

Sarojini Naidu: The Nightingale of India

Anand Kumar Thakur

Assistant Professor, Department of English, R. B. Jalan College, Bela, Darbhanga-846005, India

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ABSTRACT

This article is a humble attempt to project Sarojini Naidu as a great lyrist of India. She has been given the title 'The Nightingale of India by Mahatma Gandhi 'because of her mesmerizing poetry. She has been a well known signature in Indo-Anglican Literature as well as a political activist, feminist poetess and writer.

The paper covers her works covered a variety of themes of love, death, separation among others as contributed in her poetry.

Keywords: Poetry, Contribution, Nightingale, Literature, Social activist.

INTRODUCTION

Sarojini Naidu wrote poems on a variety of themes such as nature, children, patriotism, love and death. She also wrote poetry in praise of Muslim figures like Imam Hussain in a time where Hindu-Muslim tension ran high in pre-independent era issues regarding the split of India into a Muslim country and a Hindu country have already begun and her goal was to bring all Indians together regardless of religion. She also wrote and published a biography of Muhammed Ali Jinnah entitled as the *Ambassador of Hindu-Muslim Unity* in 1916. She became a delegate to the East African Indian Congress in 1924. She was appointed the first Indian woman to be the president of Indian National Congress in 1925. And she was made the Governor of the Uttar Pradesh in 1947.

The good name of Sarojini Naidu is Chattopadhyay. She was born on 13th February, 1879 in Hyderabad. She was died of a heart attack on 2nd March 1949 in Lucknow Uttar Pradesh. Also known by sobriquet The Nightingale of India (Bhartiya Kokila or Singer of Song). Sarojini Naidu was the eldest daughter of Aghornath Chattopadhyay, a Bengali Brahman. Who was the principal of the Nizam's College Hyderabad. Her mother's name is Barada sundari Devi. She was as poetess and used to write poetry in Bengali. Sarojini Naidu passed her matriculation examination from the University of Madras and then took a four year break from her studies in 1895, the Nizam Scholarship trust founded by the 6th Nizam, Mr. Mahbub Ali Khan, gave her the chance to study in England first at king's College London and later at Girton College, Cambridge, Sarojini Naidu met Govinda Rajulu Naidu, a doctor by profession, and at the age of 19th; after finishing her studies, she married him. At that time, inter-caste marriage was not allowed, but her father approved the marriage.^{1,2}

As true social activist Sarojini Naidu was with Mahatma Gandhi during the salt Satyagraha in 1930. Naidu joined the Indian Nation Movement in the wake of partition of Bengal in 1905. She came into contact with Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Rabindra Nath Tagore, Muhammed Ali Jinnah, Annie Besant, C.P. Ramaswami Iyer, Mahatma Gandhi and Jawahar Lal Nehru. During three years between 1915-1918, she travelled to different regions in India delivering lectures on Social Welfare, women's empowerment and nationalism. She also helped to establish the women's Indian Association in 1917. She along with Annie Besant went to London to present the case for the women's vote to the joint select committee. She

Anand Kumar Thakur

was awarded the Kaisar-i-Hind Medal by the British government for her work during the playge epidemic in India.³

‘Nightingale of India: A Perspective’

Sarojini Naidu was titled as *'Nightingale of India'* due to her rich and melodious poetry and its themes. Her poems were full of imagery and emotions and are noted for their sensuous. Imagination, words and lyrical quality. One of the most famous poem written by Sarojini Naidu is wandering singers which is about the bound folk singers who wander from town to town and from village to village to spread the message of love through their singing. The wandering singers have no dreams or hops of their own, they go wherever the wind calls them. The following are the lines of the poem, where the voice of the wind calls our wandering feet, *Through echoing forest and echoing street with lutes in our hands ever-singing we roam, All men are our kindred, the world is our home our lays are of cities whose lustre is shed, The laughter and beauty of women long dead. The sword of old battles, the crown of old kings, And happy and simple and sorrowful things.*

*What hope shall we gather, what dreams shall we sow ?
Where the wind calls our wandering footsteps we go.
No love bids us tarry, no joy bids us wait.
The voice of the wind is the voice of our bate.*

Wandering singers is a beautiful Lyric write to one of the tunes of those Nature minstrels who wander free and wid, ...singing the songs of life, love and joy. Behind the music of the lines. It is always possible to find great ideas, the ideas that may compel us to think. The songs of the wandering singers have a timeless theme-the theme of fundamental unity of men throughout the world. Their songs and mode of life present a great thought that there is no race all over the world except the human race.⁴ The wandering singers, wandering through the forests and streets, and singing endlessly, give us a great message of universal brotherhood; *'All men are our kindred, the world is our home'* : "With lutes in our hands ever. Singing we roam, All men are our kindred, the world is our home."

The wandering singers have no home, no direction, no destination, they move where the wind of time takes them to. They sing about the glories of day's bygone, about happy and simple life. Though the singers are in gay and buoyant spirit, the song is pensive.⁵ The lines remind us of the following lines of William Wordsworth's *The Solitary Reaper* :

"Will no one tell me what she sings ?
That has been, and may be again."

The wandering singers are neither attached to the present nor looked into the future with hope and aspiration. There is nothing in the world that can find them, neither the comfort nor stability of a home, nor the excitement and ecstasy of love. The concluding stanza presents the philosophy of the 'Gypsy' tribe all over the world :

"No love bids us tarry, no Joy bids us wait.
The voice of the wind is the voice of our fate."

The singers hear a call from the distant and eternal, and move with the voice of the wind. The voice of the wind is, in fact, the voice of the fate.

She says in wandering singers : *"All men are kindred, the world is our home."* She is the most cosmopolitan of India's political leaden. Here is a nationalism that readily flows into the broad international current.

Anand Kumar Thakur

Poets are inspired to work for great cause and it is to this cause of blast that Sarojini Naidu has dedicated herself. In one of her fiery speeches she says "As long as I have life, as long as blood flows through this arm of mine, I shall not leave the cause of freedom. Come, My general ! Come, my soldiers ! I am only a woman, only a poet. But as a woman, I give you the weapons of faith and courage, the shield of fortitude and as a poet; I filing out the banner of song and sound of bugle—call to battle. How shall I kindle the flame which shall waken you men from slavery ?"

When 'the terror and tumult of hate shall cease' and place would region supreme, the names of the "martyred sons" would forever be remembered. It has been called a "War" poem but critics are divided in their opinion on this point. In fact, it is a patriotic poem which is filled with deep love for motherland. It is written to attract the attention of a world to the brave soldiers of India who served the Allies in the First World War.^{6,7}

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