



Echoes of Tradition and Identity: A Comparative Study of Bangle Symbolism in Sarojini Naidu's "The Bangle Sellers" (1912) and T. Ramesh Reddy's "Clay Bangles" (2020)

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Abstract: Bangles are a key feature of cultural and literary imagination among Indian communities and represent femininity, tradition, marital status, and transitions of life cycles. This comparative research paper will discuss two poems that are separated by more than a century: the iconic poem by Sarojini Naidu, 'the Bangle Sellers' (1912), and the modern poem by T. Ramesh Reddy, 'Clay Bangles' (2020). By showing continuities in the description of bangles as a sign of female identity and changes in the accentuation, the study demonstrates a shift in focus, between metaphorical idealized seasons and the traditional domestic role in Naidu to a wider spectrum of life stages, an overt symbolic definition of colour, defensive roles and material anchoring in Reddy. The article builds its argument based on Indian cultural anthropology and literary studies, contending that the two works recognize bangles as essential markers of continuity in socio-cultural transformation that suggest the changing ways Indian womanhood is being represented in postcolonial and globalized environments.

Index Terms - Clay Bangles, Indian literature, symbolism, femininity, Sarojini Naidu, T. Ramesh Reddy, cultural identity, comparative poetry.

I. INTRODUCTION

Bangles among Indians are not merely ornaments, but represent tangible indicators of marital status, wealth, fertility and bad omens. Ringing all through infancy, until the widowhood, (with limitations), their shaking sound betokens the approach of a woman, and augurs well, whereas breaking is usually unlucky. Colours have stratified associations with life cycles and local traditions: red is a colour of a marriage and life and vitality, green is a hue of fertility and birth (it is mostly used in South India), and orange or yellow is a colour of good energies and preparation. Such decorations are everywhere in the Hindu rituals, folk songs, and literature in order to reflect the shining lives of women in the familial and social structures.

This paper presents a comparison between 'The Bangle Sellers' by Sarojini Naidu, which was published in the Indian nationalist movement, 'The Bird of Time' (1912) and 'Clay Bangles' by T. Ramesh Reddy, which came out in his book *Shades of Light & Darkness in Life* (IHRAF Publications). Naidu (1879-1949) a great freedom fighter, poet, and the 'Nightingale' of India romanticizes bangles in a chant of a vendor at a temple fair. Reddy, a modern poet and academician in Andhra Pradesh, is a straight forward, jubilant spiritual about their cultural heritage. The comparative prism sheds light on how the symbolism of the bangle has survived as an Indian identity in itself but has changed to meet the demands of modern sensibilities, such as being more inclusive of childhood and unmarried women.

II. BANGLES, INDIA CULTURAL CONTEXT:-

BANGLES: The crossover between aesthetics, ritual and protection is represented in bangles, which are traditionally made of glass (choodiyaa), or sometimes clay/terracotta in rural areas. The married women put on scads of red and green bangles on a daily basis; new wives are offered as gifts which show prosperity and fertility. Bangles generate sounds to keep off evil and good omen of a marriage, and when broken, they are instantly replaced to avoid bad luck. The regional differences are numerous: The North Indian bride loves passion and red colour, the South Indian (including Andhra-Telangana) prefer green colour as the colour of new life and fortune.

Bangles are used to adorn or even as a rite to married women, although in some cases red can be used by unmarried girls and even on neonates. The colours of orange/yellow are used in festive or preparation situations, which reminds the power of the sun and the optimistic start. The matter of the choice of material, i.e., the brittle glass versus the stable clay also builds up the layers of symbolism: glass implies delicacy and translucence, and clay suggests a connection to the Indian land and tradition. Both poems use this rich semiotic space, making the daily ornamentation a rich metaphor of culture.

III. CRITICISM OF SAROJINI NAIDU, 'THE BANGLE SELLERS':

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,

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

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.

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.

The poem by Naidu is the collective one of bangle sellers at a temple fair which forms their sales pitch in a lyrical chant. The full text reads:

We bangle sellers are those who carry our glittery burdens to the temple fair... Who shall purchase these tender, fair Rainbow-coloured rings of light? Bright hard-earned awards, To joyful daughters and to joyful wives. Some are spanned on the wrist of a maiden, Silver and blue as the mist of the mountain, some are flushed like the flower that clings to the transparent splendour of fresh foliage, some are aglow with the flower that adheres to the limpid glory of new leaves. Others are as cornfields in the sunshine, or, where on wedding day, Or, laden with the colour of her love, Tinkling, bright, tender, and fair, Like her bridal smile and bridal tear.

Others are purple and gold spotted grey to see who hath lived through life in the middle-time, whose hands have taught love, whose love hath blessed, and whose hands have suckled fair sons on her loyal bosom, and serves her family in fruitful pride, and in her chaste worship of the gods by her husband.

The poem uses picturesque images of nature and changing of seasons: spring-like silver-blue and budding greens to maidens (young hope); golden corn and reds of burning-flames to brides (fulfillment in maternity and domestic devotion); purple-grey to mature matrons (fulfillment in motherhood and domestic piety). This circular framework is a resemblance of the natural order with that of women and here the harmony and inevitability are implied.

The poetic techniques include repetition of certain words, rhyming couplets and accentual tetrameter provide rhythmic and folk-song sound along with the same sound of bangles jingling. Ideologically, Naidu romanticizes Indian womanhood: women are happy daughters, happy wives, and they are characterized by connections, birth, (fair sons are cradled), and submission. The poem was also written during the colonial era and cultural pride is not openly proclaimed but rather it glorifies the native cultures in opposition to the Western modernity. Critics observe that it prescribes normative femininity in the discourse of nationalism.

The article on the study of T. Ramesh Reddy, 'Clay Bangles':

Bangles are emblematic of Indian culture;
Seem in iridescent and shimmering;
On the hands of neonates and bambinos
Who be in a wavering cradle by harking lullaby.

Bangles are symbolic of Indian culture
As a part of custom both spinsters and
Married women; not just mere ornaments
Because, bangles are as part of lasses' identity.

Bangles are significance of Indian culture
As spinsters wearing orange colour
Which signifies success and blissful life?
And makes funky noise in and out.

Bangles are tradition of Indian culture
The brides wearing green colour to represent
A new life, a streak of luck and fertility;
As red signifies energy and prosperity.

*Bangles are custom of Indian culture
As newly wedded Sheila's wear bangles;
Which creates melodious aura around?
And safeguard them from evil spells.*

In the poem, Reddy is brief and declarative; he states right out what the bangles even are:

Bangles are characteristic of the Indian culture. Shining and glittering, On the hands of infants and children, cradled in arms, and soothed with a sweet lullaby. Bangles represent the nature of tradition, and they are worn not only by spinsters, but by married women too; Not decorations, but essential elements of a woman. Bangles are important in colourful colours, spinsters wearing orange, symbolizing success, happy life, making a merry noise with every swing. The popular custom is bangles, which are worn by brides in green, a symbol of new life, a nice lash of fortune and wealth, red, meaning power and luck. Bangles are an innate woven into life, and freshly married women take pride wearing them, and they make an aura sounding about, protecting against the cloud of mishaps.

The speaker of 'Clay Bangles' is authoritative, unlike the chant of Naidu, who takes a celebratory tone. The poem distinctly brings in neonates and children (with lullaby allusions) and stretches tradition into "spinsters" (unmarried women) with orange bangles as a symbol of success and a happy life, and to brides, the colour of green, as an indicator of new beginnings and fertility, and red as a symbol of power and wealth. The implication of clay as the title gives the sense of down-to-earthness and rural rootedness, which is the contrast of glass flimsy and the glass tradition.

The playful jingle, the melodious aura, and the protective role (Guarding against the shadows of misfortune) highlight sensual and apotropaic aspects. The devices of the literature are less tricky, namely, repetition of the word Bangles is, alliteration (iridescent and shimmering), and the direct symbolism that produce an easy, folkloric effect appropriate to the modern reader. 'Clay Bangles' is an innovative product that relates orange to the agency of unmarried women (success) and somewhat expands the conventional paradigm to empowerment and inclusivity. Bangles are reaffirmed as an essential component of a woman in the poem and built into the life phases of a woman between cradle and marriage.

IV. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS:

The two poems concur that bangles are the most Indian symbols of shining femininity and cultural preservation. They are both full of imagery of shimmer (rainbow-colored circles of light / iridescent and shimmering), sound (tinkling / playful jingle / melodious aura), and mapping of life stages. The colour is used symbolically in both Naidu implied seasonal palette of her work is similar to the literal orange of Reddy (youthful joy), green (fertility) and red (energy). They both suggest protection and pride, and bangles are not mere ornaments, as described, but shining signals or essential component of identity.

The major divergences indicate changes in time and authorship. The metaphors of nature and a voice of a communal seller romanticize three archetypical phases (maiden-bride-matron) of Naidu during the colonial era and idealize domestic satisfaction and sons-preference in the nationalist ideology. The poem of the 21st century by Reddy gets more inclusive to neonates, children, and spinsters; uses specifically colours with positive meanings in modern times (orange = success); emphasizes the materiality of clay; and reiterates protective agency (against misfortune). Where Naidu advocates normative roles, Reddy glorifies tradition with minor empowerment of single women and sensual pleasure at all ages.

Formally, the multi-stanza ballad that Naidu has created is appropriate for a fair performance, whereas the declarative structure of the Reddy ballad has five stanzas, which sound more like a cultural manifesto. Naidu, in materials, underlines the subtlety of glass; Reddy paves way to the symbolism of clay, and local, indigenous, earthiness in the context of globalization. These changes reflect how India has been transformed in no longer being a nationalist revival into a modern cultural affirmation in which literature remains chaste but is adaptable to altered gender standards.

Wider comparative lenses only enhance the resounding of the poems. Similar to western wedding rings (symbolic of lifetime commitment but not of colour and multiplicity by stage of life), Indian bangles contain dynamic identity. Both poems oppose the destruction of traditional and they can be seen as literary protests against homogenization of culture.

VI. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The comparison shows the symbolism of bangles in the Indian English literature as a strong cultural code. Having been written in the feminine and nationalistic spirit of the early 20th century, Naidu romanticizes conformity; Reddy, written in a globalized age, democratizes it in a way that is rather subtle. Collectively, they show the way literature has been used to pass on intangible heritage a colour semiotics, a sound aura, protective power, and adjust to the new values of individual success and childhood innocence.

This is a lasting theme of women ornaments as locations of agency and rebellion. The poems in an international context provide cross-cultural perspectives of how material culture represents gender, ritual and identity, to open a conversation with the global jewellery symbolism studies. Further studies might be applied to visual arts or film (choodiyan songs) or dialect.

V. CONCLUSION

In 'The Bangle Sellers' by Sarojini Naidu and 'Clay Bangles' by T. Ramesh Reddy, it is possible to see the same cultural artifact in different times that bangles are shining markers of Indian womanhood, tradition, and strength. Whereas Naidu spins seasonal idealism of connoted roles, Reddy anticipates inclusive vividness, declarative colour agency, and earthly protection. In their comparative analysis there is no discontinuity, but development--a culture which still sings its merry little jingle against the waves of time. In saving this symbol, the two poets make sure that Indian culture identity is iridescent, rooted and radiant.

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