

Sarojini Naidu's Love for Nature

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Abstract

Sarojini Naidu, a poetess with perfect knowledge of English language gained the spectacular success as the nightingale of India. She was a successful poet of early twentieth century along with being a true patriot. Sarojini Naidu looked into the locations, sounds, colours, quality and moods of nature remarkably and incredibly. She was a versatile poet and had written her poetry on different themes. Her poems project different themes like love, folk life, challenges of life and death, nature, Indian customs and traditions, but she was always inclined towards nature, specially towards spring season. The poet was particularly enticed and mesmerized by the bliss and astonishing gifts of springs. In spite of the short tenure of her artistry she had lyrical elegance, exquisite passion and enchanting melody in her poetry. Her major works *The Golden Threshold*, *The Bird of Time* and *The Broken Wing* overflow with many wonderful and picturesque beauty of Indian natural landscape.

Keywords: Nature, Spring Season, Indian Birds, Flowers, Romanticism

Introduction

In classical Indian poetry nature was treated as the physical environment of man and not as the inner landscape reflecting and reacting to the outer world. Sarojini Naidu's poetry is a beautiful blending of Wordsworthian enthusiasm and classical Indian quality.

Indo-Anglian enthusiastically followed English poetry because Indo-Anglian work was written in second language. It demanded great effort on the part of the poets to travel from their impoverished imitation to authentic and inspirational works. But contrary to these Indo-Anglian poets in the last decades of nineteenth and early twentieth century Sarojini Naidu wrote on Indian and oriental themes in her poems.

Till 1913 Indian poetry in English was evolved and the poets like Rabindra Nath Tagore, Shri Aurbindo, Toru Dutt and Sarojini Naidu succeeded in creating an independent image of Indian poetry. Sarojini Naidu's poetry shows a natural understanding of the Indian perspective. She went to England for her higher education and was very much influenced by the English poets like P.B. Shelley, John Keats and Lord Alfred Tennyson and imitated the English colours and odours of skylarks and nightingales. But after the precious advice of her trusted guide Edmund Gosse she surprisingly commenced writing about the Indian nature, Indian seasons and Indian birds and flowers, Indian life and Indian ethos. Her poems are marked with abundance of oriental colours and splendour.

George Sampson, who was the author of *The Concise Cambridge History of English Literature*, says

“Sarojini Naidu (1870 - 1949) made a more definite contribution to English poetry. She came to England in 1895 and went to Girton. Her ardent literary temperament was fired by the poetic spirit of the nineties and she began writing verses that are entirely English in matter and form, but was advised to turn to her native land for themes. ... Some of her songs are little more than exotically sentimental utterances that might have come from an English writer who

knew the east by hearsay; but others give vivid vignettes of the native life and some embody the spirit of oriental devotions. In general her work is more remarkable for its command of English than for any revelation of India.” (P 914)

Sarojini Naidu’s artistry portrays the different aspects and moods of Indian life but we can observe that whatever may be the theme of her poems she always blended her work with beautiful and mesmerizing aspects of Mother Nature. Her conception of poetry may lack philosophical foundation but she truly incorporated the natural and spontaneous understanding of Indian point of view.

Discussion

Sarojini Naidu was magnificently enchanted by the transformation and improvement of the mother earth from season to season. Her love and admiration was completely concentrated on spring (*Rituraj*), the king of seasons, rather than other seasons. Her love for different flowers, birds, fragrances and colours of nature resulted into two series of nature poems where the beauty and joy of the spring is portrayed by her.

a) Song of the Spring Time contains following poems

- Spring
- A Song in Spring
- The Joy of the Spring Time
- Vasant Panchami
- In a Time of Flowers
- In Praise of Gulmohar Blossoms
- Nasturtiums

b) The Flowering Year contains

- The Call of Spring
- The Coming of Spring

- The Magic of Spring
- Summer Woods
- June Sunset and
- The Time of Roses

The poem '*June Sunset*' greatly engages the reader in the world of nature.

“Here shall my soul find its true repose

Under a sunset sky or dreams”

Here in these lines the poet in the colours of a June sunset, looks for tranquility in a harmonious country-scene. She does not highlight the negative aspect of fiery heat of the early June, instead she presents the soothing and refreshing part of later June, where there have been few showers of monsoon and wandering clouds and sky is radiant during the hour of sun-set.

The poem reminds us of John Keats 'Odes' where every part is full of lore. In the second line of the poem '*June Sunset*', '*rush fringed rivers*' and '*rain-fed stream*', the consonance of the 'r' and 's' and 'sh' sounds, double alliteration in *fringed* and *feel* creates a striking rhyming effect. The second line with,

“By rush-fringed rivers, and rain-fed streams”

“That glimmer thro meadows of lily and palm.”

The rivers and streams running through the meadows create an impressionistic picture which displays the aesthetic and unique craftsmanship, which peerless except in John Keats.

The sixth and ninth line of the poem '*June Sunset*',

“Diaphanous, amber and rose...

sapphire, emerald, topaz and pearl.”

Offer a rich treat of colours. The lively images of fainted stars in the sky, rising moon, object likes the quail, the bullock cart, the ‘*Pipal*’ tree, the *Banjaran* (gypsy) beautifully come together to portray the sunset.

Sarojini Naidu’s poem ‘*In Praise of Gulmohar Blossoms*’ is also a beautiful word picture of spring season. She admires and praises the Gulmohar as the blessing of beautiful blossom. The poet feels that the richness of blossom of Gulmohar is so vibrant and appealing that neither the red bridal robes nor the red wings of a bird can compete with it.

*“what can rival your lovely hue
O gorgeous boon of the spring?
The glimmering red of a bridal rob
Rich red of a wild bird’s wing?”*

Her poem ‘*Nasturtiums*’ beautifully presents the magnificent, radiant and flame like blooms of flowers. She charmingly sketched the leaves of nasturtiums blended with fragrance and flame which reminds us of the immortal women, in the following lines

*“... Savitri’s sorrow and Sita’s desire,
Draupadi’s longing, Damayanti’s fears,
And sweetest Shankuntala’s magical tears.”*

There is a sudden change from natural to mythic imagery which sharpens the pathos of the situation and leads a reader to recall the virtues and miseries of legendary women of India.

In the poem ‘*The Magic of Spring*’, we observe the desperate mood of the poet. The season of spring creates a mesmerizing conversion in nature but at times it is not at all helpful to encourage the human heart, which is buried under the secret pain.

*“I buried my heart so deep
Under a secret hill of pain.”*

But her gloom of melancholy and depression disappears and she revives her mood of delight and happiness with the song of *Koel*.

“Tho’ March woods glimmer with opal rain

And passionate Koel sings.”

In this poem we observe Sarojini Naidu is very close to P.B. Shelley and John Keats, whom she admired so much. Melancholy in Shelley’s poetry is an intrinsic character, when he says, in ‘Ode to the West Wind’

“Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud,

I fall upon the throns of life: I bleed”

John Keats feels extreme pain because of his high intensity of joy, when he quotes in ‘Ode to a Nightingale’,

“My heart aches and a drowsy numbness pains my sense.”

In Naidu’s poem she forgets her sorrows and grief and encourages younger girls to sing the song, she used to sing as a young maiden. In the second part of the poem after grief, feeling of withdrawal, pain of giving up, her silent suffering is followed by the joy and happiness. Her grief and depression disappears when the March woods glimmer with opal rain and desperate *Koel* sings, the *Kimshuks* bursts into glimmering flower and feathery clouds turns into sparkling tide.

In her poem ‘*Summer Woods*’ nature is far away from the dispute of the worldly life where she says,

“O, I am tired of painted roofs and soft and silken floors

And long for wind-blown canopies of crimson Gulmohar.”

In this poem she desires to fly where cassia-woods are breaking into flame and *Koels* are calling from flowery glad n glen. She longs to sit underneath the trees of *Molasri*, *Neem* and *Tamarind*. She wishes to play on carven flute and roam along the bank of the river and swim

in the water- lily pools. In her poem ‘*Laxmi The Lotus born*’ Sarojini Naidu admires the innate beauty of lotus flowers, birds and their leaves and their blossom. Simultaneously she relates the lotus with mythology. The poem ‘*A Buddha Seated On a Lotus*’ is another example where she depicted the beauty of lotus flower. But her symbolism of lotus, is so effective in the poem ‘*The Lotus*’, addressed to Mahatma Gandhi, which remains unmatched and un-compared anywhere. In this poem Gandhiji’s purity and spiritual beauty are portrayed elegantly with the image of lotus flower with numerous petals has been artistically implemented.

Sarojini Naidu portrayed a close relation between clouds and wind in her poem ‘*Song of Radha*’

*“I wanted to cry, who will buy, who will buy,
These curds that is white as the clouds in the sky,
When the breezes of Shravan are blowing?”*

One of the artistic stanza from her poem ‘*Coromandel Fishers*’ in which she expressed wind at rest is another example of her spontaneous response to natural occurrences:

*“The wind lies asleep in the arms of the dawn,
Like a child that has cried all night.”*

Sarojini Naidu gloriously threaded the spring season with different elements of nature which expresses her love for ‘spring’ season. Her poetry is very rich with the pictures of natural elements of Indian background. The elements of nature like the sun, the dusk, the wind, flowers, rivers, rain, different trees, Indian birds, Indian seasons made a strong impression on the readers’ mind. She magnificently blended the nature with human beings to present their emotions of love, pathos, sorrows, courage and spirituality as an event of personal emotion and individual awareness. In her poems flowers like *Champak, Gulmohar, Lotus, Golden-Casia, Sirisha, Har-Singhar(Parijat)* charmingly please and soothe us with their vibrant

colours, attractive fragrance and wonderful bloom. The poet's passion for *Sirisha*, *Kadamb*, *Kimshuka*, *Neem*, *Pipal*, *Champak*, Tamrind and *Ashoka* splendidly captured and painted the spring season in many of her poems. The wonderful singing birds like *Koels*, *Bulbul*, *Dhadikula*, *Papeeha*, Parrot, Peacock, Swan and dove amuse the readers with their melodious music captured in different poems.

Conclusion

Her romanticism tends to be mark the with her love for the music of words and her enthusiastic aesthetic appreciation of the beautiful aspects of Indian life and nature. With wonder and excitement, Sarojini Naidu looks towards the sights, sounds, colours and tones of nature. She is particularly fascinated by the joys and surprises of spring the cyclical extension and recuperation, which the season lends to the land.

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