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Indianness in Sarojini Naidu's poetry with Reference to Her Major Poems

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Abstract : Sarojini Naidu, the great patriot, politician, orator and the Nightingale of India was born on 13th Feb.1879 in Hyderabad. Most of her poems deal with the vast Indian Panorama. No significant aspect of Indian life is untouched by her. One can come across a cross-section of the Indian society in her poems. Her contribution to the development of culture and national liberation struggle is invaluable. So her significance and greatness as a women poet has been praised by all. This article is a modest attempt to bring out Sarojini Naidu's poetic genius reflecting the Indian character while exploring the religious and spiritual ideals of Truth.

Introduction

Sarojini Naidu, a great patriot, politician, orator and the Nightingale of India (Bharatha Kokila) was born on 13th Feb.1879 in Hyderabad. Her father, Dr. Aghornath Chattopadhyaya, was the founder of Nizam College of Hyderabad and a scientist. Her mother, Mrs. Varasundari, was a Bengali poetess. Sarojinidevi inherited qualities from both her mother and father. Most of her poems deal with the vast panorama of India. One can come across a cross-section of the Indian society in her poems. No significant aspect of Indian life is untouched by her. She worked to the development of Indian culture. Her contribution to the National liberation struggle is invaluable. So her significance and greatness as a Nationalist and Poet has been praised by one and all.

According to many Indian critics, "the most characteristic quality of Sarojini Naidu's poetry, besides its lyrical wealth, is its portrayal of Indian character. She is a poetess of Indian thought and sensibility. Her themes relate to all "Indian." The men and women, fauna and flora, customs and traditions, festivals and celebrations, myths and legends, markets and bazars, fairs and feasts. To a great extent, her poetry is a mirror to India.

Thus one can say that Indianness is the most important aspect in the poetic work of Sarojini Naidu, especially in the genre of traditional folk lore which has been depicted very well. Therefore her poetry comes under the banner as "Indian folk songs". It has dealt with customs, beliefs, traditions, superstitions, aspirations, simple joys, and sorrows etc.

The task of interpreting the heart of India and of creating a genuine Indian atmosphere in English poetry, which had been left incomplete by Toru Dutt on account of her premature death, was taken up by Sarojini Naidu. While Toru Dutt has described the Puranic legends of ancient India, Sarojini has immortalised the familiar scenes of everyday life in modern India.

Sarojini Naidu has achieved a place of great prominence among the Indo-Anglian poets and literary figures. She was not only known as a poetess but a staunch patriot and a freedom

fighter. This nationalism or an intense feeling of patriotism is an Impetus for her active participation in the independence movement.

Sarojini Naidu springs from the very soil of India, her spirit very Indian, manipulates the English language a foreign language effectively as a vehicle, to convey very Indian thought and themes". Out of her 184 poems most of her poems deal chiefly this idea

Bangle-Sellers

The poem *Bangle-Sellers* is associated with bangles and the implications of women's roles in a traditionalist Indian social setting. The bangle seller is trying to convince the woman by explaining the spiritual and symbolic importance of these bangles. In this process, Sarojini Naidu makes strong connections between the bangles and their role in providing "happy daughters and happy wives."

Some are meet for a maiden's wrist,
Silver and blue as the mountain mist,
Some are flushed like the buds that dream.

The subsequent stanzas describe through lush and natural imagery the beauty of the bangles and their representation of these ideals help to increase their precious value. Some of these descriptions invoke the passion of "marriage's fire"

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

And, in the last stanza, help to bring to light the socially accepted role of women in this setting. The purple and gray flecked bangle is meant to symbolize a woman who "serves her household in fruitful pride, and worships the gods at her husband's side."

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.

Palanquin Bearers

The poem "*Palanquin bearers*" is to reflect about the Indian marriages and their cultures. The poet has deliberately used the contradictory feeling of laughing and weeping. The bride is sad and is crying as she is separated from her family. But simultaneously she is also overjoyed as she is going to start a new life. In Indian culture earlier woman were considered as a burden. But when the palanquin bearers carry the bride as she is married, they feel no burden because of the ecstatic environment.

Lightly, O lightly we bear her along,

Softly, O softly we bear her along,

She hangs like a star in the dew of our song;

She springs like a beam on the brow of the tide,

She falls like a tear from the eyes of a bride.

Lightly, O lightly we glide and we sing,

We bear her along like a pearl on a string.

Wandering Singers

This poem *Wandering Singers* is about wandering singers who are common in Indian scene, their life and all about what they do in life, their experiences. The wandering singers wander here and there. They consider all people as their family and relatives and the world as their homes. They have lutes in their hands and they always sing about the cities luster which is lost, laughter and beauty of the women who are dead now, swords of old battles and crowns of old kings.

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 fate.

There is no love that compels them to stay and no joy that forces them to wait, but they wander about as the winds guide them. There is a suggestion of fate governing their future.

Kali, the Mother

The poem, *Kali, the Mother* is a hymn to Kali, “the Eternal Mother” of Hindu worship. Indian folk culture is dominated by ritual. The rituals observed on the occasion of festivals draw on the participants’ sense of their own common helplessness, in the face of dancers and mysteries which confront man, both in his own nature and in his world. Through such rituals both the individual and the community express their common attempt to placate some supernal being who can destroy them as well as protect them from unknown dangers, lurking in the darkness of the future:

O’ Terrible and Tender and Devine!

O” Mystic mother of sacrifice

We deck the somber altars of thy shrine

With sacred basil leaves and saffron and rice

All gifts of life and death, we bring to thee

Uma, Haimavathi,

There are innumerable gods ‘and goddesses whom the Hindus have always worshiped and sung hymns to since the time of the *Rig Veda*., *Kali, the Mother* is one such deity, and in the present hymn Sarojini has succeeded capturing the very spirit of the worship that is offered to her every year by the people of India as a whole, as well as individually:

Corn-Grinders

The poem *corn-grinders* is a lyric about the wretched condition of Indian women who have to do the manual work of corn-grinding, especially the young widows of that time. The women in early morning hours, when the stars still laugh and all the happy world is asleep, are at their grinding wheels, singing but in a pathetic tone, which harmonises well with their own life experience and the lonely hours of the morning:

O little bride, why dost thou weep

With all the happy world asleep?
Alas! Alas! My lord is dead!
Ah, who will stay these hungry tears,
Or still the want of famished years,
And crown with love my marriage-bed?
My soul burns with the quenchless fire
That lit my lover's funeral pyre:
Alas! Alas! My lord is dead.

Cradle Song

A 'Cradle Song' or lullaby is a part of Indian culture which is a song by the mother to put her children to sleep. In the present poem, the Indian mother perhaps is reciting the lullaby. She describes the various places from which she has gathered the song that is descending gradually upon the eyelids of her child:

From groves of spice,
O'er fields of rice,
Athwart the lotus-stream,
I bring for you,
A glint with dew
A little lovely dream.

Finally the baby goes into a deep and sound sleep. In the golden light of the late evening produced by the clear starry skies, the stars from heaven look down upon the baby in its cradle. The mother places the baby in the cradle with soft caress and a promising dream.

Dear eyes, good-night,
In golden light
The stars around you gleam;
On you I press
With soft caress
A little lovely dream.

Hymn to Indra, Lord of Rain

This poem is about the prayer to the rain god, Indra by farmers for rain. It is believed by the Hindus that the rain, thunder and lightning occur by the grace of Indra. Hence, this poem is composed as the villagers pray to Indra for rain for their agricultural purpose.

The farmers pray to Indra to make the thunder which is described as His voice, to wake up the storm from sleep which can break even the mountains by its force and split the waves of the sea. Indra is the maker of streams and rivers:

O Thou, who rousest the voice of the thunder,
And biddest the storms to awake from their sleep
Who breakest the strength of the mountains asunder,
And clearest the manifold pride and rife
Dost nourish the heart of the forest and plain,
Withhold not Thy gifts O Omnipotent Giver!

They flow through the forest and plain lands which is utilised for cultivation. He is omnipotent and has the ultimate power over the earth and sky and he grants joy to the eagles and

teaches the young koel to fly. He helps everyone as and when he needs His help or his suffering. He loves everyone and saves all from sorrows and protects from pain. Hence, they surrender themselves to him and ask him not to leave them without rain

Lakshmi, the lotus Born

The very Indian poem *Lakshmi, the lotus Born* is addressed to the Goddess of Fortune, Lakshmi. In Hindu mythology Lakshmi, wife of Lord Vishnu is worshipped as goddess of fortune and happiness. This poem is a finest example of Indian faith in performing rituals and worshipping idols. It was composed on the 'Lakshmi Puja Day' in 1915. In it the poetess invokes Lakshmi, the goddess of fortune in a traditional way to shower prosperity and wealth :

Prosper our cradles and kindred and cattle
And cherish our Health-fires and coffers and corn
Hearken ,O' Lotus Born

Here the poetess addresses the deity Goddess Lakshmi not only for herself but also for the entire mankind.

"For our dear land, we offer oblation
To keep thou her glory unsullied , unhorn
And guard the invincible hope of our nation
Hearken ,O' Lotus Born

Conclusion: - Thus we can observe variegated scenes of Indian life being presented throughout Sarojini Naidu's poetry. Her depiction of India is comprehensive and realistic. She depicts With beauty, grace, love, sympathy and penetration the changing seasons, the rivers and lakes, beaches and forests, flowers and birds, men and women of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, engaged in diverse vocations and exhibiting various skills. The simple rustic scene of rural India and mundane life is being very picturesquely portrayed by the author.

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