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Shaurabh Dubey
Lecturer -SD College, Kanpur
University, Uttar Pradesh,
India

Indianness in the poems of Sarojini Naidu: A study

Shaurabh Dubey

Abstract

Sarojini Naidu, popularly known as 'Bharat Kokila' is one of the greatest Anglo-Indian poetesses express Indianness in her poems. All the poems of Naidu depict India's culture, tradition, nature and ecology and moreover about the society. She had lived in the time of Nizam of Hyderabad so many of her poems depict the city of Hyderabad. She has also depicted well religious poems which are about Indian's God and Goddess.

Keywords: Culture, tradition, nature, and ecology & society

Introduction

Sarojini Naidu's poems express the spirit of her own city of Hyderabad. The poem 'Nightfall in the city of Hyderabad' is a marvelous one dealing with the charms of the city during nightfall. The Speckled sky hanging over it; the white river kissing the mouth of the city gates, the Muezzin's call floating balconies, leisurely elephants winding through the lanes and the high charminar humming with sounds of gay cavalcades. The poetess's love for nature in Hyderabad is quite evident in it.

In the description of splendid scenes Sarojini is excellent. In this poem, we feel the stately magnificence of a flourishing oriental metropolis Sarojini bears unbounded love for the fair places of her birth. Her love for Hyderabad is like Kipling's love for Sussex. It is but natural for us to be attracted to the earth of our country.

Description of Hyderabad from Sarojini's pen recall Charles Baskerville's impression of Indian states, the glamour and gorgeousness of which struck the foreign journalist's mind. The starry sky of Hyderabad appears to the white river, the music that flashes and scintillates seems to the poet to be like a tusk from the mouth of the city gates

Mark from the minaret, how the muezzin's call,
Floats like a battle- flag over the city and luminous;
From trellised balconies, languid and luminous,
Faces gleam, veiled splendour voluminous.

Round the charminar the sounds of gay cavalcades blend with the music of Cymbals and over the city bridge night comes majestically born like a Queen to a Sumptuous feast

The poem is written in dactylic metre which has been made melodious by Sarojini. "All textbooks of English prosody," Shankar Makashi-Punekar points out, "have declared, the dactyl to be a sad 'falling' meter good enough only for 'The Bridge of sighs' but Sarojini succeeded in creating 'a rousing effect'". (Shankar Mokshi, 186)

Another street scene is painted in 'Street Cries' - the bazaar as it appears to the poet in the morning, at noon and at the evening. The First Cymbals of dawn, according to the poet, beat upon the sky rousing the world to labour to tend the flock, to bind the mellowing grain, to toil in diverse ways for a livelihood. People are hungry, and what they want in breakfast, and so when they hurry out of their homes, they cry of buy bread, buy bread rings down the eager street.

(Sarojini Naidu, 57)

And at evening her light tinkles over the gay shopping places and a canopy of stars in suddenly unfurled

Correspondence
Shaurabh Dubey
Lecturer -SD College, Kanpur
University, Uttar Pradesh,
India

When lutes are strung and Fragrant torches lit,
On white roof-terraces where lovers sit,
Drinking together of life's poignant sweet,
But flowers, buy flowers, floats down the singing street
(ibid, 57)

At noon the earth falters and waters swoon. The kelps hush
their songs in dim shelters thirsty throats crave "liquid
succor" from the cruel heat. Then the cry of
Buy fruit, buy fruit, steals down the panting street (ibid, 57)
The purdah Nashin' is reminiscent of muslimculture. It is an
exquisite piece of fancy. The inefficacy of the purdah is
pointed out in the following.

Who shall prevent the subtle years
Or shield a woman's eyes from tears?
It is time that lifts the curtain unawares
(Sarojini Naidu, 57)

In March 1908 a meeting was held in Bombay to celebrate
the jubilee of stree Bodha, Gujarati monthly published
from Bombay. Many Muslim ladies were present gave
expression stumbling block in the way of social reforms in
this country.

Padmini sengupta asks whether Sarojini exulted in two
forms of existence –"One in the glare and turmoil of
political agitations, youth movement, and women's
emancipation, and the other in the sweet scented, heavily
curtained drawing room of a secret woman's world."
(Padmini sengupta, 44)

The truth is, as Sarojini points out, that by imposing purdah
man may protect the woman from impure eyes.

Putting her behind lattices, he can guard her secure against
the sun and the wind. No hand other than of her lord and
lover can unveil the mysteries of her beauty. It is true. But
man is helpless against time. He cannot prevent the woman
from becoming old.

He cannot guard her face being covered with wrinkles of
age. He cannot shield her from sorrow at the loss of her
health and beauty. He cannot provide security to her eyes
against shedding tears and the veil that man has drawn over
the woman's face, is lifted by time. The futility of purdah is
therefore apparent. Talking to the students of the kanya
Mahavidyalay at Jullunder in 1819, Sarojini said,
The purdah system does not mean purdah on the mind and
purdah on the soul."

'In A time of flowers' Another poem dealing with Vasant
Panchmi form a similar angle is 'In a Time of flowers'. In it
a friend is dead and Vasant Panchmi has come again. The
deceased was a wealthy man. He wore gems in his turban-
crest. He used to participate with gusto in celebrations. His
generosity is evident from the reference that he is to throw
red jewels over the maidens who danced at the feet of
spring.

Thus we see that Indianness is plenty in the poems of
Sarojini Naidu which she enjoyed throughout of her life.

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