

## Sarojini Naidu: The Singer of Beautiful Songs

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### ABSTRACT

Sarojini Naidu was an Indian political activist, feminist, and poet, a proponent of civil rights, women's emancipation, and anti-imperialistic ideas. Despite all these qualities, she was known as "The Singer of Beautiful Songs" she will always be remembered and recalled by her two names: "The Nightingale of India" and "Bharat Kokila" as Mahatma Gandhi ornamented her. The present paper is a genuine effort to reveal her personality as a singer of beautiful songs; she emerged as the very soul of India and was attached firmly to its soil. Despite all her western garb and literary affiliation with the English poets, her sensibility was "wholly native." Blessed with remarkable creative talent, she adroitly composed charming songs with a striking note of native fervour. In this task, she fell into the tradition of Indian women writers since the Vedic age. In the tradition of Vishwavara and Ghosha, the singers of sonorous songs in Vedas of Gargie, Maitreyi, and Sulabha, the unchangeable Upanishadic debaters of Sumana, Shyama, Sumangala, Sangh Mitra, and Rajyashri.

**Keywords:** *Sarojini Naidu, The Nightingale of India, Romantic poets, Shelley, sensuousness.*

Sarojini blossomed into a poet under the powerful influence of English Romantic poets like— Shelley and Keats and tutored by romantic critics—Gosse and Symons; she remained every inch a romantic. She could not become as Edmund Gosse says she hoped to be: "A Keats" of India, but her poetry possessed an "Individual Beauty" of its own. She may be compared to Shelley and Keats in this connection. Sarojini's early verses were western in sentiment and imagery and were founded on Tennyson and Shelley's reminiscences. Written under the impact of the Romantics, Sarojini's work conveys an impression of exuberance and heat, for, on the whole, she lives not in high reflective moments, nor even profoundly emotional ones, but in a brilliant beauty of suggestive sensation.

Sarojini loves to be luxurious; She deals with tangibilities, her genius is predominantly visual and auditory sight and sound and vibrant palpableness are the constituents of her soul.

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Received 11 Nov. 2022; Accepted 18 Nov. 2022. Available online: 25 Nov. 2022.

Published by SAFE. (Society for Academic Facilitation and Extension)

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Sarojini's success lies in her using the sensuous basis of poetry for the one legitimate aim all poetic language must have: the revelation of realities not quite of earth. Her poems draw aside the veil of the gross world and show us brief vistas of some subtle abiding and perfect sense-existence, the colour, and cry of a dream plane which is a kind of magic background to the earth. In her sensuousness, Sarojini is very close to Keats. Her world is a mingled fare of rainbow and romance, sunlight and starlight, and at the same time of death and deprivation. Like Keats, again her poetic motto was around beauty in its perfect form. A few poetic images gathered randomly from various arresting ones will suffice to illustrate how exquisitely the nakedness of fact can be robed in "fancy weeds" and with what pleasing effect. Consider, for example, how the common is lifted from commonplace in a suggestive simile:

Anklet bells! Frail-anklet bells!  
That hold Loves ancient mystery  
As hide the lips of limpid shells  
Faint tones of the remembered sea.

Sarojini developed her thoughts with images, which sometimes seem a trifle over-elaborate, but they make less familiar things more accurate and more familiar. We are naturally pleased with comparisons. One can scarcely be a lyric poet without masterly handling of the imagery: and so to read Sarojini is to find the colour and condensed significance of metaphor grandly used and personification made an impassioned perception. Sarojini is a talented melodist, charming us with the sweetness of her lines. Her songs attain unity because they contain one cry, the cry of the dominant unmediated emotion at the moment of writing. She finds great joy in beauty, and her palanquin bearers burst out in rapture again and again over the beauty of the lady they are carrying. In a song of two stanzas, similes tell how the palanquin bearers felt when they carried a delicate and beautiful Indian maiden in their palanquin:

Lightly, O lightly we bear her along,  
She sways like a flower in the wind of our song;  
She skims like a bird on the foam of a streams,  
She floats like a laugh from the lips of a dream.  
Gaily, O gaily we glide and we sing,  
We bear her along like a pearl on a string.  
Softly, O softly we bear her along,  
She hangs like a star in the dew of our songs;

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.

The similes are used not to explain but to fill the mind's eye with pictures of an elusive delicacy and beauty. Every critic who has reviewed Sarojini's works has been struck by the harmony of her lines, whether she sings of the beautiful dancers with houri-like faces who bewitch the voluptuous watches of the night or the coromandel fishers out to capture the leaping wealth of the tide. Her command of lingering cadence, her unfailing genius in the apt use of epithets, and her artistic use of alliteration are all evident in such songs as "Indian Dancers" the "Palanquin Bearers" Sarojini's genius was essentially lyrical, like Shelley's. Her lyric poetry occupies an essential place in Indo- English poetry.

Most of her poetry constitutes songs and the song impulse, even those poems that are not lyrical. She has written a few ballads and narrative poems filled with her particular mood and emotion. Sarojini Naidu's lyrics art has been much influenced by British romanticism, especially Persian and Urdu poetic modes, with their characteristics of opulence. In ardour of passion and mystical imagination, and in the witchery of music she has no equal. The song's cry rises straight from her heart and goes straight to the reader's heart. That is why she has been called "The perfect singing God." Her songs are the poetic cry of Joy, sorrow, and exultation and are suffused with emotional intensity. For their emotional power, spontaneity and music, rapture and simplicity, personal melancholy, and prophetic passion Sarojini's songs have become part and parcel of human memory. Sarojini's songs are incomparable in their technique: Sarojini Naidu's finest songs have a perfect structure and an exquisite finish and she handles various meters and stanza forms with consummate ease. To her and Rilke; singing was being; of all Indian English poets of her generation, she has perhaps the finest ear, and her mastery of words- music is indubitable.

She has attempted every form of the songs as hymn, ode, elegy, sonnet, and has achieved excellence in each like Keats. An object of beauty was her a joy for ever and beauty of every kind thrilled her and inspired her to poetic activity. To quote A.N. Dwivedi:

Like Keats and Shelley, she employed a high – browed diction, which is steeped in passion, pulse and power. Her sonorous and unusual words add to the subtlety of expression of ideas and display a keen perception of beauty.

Her eyes turn towards beauty as the sunflower turns towards the sun, and it is this beauty which she celebrates in one song after another. The beauty lifted her up and transformed her into an elfin spirit and gave her a “strange sensation”.

In the poem “Indian Dancers” Sarojini reveals the richness of words and the music she sings:

Eyes ravished with rapture, celestially panting,  
What passionate be some a flaming with fire  
Drink deep of the hush of the hyacinth heavens  
That glimmer around them in fountains of light;  
O wild and entrancing the strain of keen music  
That cleaveth the stars like a wail of desire,  
And beautiful dancers with houri-like faces  
Be-witch the voluptuous watches of night.

Her song appeal is various, wonderful, and full of the magic of melody. Her personal songs are idealistic in character. Sarojini always longs for an ideal. Her ideals are many. Sometimes one finds her in pursuit of death, sometimes in the quest of love, and sometimes in pursuit of a new millennium that she would like to bring about in this world. A song is marked by simplicity, brevity, spontaneity, music, and melody, and it is essentially these characteristics that her poetry has. Sarojini’s songs are marked by the spontaneity of expression; the variety of music and songs come to her as spontaneously and naturally as leaves to a tree; initially, she was a singer of song and a “song bird” and is rightly called the ‘nightingale of India’. She wrote to Arthur Symons:

I have the vision and the desire, but the voice,  
If I could write just one poem full of beauty and spirit of greatness,  
I should be exultantly silent forever,  
but I sing just as the birds do,  
and my songs are as ephemeral.

True poet signs as the birds do; he sings because he must. It is this bird-like quality that she possesses in plenty. It was the quality Keats had in mind when he said that poetry should come like leaves on the trees or not at all. This quality is conspicuous in her fold songs. With the experiences of life gathering upon her, it intensified and deepened and assumed a more sober coloring in her later poetry.

Sarojini Naidu is a singer of the beauty of human joys and suffering. In the poem “Guerdon,” Sarojini prays to God to award suitable rewards to various objects, creatures, and human beings and that fields and forests should be graced by the gifts of spring. She sings:

To hawk and to heron  
The pride of their wing;  
Her grace to the panther,  
Her tints to the dove...  
The rapture of Love!

Sarojini’s songs are marked by the spontaneity of expression and easy and graceful diction. Her genius was essentially lyrical. All of her poetry is lyrical. The lyrical impulse penetrates into her un-lyrical verses, be it pictorial, epical or dramatic; as it also does with Swinburne, and it does much less with Wordsworth, Byron, or Keats. In “Guerdon” she expresses her feelings with spontaneity and melody:

To the hand of the diver  
The gems of the tide,  
To the eyes of the bridegroom  
To face of his bride;  
To the heart of a dreamer  
The dreams of his youth...,  
For me, O my Master,  
The rapture of Truth!

In the first stanza of this poem, Sarojini says that the priests and prophets may exult in the propagation of their creeds, and the kings and their followers may feel pleasure in their glories triumphs, but she desires to be a singer of love and truth and set her goal in life:

“For me, O my Master, The rapture of Song!”

She was not an idle singer, shutting her eyes from the suffering of humankind. In her song “The Faery Isle of Janjira” She conspicuously describes her ideal—her infinite love for humankind:

Into the strife of the throng and the tumult,  
The war of sweet Love against folly and wrong;  
Where brave hearts carry the sword of battle,  
‘Tis mine to carry the banner of song,

The solace of faith to the lips that falter,  
The succor of hope to the hands the fail,  
The tidings of joy when Peace shall triumph,  
When Truth shall conquer and Love prevail.

Sarojini's songs are ephemeral, as she doubted. Some of them, like "To a Buddha Seated on Lotus" " In Salutation of Eternal peace," " June Sunset," " Summer Woods," " The Old Woman," etc., have stood the wear and tear of time virtue of their poetical excellence and undisputed lyrical quality. In the song "The Time of Roses," she expresses the enchanting beauty and ravishing perfume of lovely roses which bloom in plenty everywhere:

In bright fields and garden closes  
How they burgeon and unfold!  
How they sweep o'er tombs and towers  
In voluptuous crimson showers  
And untrammelled tides of gold!

They attract wild bees with their sweet and magical perfume and scatter the abundant wealth of their beauty and scent, which rival the turban plume of her lover, which is carried by winds in all directions, and, thus, the entire atmosphere becomes magical and sweet-scented. Sarojini Naidu was fascinated by the music and melody of words. Their musical sounds thrill the reader's heart. She attains a high degree of rhythmical beauty and variety in her songs. She was a master of musical suggestion, using words as a song. She had inner and outer music indeed, and the whole effect of her meter and the very sound and sense of language can be changed by a change in her mood. Though it can't be too clearly understood that both meter and spirit are in the control of her art, in her method of dealing with words, only her inner music had a remarkable effect upon her outer music, making each a living instrument of her sorrow and her soul. Naturally, her genius did not lean to blank verse, for she had a very highly developed art of rhyme. The rhymes of her great songs are unique. There is never the least trace of effort in their simplicity and force. Her verses nearly always achieve either using a pause or by position or sheer sonority and emphasizing splendid and arresting isolation. Moreover, emotion comes to her, as it were, in a rhythmical harmony:

Lord Buddha, on thy Lotus-throne,  
With praying eyes and hands elate,  
What mystic rapture dost thou own.

Immutable and ultimate?

Sarojini did not seek to grapple with life's problems as a philosopher. Beauty made her nerve tingle and stirred her into quivering songs. She poignantly cherishes the sweet and loving memory of her beloved. In "The Festival of Memory" she frequently sings:

Doth rapture hold a feast,  
Doth sorrow keep a fast  
For love's dear memory  
Whose sweetness shall outlast  
The changing winds of Time,  
Secret and unsurpassed.

Sarojini's latter songs are distinguished by a note of melancholy which never mars her love for life. Melancholy is the result of the grim spectacle of human suffering and frustration in love. In the song "In Salutation to the Eternal Peace" she expresses her sorrow and love for mankind:

Say, shall I heed dull presages of doom,  
Or dread the rumoured loneliness and gloom,  
The mute and mythic terror of the tomb?  
For my glad heart is drunk and drenched with Thee,  
O inmost wine of living ecstasy!  
O inmost essence of eternity!

Emotional intensity and exultation are other characteristics of a song, and this emotional intensity and ecstasy also characterize the songs of Sarojini Naidu. The song proper is the product of a swift momentary and passionate impulse coming from without, for the most part, suddenly awakening the poet into a vivid life, seizing upon him and setting him on fire. It is a short-lived fire, but it completely possesses the poet as long as it lasts. A great intensity of feeling and depth of passion characterizes Sarojini's songs. The following lines of "The Broken Wing" illustrate the intensity of her feeling:

Shell spring that wakes mine ancient land again,  
Call to my wild and suffering heart in vain?  
Or Fate's blind arrows still the pulsing note  
Of my far-reaching, frail, unconquered throat?  
Or a weak bleeding pinion daunt or tire

My flight to the high realms of my desire?  
Behold! I rise to meet the destined spring  
And scale the star upon my broken wing!

There is one emotion described in all its intensity in a song. All her songs possess the emotional depth and intensity. The joys of spring, the rapture of love, the suffering of lovers in separation, colourful spectacles of Indian life, the mystic peace enjoyed by Buddha, and numerous other emotions thrill her. In the heat of emotion, she begins to sing. Cousins aptly says: “The poems like “The Broken Wing” were of a depth of emotional intensity that swept me of my feet. I remember especially the love and reverence which she poured in to her poems to her father and her national guru, Gokhale.”

There is a whole class of Sarojini’s songs that defy analysis; which purposely darken and blur the outlines of thought and emotion whenever those outlines tend to become clear; which laugh at method; which, when we think we catch their meaning, glide into something else, leaving the thought we seemed to attain unfinished; in which nothing is finished; but which all the same, leave a vivid impression behind them of the state of Sarojini’s feeling of which we are often conscious. Her nature and spring songs follow the pattern of ancient Indian classical poetry to a great extent. The sights and sounds and scenes of nature, especially those of spring, thrill her, and she rapturously begins to sing:

Young leaves grow green on the banyan twigs,  
And red on the people tree,  
The honey-birds pipe to the budding figs  
And honey blooms call thee bee.  
Popies squander their fragile gold  
In the silvery aloe- brake,  
Coral and ivory lilies unfold.

In seasons of India, particularly the spring, fascinate her, she sings of the joys of the spring in a number of songs. Sarojini Naidu finds pleasure in the broadest commonality spread in nature. The melodious songs of bulbul, the beauty and fragrance of roses, dew-drops glittering on the blades of grass and, the petals of flowers, the musical movement of zephyr are the numerous expression of joy in the springtime. In “The joy of the Springtime”, Sarojini expresses the sensuous beauty of springtime:



Springtime, O Spring time, what is your essence,  
The lift of a bulbul, the laugh of a rose,  
The dance of the dew on the wings of the moonbeam,  
The voice of the zephyr that sings as he goes,  
The hope of a bride or the dream of a maiden  
Watching the petals if gladness uncloses.

An undercurrent of powerful emotions runs in “Ecstasy”. The poetess aims to arouse similar emotions with intensity in the hearts of her readers:

Their joy from birds and the streams let us borrow,  
O heart! Let us sing,  
The years are before us for weeping and sorrow....  
To-day it is spring!

The poetess describes her feelings in a dramatic manner called the monologue form, which Robert Browning successfully practiced. Some of her songs like “Vasant Panchami,” “The coming of Spring”, “The magic of Spring,” etc., are noticeable for wistful melancholy and indicate the occurrence of some emotional crises in the poet’s life. The coming of spring cannot delight her:

O spring, I cannot run to greet  
Your coming as I did of old,  
Clad in a shining veil of gold,  
With champa-buds and blowing wheat  
And silver anklets on my feet  
And I buried my heart so deep, so deep,  
Under a secret hill of pain,  
And said: “O broken pitiful thing  
Ever the magic spring shall ne’er wake  
Thee to life again,  
Tho’ march words glimmer with opal rain  
And passionate Koels sing.

In “Village Song” Sarojini reveals the attraction of pastoral life. It is unspoiled by the sorrows and suffering of life. The young village boy who is giving up all worldly pleasure goes to the forest:

“Where upon the champa- boughs the Champa buds are blowing;  
To the koel-haunted river-isles where lotus lilies glisten”

His mother tries her best to prevent him from going away by presenting the rosy picture of life before him. The world is full of pleasure “of bridal songs and cradle-songs and sandal scented leisure.” The boy tries deeper and deeper into reality, and he finds a powerful undercurrent of deep sorrow in all the gay pageants of life.

The bridal and cradle songs have cadences of sorrow—the laughter of the sun today, the wind of depth tomorrow. The lines can be compared with Shelley’s *To a skylark*”!

We look before and after,  
And pine for what is not  
Our sincerest laughter  
With some pain is fraught.

Sarojini’s love songs comprise a major part of her poetry. They are of the ever-changing, indifferent, infinite character of passion, which fled from its fulfillment as if it were an enemy who would rob her of all joy since it robbed her of pursuit and limited the illimitable. An Ariel’s imagination and passionate intensity are the cardinal characteristics of her love poem:

You flaunt your beauty in the rose, your glory in the dawn,  
Your sweetness in the nightingale, your whiteness in the swan  
You haunt my walking like a dream, my slumber like a moon,  
Pervade me like musky scent possess me like a tune.

Her passionate yearning for the fulfillment of love characterizes “*To love*.” Love is self-surrender, the complete identification of two loving hearts, and all obstacles cannot hinder the path of love. The beloved offers her all at the shrine of love and does not wait for a return:

O Love! Of riches that are mine,  
What gift had I withheld before thy shrine?  
What tender ecstasy of prayer and praise  
Or lyric flower of my impassioned days?

In the poem “The Path of Tears”, Sarojini Naidu expresses unfathomable agony of a maiden who has sacrificed her all at the altar of love and fears that her lover has turned his eyes away. In “Love’s Guerdon” the maiden intensely loves her lover, who has abandoned her without blame or reproach. She gladly accepts all sorrows, suffering, cruelty, and unkindness; he inflicts on her. She feels the hunger for love, tormenting her heart and soul:

Fierce were the wounds you struck me, O’ my Love,  
And bitter were the blows!... And  
Love it were not such deep unmeasured wrong  
To wreck my life of youth and all delight  
Bereave my days of sweetness and to blight  
My hidden wells of slumber and of song.

The eight poems in “The Sanctuary” deal with love as the supreme sacrifice in the love-lorn maiden’s life. Her love songs dealing with various love experiences are characterized by intensity and draw both on the Hindu tradition of love poetry and the Sufi Muslim tradition. She joyously surrenders her life and fancies herself making a shrine to protect her love from Time and Fate:

O Could my love design  
A secret, sealed, invulnerable shrine  
To hide you, happy and inviolate,

From covetous Time and Fate. In “The Worship of Love” Sarojini Naidu has vividly recreated the devotional atmosphere of an Indian temple, but it is in the temple:

Of love that she gives herself to martyrdom:  
Burn me, O Love, as in a glowing censer  
Dies the rich substance of a sandal grain  
Let my soul die till naught but an intenser  
And every twilight star shall hold its breath  
And praise the for my death!

Sarojini’s love songs also have an autobiographical interest and may be read as expression of her deep and passionate love for Govind Rajalu Naidu, with whom she fell in love early in life. Her songs of life and death also reveal emotional intensity. In the poems, dealing mainly with life, there is a note of steadfast courage and dauntless forbearance against the suffering and

futile striving of life, but the somber and ghastly shadow of death, of the transience of life haunt her poems:

Shall my soul falter or my body fear  
Its poignant hour of bitter suffering,  
Or fail are I achieve my destined deed  
Of song or service for my country's need

In “the old woman” she describes her faith in God, and in “solitude” she expresses the note of mysticism of the Almightyness of God:

Or perchance, we may glean a far glimpse of the infinite bosom,  
in whose glorious shadow all life is unfolded or furled, Thro'  
the luminous hours ere the lotus of dawn shall re blossom, in  
petals of splendour to worship the Lord of the world.

Another distinctive feature of Sarojini's songs is the combination of simplicity with sophistication. Rapture and simplicity are the two essential qualities of a song. A song is the expression of a passionate ideal, and besides being rapturous, pure passion is always simple, whether it be the passion of love, hatred, joy or despair. Sarojini's songs have the quality of simplicity to a marked degree. In this respect, no poet except Shelley can stand in comparison. Sarojini Naidu had a propensity for the ornate style and the choicest jewels of language, but she could also be simple when she liked. Indeed, in her song, we find a rare combination of the simple and the ornate; according to the recruitment of thought and emotion, passages of extreme simplicity coexist with highly elaborate passages. The concluding lines of “The Time of Roses” is an example of extreme simplicity:

Hide me in a shrine of roses,  
Drown me in a wine of roses,  
Drawn from every fragrant grove!  
Bind me on a pyre of roses,  
Burn me in a fire of roses,  
Crown me with the roses of Love!

But in this very poem, the second and the third stanzas, on the contrary, are high-strung. She is not only sophisticated but also straightforward. The lines of extreme simplicity exist side by side with exuberant, rich, ornate, and luxuriant images which find expression in uncommon,

big words. All kinds of styles suit her; She has no mental reservations, no withstanding, and she prefers the ornate style with the choicest ornamentations of language. The following lines of “Alabaster” express the ornate style:

.....alabaster box whose art  
Is frail as a cassia-flower, is my heart,  
Carven with delicate dreams and wrought  
With many a subtle and exquisite thought.  
Therein I treasure the spice and scent  
Or rich and passionate memories blent  
Like odours of cinnamon, sandal and clove  
Of song and sorrow and life and love.

Another stylistic device peculiar to her is the device of ‘triplicity.’ Her poems have a triple structure, and her thought, emotion, and fancy flow in a triple course. This results in compactness of shape and contributes to clarity and precision, but it is overdone and degenerates into mannerism. This makes the carpentry neat but narrow and imparts a coloring of omnipresence to her songs. She has an unambitious mind, a keen mind, a mind that realizes that in a small measure, life can be perfect. The following lines of “Indian Weavers” exemplify Sarojini’s use of this device:

Weavers, weaving solemn and still,  
What do you weave in the moon light chill?...  
White as a feather and white as a cloud,  
We weave a dead man’s funeral shroud.

Her songs especially captured folk songs and Indian folk songs, delineating multitudinous phases of Indian life and some of them are fast vanishing with the advancement of industrialization and materialism. Her poetry is a simple, lucid, and adorned album of Indian life. “Corn-Grinders” is a beautiful song written in simple, easy, direct, and graceful language. In this song, the old widows in the early morning when the bright stars laugh in the sky are at their grinding wheels. They sing a sad song that accords well with their own unfortunate predicament:

Alas! Alas! My Lord is dead!  
Ah; who will ease my bitter pain

He went to seek a millet- grain  
In the rich farmer's granary shed;  
They caught him in a baited snare,  
And slew my lover unaware...  
Alas! alas! my lord is dead.

The corn grinders first ask a little mouse the cause of its suffering. Then, they ask she deer the cause of its sorrow, lastly, they inquired from a bride why she weeps “with all the happy world asleep.” She replies that her husband is dead and now “who will stay these hungry tears.” In this song, the poetess reveals an unbounded humanity that encompasses even the animal world. Her heart was so full of the milk of kindness that she extended her sympathy to the sorrowful mouse and deer. Pathos is the main feature of this poem. It is pathetic and simple from start to finish.

In “Bangle Sellers” Sarojini Naidu creates a vivid scene of Indian life with simplicity and ornamentation. She emphasizes in this poem a radiance suggestive of joyousness. Some are meet for a maiden's wrist, Silver and blue as the mountain mist. Meet for a bride on her bridal morn For her who has journeyed through life midway. 38 Sarojini Naidu divided the song “Bells” into three parts “Anklet- Bells”, “Cattle Bells” and “Temple Bells”.

The anklet bells conceal the old mystery of love. The singing of the anklet bells communicates two different moods—one of union and the other of separation. Cattle bells are reminiscent of the bygone pastoral beauty in the Indian countryside. The temple bells are indicative of man's eternal praise of God and his prayer for pity and solace for life's despair and peace for the dead. How vividly she beautifully creates the pastoral spectacle:

Cattle-bells! Soft cattle-bells!  
What gracious memories you bring  
Of drowsy fields and dreaming wells,  
And weary labour's folded wing,  
  
Of frugal mirth found festal fires  
Brief trysts that youth and beauty keep,

Of flowering roofs and fragrant byres,  
White heifers gathered in for sleep,  
Old songs the wandering women sing.

Sarojini presents a colourful pageant of the life of the Indian masses and their diverse occupations, customs, traditions, beliefs, superstitions, aspirations, simple joys, and sorrows, particularly in a rural setting. In the beginning of her career Sarojini Naidu gave an English colour to the various objects she depicted in her poetry. But later on, being advised by Edmund Gosse, she opened the window to the East to enable the West to understand the other part of the world better. Her subsequent poetry has out and out the Indian background. Now Sarojini Naidu loves the birds, blossoms, climate, soil, and folk of her country. She discovers the true beauty of her land. A rich heritage is unfolded in her poems:

Yet must I go where the loud world beckons  
Into the strife of the throng and the tumult  
The war of sweet love against folly and wrong.

The political aspirations of Sarojini Naidu are for the welfare of the people. In her, there is no trace of a desire for self-elevation. Her ambition lies in raising the destinies of the teeming millions who toil in poverty and dust. The poem “Street Cries” reveals her feelings for the labouring class. The people who labour the fields gain very little for their ardent labour. With “faint thirsting blood in languid throats” they labour:

When the earth falters and the waters swoon  
With the implacable radiance of noon  
And in dim shelters Koels  
And the faint, thirsting blood languid throats  
Craves liquid succour from the cruel heat.

Besides the hard lot of poor farmers in the fields and labourers in the city, Sarojini Naidu refers to the hardships of soldiers of India. The poem “The Gift of India”, was written in 1915 when many stalwarts sacrificed their lives in the First World War. The soldiers risked their lives and shed blood. She asks:

Can ye measure the grief of the tears I weep  
Or compass the woe of the watch I keep?

Sarojini Naidu feels the urge to serve the country of hungry producers of food grains, of the thirsty folks panting. For water in the streets, of the stalwart soldiers shedding blood in alien lands. Then she is moved by the cries of the street vendors embodying different needs. When the first cymbals beat rings through the dawn, the world is aroused to the human need of labor for bread. “Buy bread, buy bread, rings down the eager street.” Then there are bangle-sellers and vendors with beautiful bangles: “Silver and blue as the mountain mist, some are flushed like the buds that dream.”

In her folk songs, there is a realization of the reality of life of the general masses. Life is weaved with the mingled yarn, dark and gay “In the Bazars of Hyderabad,” flower girls wear the allegory of life:

With tassels of azure and red?  
Crowns for the brow of a bride-groom,  
Chaplets of garland his bed,  
Sheets of white bossoms new gathered  
To perfume the sleep of the dead.

The poems about Indian folks in the country and town speak of the challenges and the suffering of the toiling humanity that are little known to the wild birds and fireflies and hence Sarojini asks:

What do you know in your blithe, brief season?  
Of dreams deferred and a heart grown old

Life is seen here consistently in two aspects: the sense and the soul. Just as the sun and the moon can be seen together in the sky, so are the sorrows and the joys in life. Sarojini’s country folk deeply experience human sensibility and real existence. The poetess believes in the human story of love and faith. In the rainbow world of “Bangle Sellers,” who carry loads of “Rainbow-tinted circles of light for happy daughters and happy wives”.

The imagination of the poetess matches their silvers and blues with the “Mountain mist” and their flush with the “buds that dream”. In the poem the “wandering Beggars” we again find faith in Allah that rocks the cradle of humanity in poverty. The beggars wander from dawn to night until the end of the journey of life. The “fearless band” marches to the drum beat of life:

Life may grant us or withhold  
Roof or raiment, bread or gold,



But our hearts are gay and bold.

The bold and fearless poverty-stricken people wander from land to land. They do not wander; they actually carry a banner of freedom from poverty and want: “so we go a fearless band, the A taft of freedom in our hand”.

The sheer joy marks Sarojini Naidu's attitude towards India's festivals. In the poem, “spring song,” three festivals Vasant Panchami and Deepavali are described. Vasant Panchami is the festival of the spring season when girls pluck new leaves to decorate their garden swings and wear “golden veils”. The joys of the new blown buds and nesting birds blend with human delight. The description of “shining golden veils’ brings home the oneness of human joys with the gold, green, red and blues of heaven. The festival carries a message of gaiety to brides who bear jewels on their feet and worship with them:

Ye brides who sternward bear on jewelled feet  
Your gifts of silver lamps and new-blown wheat,

The festivals and legends are beautifully described in her poems. On Nagpanchami day, the festival of serpents, “milk and maize, wild figs and golden honey,” and prayers are offered with “fasting lips.” The prayer expresses universal longing: guard our helpless lives and guide our patient labors, and cherish our dear vision like the jewels in your crests, O spread the troubled longings that clamour in our breasts.<sup>51</sup> In many of her poems, Sarojini invokes the various gods and goddesses of common belief. She does not believe in folk garment for a “dead man’s funeral”. C.D. Narsimhaiah aptly remarks:

Here, in twelve lines is an elliptical, allusive, and symbolic  
Representation of life’s journey from birth to death....  
It is not merely a component poem, but a very distinguished  
One for Sarojini because the poet here is in full possession of  
Her own tradition, admirable poise, economy, and an ear and  
Eye for striking rhythm, image and symbol all used to find  
To make the poem most evocative. The weavers are the fates,  
The Indian trinity, weaving the web of life.

There can be no two opinions about the predominance of lyrical impulse in Sarojini’s poetry. Her poems are mostly short flights of fancy. Some are the effusions of the rapture of spring, some others transport us into a world of inner ecstasy and spiritual elation, and many others

quiver with the passion of love. Some poems enable us to peer into India's luminous past. In Sarojini's poetry, the song appeal is "various and wonderful full of the magic of melody." Among Her Notable Songs, One May Mention, "The Festival of memory," "Palanquin bearers", "To a Buddha seated on a lotus", "Wandering singers", "Guerdon", etc. The poetess, when inspired, can not live at a lower level,- - this is clearly borne out by the poem "Guerdon", which will "take its place among the lyrical classics". A critic has even suggested that Sarojini's metrical accomplishment is part of her song. Like Keats and Shelly, she employed a high browed diction steeped in passion, pulse and power. Her sonorous and unusual words add to the subtlety of the expression of ideas and display a keen perception of beauty.

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