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Reflection of the Sense of Melancholy in Sarojini Naidu's Poetry

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Sarojini Naidu popularly known as the 'Nightingale of India' is the greatest lyric poetess of pre-independence era in Indo-Anglian poetry. Her poetry is marked by intense lyric quality. The present paper is aimed to study the sense of melancholy in Sarojini Naidu's poetry.

Like a true Romantic Sarojini Naidu was fascinated by nature, by the spring sights and scenes, by the colours and odors of natural surroundings. Sarojini Naidu primarily was a poet of a spring in all its changing moods and diverse manifestations. Although spring means joy and happiness, sometimes it reflects the sense of Melancholy. Sarojini Naidu observes the different objects of nature in the various stages of birth, growth and decay and this enables her conscious of the trifling nature of life and beauty. She has sense of fear and death and has become insensitive to the beauties of spring-

*"There was a song I used to sing
But now I seek in vain, in vain
For the old tilting glad refrain-
I have forgotten everything."*

[The coming of spring]

Death means the end of life and the terminal of physical existence upon the earth. Death inspired Sarojini Naidu. Though Death gives her sense of Melancholy, yet Sarojini is not afraid of death. She does not consider death as a liberator as many people who believe in after-life do. Surrounded by the horror and fear of death, she wants to taste life to the full before embarking on the final journey.

*"Tarry a while till I am satisfied
of love and grief, of earth and altering sky;
Till all my human hungers are fulfilled
O Death I cannot die!"*

[The Poet to Death]

Even in an intense Melancholic mood she defies and challenges death and wants to live for some more time. Her sense of Melancholy does not rule over her strong will power. It is true that it always flows at the surface level. But it does not have any impression at deeper level. For Sarojini Naidu life and death are not two separate identities; they are in fact, facets of the same truth and reality.

The poems of Sarojini Naidu which treat sadness and sorrow are embellished by the thought of Death. '**Corn Grinders**' is modeled on question-answer pattern. Each question is answered through loss, decay and death. Thus, her preoccupation with death caused a sense of loss and melancholy in the poetry. The word denoting loss in her poetry is many. We can observe it through a few examples – "In the poem '**Indian weavers**' we have 'Funeral shroud', in '**Corn Grinders**' we come across 'Hungry lears' and 'Funeral Pyre' In the poem "**Suttee**", we have

living images like – ‘Cruel foot’ and ‘bitter sword’ and in the poem ‘**Life**’ we have glimpses of ‘blood red suffering’, ‘grieves’ and ‘fears’ and ‘dream-shattering years’.

In *Destiny*, the unfaithfulness of man and the consequent suffering of the woman are described as:

*Love came with his ivory flute,
His pleading eye and winged foot.
“I am weary,” he murmured, “O let me rest
In the sheltering joy of your fragrant breast.”
At dawn he fled and he left no token...
Who cares if a woman’s heart be broken?*

This tone of frustration in love dominates her poems. We do not encounter any expression that gives feelings love and life.

In the poem “The Soul's Prayer”, the person is speaking to God. She is troubled and sad about life. The rituals of the fire (being burned after death) represent purity and peace. She wants God to give her answers to existence. She is trying to get a better understanding from God as to her own life and death and why suffering exists. The poetess does not understand why God allows so much pain and suffering. She is answered by the understanding that it will make her pure and that suffering is necessary for a soul's development. God has shared with her that life and death are both part of existence as well as suffering and the miseries of the world.

Thus, she had a great obsession with the death and paid a lot of price for it. This resulted and reflected the sense of Melancholy in her poetry. Outwardly, she showed that death did not rule her body and soul but in reality the fear and mystery of death made her lyrics Melancholic in nature. Sarojini’s love poems are noted for their rare tenderness and delicacy of passion. They are autobiographical in tone and a note of melancholy and soulful tenderness is hidden behind the apparent spirit of joy and ecstasy, despair and jealousy, suspicion and anxiety, separation and union.

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