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Sarojini Naidu - A contemporary nationalist Indian poetess

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Abstract

Sarojini Naidu carries the legacy of being great poetess who revolutionized the mental set up of Indian subcontinent. She happened to be a nationalist leader in India's freedom struggle. Her poetry put a new zeal and zest in the struggle against oppression, coercion and subjugation^[1]. Naidu's fight for women equality added more fame to her back in the times when English was less prominent in India. By speaking up in the verses and couplets she made her voice reach millions of hearts within a very less time. In relation to the other Indian revolutionary poets Naidu puts a unique style of inking the verses which are blended with the most day to day images, metaphors and similes^[2].

Keywords: Sarojini Naidu, nationalist, Indian poetess

Introduction

Review of literature

Education: Sarojini Naidu was born to an orthodox Bengali Brahman family on 13 February 1879 in Hyderabad. She belonged to an educated family with her father, Aghorenath Chattopadhyay, administering the Hyderabad Nizam College after being a doctorate in Science from Edinburgh University^[3]. Within a big Brahman family she was the eldest of other siblings. She wrote her matric examination from the University of Madras and then allowed herself to take a break from studies. To her good luck, one of the Nizam's charitable trust gave her a chance to explore the facilities of UK. The journey started from King's College and flourished in Girton College, each of them located in London and Cambridge respectively^[4]. Naidu got married inter regionally to an Andhra Pradesh boy, Paidipati Govindarajulu Naidu, at the young age of 19. She cut out the biased distinctions of inter-regional marriage in the times when society was all in the abyss of patriarchy. The couple had five children among which one of the daughters, Paidipati Padmaja, became governor of Uttar Pradesh^[5].

Once in the dream of a night I stood
Lone in the light of a magical wood
Soul deep in visions that poppy like sprang
And spirits of truth were the birds that sang
And spirits of love were the stars that glowed
And spirits of peace were the streams that flowed
In that magical wood in the land of sleep.

Naidu as a prolific Nationalist leader

Since the early childhood Naidu was captivated by the political developments around her. However, partition of Bengal in 1905 added fuel to the fire and she jumped into the full-fledged Indian independence Movement. The spark of seeing India as a free nation was embedded in soul as portrayed by her writing. She was lucky enough to be guided by the mentors like Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore and Gopal Krishna who guided her with a helping hand in fight against colonialism. She had a chance to travel to different parts of India and had the privilege of delivering the lectures on women upliftment and their emancipation^[6]. She challenged the orthodox mind set of the people regarding the women folk and finally became the pioneer of forming the Women's Indian Association in 1917. Being a prolific writer and fluent English speaker she was given chance to represent India in England

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in 1920 to advocate the effort of freedom from British rule under the banner of All India Home Rule League ^[7].

The new hath come and now old retires
And so the past becomes a mountain cell
Where lone, apart, old hermit memories dwell
In consecrated calm, forgotten yet
Of the keen heart that hastens to forget
Old longings in fulfilling new desires.....

Sarojini Naidu _Being a Writer

Book Title	Year of publication
The Golden Threshold	1905
The Bird of Time	1912
The broken wing	1917
Muhammad Jinnah	1919
The Sceptred flute	1943
The Feather of the Dawn	1961

Besides being inclined to the socio political developments in India Sarojini Naidu was equally passionate about the writing as well. She started inking her thoughts at the early age of 12. She published her first book titled, The Golden Threshold, that impressed the political stalwarts of India like Gopal Krishna. The book bore the foreword of a prominent author Arthur Symons. The great sense of drawing images in her poems was widely acclaimed after the successful launch of the book, the bird of time ^[8, 9].

What do you weave, O ye flower –girls?

With tassels of azure and red
Crowns from the brow of a bridegroom
Chaplets to garland his bed
Sheets of white blossoms new gathered
To perfume the sleep of the dead.

The Feather of the dawn, was the last collection of her poems which was published posthumously by her daughter

Naidu's Accomplishments

Naidu made her fame as a widely read writer right from the age of 12. She had multiple achievements to her name apart from being a bold and brave politician. She was honoured with Kaiser-i-Hind medal by the British government for her passionate and zealous work during the plague in India. Since she was fierce and fervent with regard to the freedom struggle in India she is also remembered as the first lady to hoist the tricolour on an international platform in USA and UK. For her profound work in the English poetry she was given the title of The Nightingale of India. On her 134th birthday in 2014, Google India remembered her for all his services to the India, via Google doodle. An asteroid 4567 was named after her named on her memory which was discovered by Eleonor Helin. The London University named her in the top 150th leading women in year 2018 ^[10, 11, and 12].

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 we sing
We bear her along like a pearl on a string.

Legacy of Nightingale

Death knocked her door on 2nd march 1949 when she suffered a cardiac arrest in the afternoon of a spring day. When she breathed her last she was in the government house at

Lucknow. Days before her death she was advised to rest by the doctors but her zeal and zest to work did not allow her to stop working for the people. She was dedicated to her work right from her first day in the office. She had to undergo a bloodletting a day before her death ^[13, 14].

We paused before a house that seemed

A swelling of the ground
The roof was scarcely visible
The cornice but a mud.

Emily Dickson

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