed like the buds that dream.’ The word ‘buds’ here is suggestive of chastity. ‘Buds that dreams’ present before us an image of young girls dreaming of marriage. In this stanza, the poet presents the stage of youth in a woman’s life.

### Stanza Three:

Some are like fields of sunlit corn,  
Meet for a bride on her bridal morn,  
Some, like the flame of her marriage fire,  
Or, rich with the hue of her heart’s desire,  
Tinkling, luminous, tender, and clear,  
Like her bridal laughter and bridal tear.

In the third stanza, the bangle sellers say that some of their bangles are yellow like ‘fields of sunlit corn’. Bangles of this colour are perfect for a bride on her bridal morn. Some of the bangles they have are bright red. They represent the flame of a newly turned bride’s marriage fire, that is, the passion of her newly made relation. The red bangles also stand for her heart’s desire. The bangles are ‘tinkling, luminous, tender and clear’. They express both her joy of starting a new life with her husband and the sorrow of leaving her parents behind.

What we find striking is the use of the words ‘bridal laughter and bridal tears.’ These words convey the whole of a woman’s transition in life from a maiden to a wife and all the emotions attached with it in a single line. This stanza marks the transition of life from a maiden to a wife.

Stanza Four:

Some are purple and gold flecked grey  
For she who has journeyed through life midway,  
Whose hands have cherished, whose love has blest,  
And cradled fair sons on her faithful breast,  
And serves her household in fruitful pride,  
And worships the gods at her husband’s side.

In the final stanza of the poem *The Bangle Sellers*, the speakers continue to advertise their bangles. They shout that some of their bangles are purple and gold flecked grey. These are suited for a middle-aged woman who has ‘journeyed through life’. They are for her who has raised her children well, and has remained faithful to her husband and family. These bangles are, they say, perfect for she who has maintained her household with pride and ‘worships the gods at her husband’s side’.

In this stanza, the poet writes down what she perceives as the qualities of a good wife. Such a woman is truly deserving of the purple and gold flecked grey bangles in

her eyes. Here we should pay attention to the word 'sons' used to mean offspring. While it could be a happy coincidence, it could also suggest the ingrained attitude of male preference in the society of Sarojini Naidu's times.

The poem, 'The bangle Sellers' is a celebration of the female life. It shows us the various stages of a woman's life and attempts to represent the Indian culture and the role of bangle sellers in the traditional set up.