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Re-imagining Tradition: *Mythological Themes in Sarojini Naidu's Select Poems*

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ABSTRACT: One of the most prominent qualities of Indo- Anglian writers' works is their Indianness. "We see realized in the English language the power of the Indian ancestry, the complexity of the Indian experience, and the uniqueness of the Indian voice in these poets, we find an Eastern sensibility that is quite at home in Western art" says Raja Rao. Indian poets consequently gained a thorough understanding of English as a language and effectively used it to convey the Indian intellect and subtlety. The prolific author and poet Sarojini Naidu, known as "The Nightingale of India," captures the unique feelings and richness of existence through rhyme, her poetry. She has skillfully captured the sentiments and hearts of Indians with this treasure of lyricism. Her poetry is remarkable for its lyricism, symbolism, imagery, mysticism, and natural emotion. Whether it was the rich colors of India's cultural legacy or the grandeur of the natural environment, she was in awe of everything around her. *The Golden Threshold* (1905), *The Bird of Time* (1912), and *The Broken Wing* (1917), her three popular anthologies have retained a prominent place in the Anglophone poetry of India. This paper will focus on how the theme of Mythology can be traced down from Naidu's select poems.

KEYWORDS: Mysticism, Nature, Tradition, Mythology, Sarojini Naidu, Poetry

I. SAROJINI NAIDU'S LIFE AND POETRY

Poetry written by Indians in English during the last 150 years has gone through three stages: imitation, assimilation, and experimentation. The imitation phase, which lasted from 1850 to 1900, was characterized by Indian writers who wrote romantic poetry while wearing Indian clothing, or, in George Bottomley's words, "Matthew Arnold in a saree" or, as others, has mockingly put it, "Shakuntala in a miniskirt." The British romantic poets Wordsworth, Scott, Shelley, Keats, and Byron were major sources of inspiration. The period of literary renaissance in India was the first phase of Indian poetry.

Sarojini Naidu, Tagore, Aurobindo Ghose, and Harindranth Chattopadhyaya were the second phase's poets, all of whom had a romantic outlook. These poets produced an enormous amount of poetry. These Indian poets' romanticism was laced with *nationalism, mysticism, and spirituality*.

Among Indian poets in English, *Sarojini Naidu (1879–1949)* is one of the most well-known. She is considered a lyric poet, unrivalled in her command of rhyme and meter. She has amazing versatility. She incorporates the rich cultural heritage of numerous Indian languages, regions, and faiths. Some of her poems are duets or monologues, while others are group songs sung in chorus and in different voices. Naidu's poetry examines the numerous sides of love as they are described in classical writings, including love in union, love in longing and love in separation, sorrow from love, sin from love, desire from love, earthly love, divine love, and more.

The birthplace of Sarojini Naidu is Hyderabad. Sarojini Chattopadhyay, later known as Naidu, was born into a Bengali Kulin Brahmin family. She excelled at school. She was fluent in Bengali, English, Telugu, Urdu, and Persian. Sarojini Naidu gained national recognition when she won the Madras University matriculation test at the age of twelve. Her father wanted her to pursue a career in math or science, but she preferred poetry. Sarojini Naidu's appreciation of nature reflects her natural tendency towards romanticism. She was interested and delighted by the hues, sounds, and lights, scents, and textures of natural objects. Her naturalistic writings are magnificent and colorful in an eastern style. Her natural poetry is characterized primarily by sensuality. The sensitivity and finesse of her imagination have clarified and enhanced the everyday world into her poetic universe. Her poetry explores the straightforward, every day, and unadorned world of basic joys and sorrows, vivid recollections, and emotional realizations, all of which are exemplified by the rich naturalness and elegance of Indian life and surroundings. In

contrast to her poetry about rivers or lakes, Sarojini Naidu's descriptions of farms, orchards, groves, and woods more clearly demonstrate her compassion for nature. She found immense joy in the yearly renewal and transformation of the environment. Love for oneself and for the physical world, as seen in its different flowers, birds, seasons, and scents, was exhibited by Sarojini Naidu.

II. NAIDU'S POETIC ENGAGEMENT WITH HINDU MYTHOLOGY

Myths are used by all cultures to explain natural phenomena, a people's origins and history, the progress of their civilization, and the causes of events. Myths, at their most basic, provide comfort by imparting order and importance to what might appear to be a chaotic world. Mythology, which derives from the Greek word *mythos*, which mean "people's story," and *logos*, "word" or "speech," is the study and interpretation of myths, which are often sacred tales or fables of a civilization.

Studies define mythology as highly cherished tales that explain a society's existence and social order: those tales of a society's creation, its origins and foundations, its god(s), its founding heroes, mankind's connection to the "divine," and its tales of eschatology (what happens in the "after-life"). The term "myth" simply refers to a conventional story in its broadest academic definition. But academicians often use the term "myth" to refer to religious stories. Naidu's poetry emerged during India's cultural and intellectual revival known as the Indian Renaissance. Her poetic style and themes were influenced by the resurgence of interest in Indian traditions, literature, and spirituality during this time. She infused ancient Indian literature, mythology, and folklore with a contemporary sensibility as sources of inspiration.

Indianness and India are at the center of Naidu's poetry. Her poetry is full of references to Indian people. Whether it is the Harvest Hymn, *Suttee*, *Palanquin Bearers*, *Wandering Singers*, *Bangle Sellers*, *Indian Gypsy*, or *Hymn to Indra*, the Lord of Rain, the people of India, as well as our culture and traditions, are depicted in these poems in a realistic way. Poetry by Naidu depicts everyday life, including ugliness, the working class, everything that is real, and everything that we see. Through her poems, Sarojini Naidu has revealed the emotional and mental makeup of Indian men and women, as well as their regional trait, their fantasies, shifting moods, reactions to happiness and frustration in personal love and marriage, attitudes toward children, and age-old customs.

*"I want to learn the language,
Of birds, the rustle of leaves,
The sonorous rippling of the streams,
The gurgling of the seas,
The calm, silent thoughts that pervade,
On the bottom of the ocean."*

The feelings, aspirations, and wishes of most lower-class Indians are especially portrayed in folk songs. She sees life in its entirety as real. The fact that Sarojini's poetry never fails to strike a chord or convey its true emotion is part of its appeal. The difficulties of life, as well as the happenings of the day, are the subjects of her poetry. Her poems take us on a journey through the real-life India.

The poems that have been analyzed with the theme of mythology and tradition are listed below:

1. *Songs of Radha: The Quest*
2. *In the Bazaars of Hyderabad*
3. *The Song of Princess Zeb Un Nissa*
4. *The Snake Charmer*
5. *The Queen's Rival*

Sarojini Naidu's spiritual poetry reveals the poetess's intense desire to merge with the Infinite. songs of *Radha*, the *Milkmaid*, and the *Flute Player of Brindaban* are poems set in the archetypal love ballads of *Radha* and *Krishna*. With the fitting image of a "homeless bird," the poetess defined herself as a devotee in search of the Infinite, leaving all worldly joys behind. She wrote:

*Still must I like a homeless bird
Wander, forsaking all.
The earthly loves and worldly lures
That held my life in thrall,*

*And follow, follow, answering
Thy magical flute-call*

Sarojini Naidu, 1943. 'The Songs of Radha, the Milkmaid' is a poem written in the Bhakti cult. Hinduism's spiritual history had left a rich legacy of poets. Through poetry, these Hindu poets attempted to portray their spiritual feelings and experiences. Sarojini Naidu's character in 'Songs of Radha, the Milkmaid' is like Mirabai, a high-level devotee who wrote many pious songs (Bhajans) in her devotion to Krishna, the celestial lover. Radha the devotee is described in the poem's final stanza as standing in the sanctum with folded hands, seeking shelter and surrendering her soul with a contrite heart. Radha is giving her celestial lover the gift of her soul. The devotee is completely absorbed in devotion and is unconcerned about the outside world. The devotee attains the ultimate level of spiritual consciousness when love as a personal desire is turned into divine love. Radha achieves spiritual experience by entirely identifying with her divine love. She says:

*But my heart was so lost in your worship, Beloved,
They were wroth when I cried without knowing:
Govinda! Govinda!
Govinda! Govinda!
"Songs of Radha"*

the poem The Indian belief that God dwells within one's own self is the subject of the divine love song "The Quest." In addition, it describes the beloved's passionate and frantic love for the divine lover for whom she is constantly searching. She suddenly realizes that she has him inside of her and that it would be foolish to look for him outside.

Mulkraj Anand was so moved with the poem that he said, "Here the poetry of romanticism, of ornate epithets and delicate similes, has become infused with transcendental experience, Sarojini has transformed personal yearning into divine love, imbuing it with the sense of eternity, of the Universal."

This poem introduced Naidu to the great English critic James. H. Cousins, who was impressed by Govinda's chanting impact (Govinda! govinda!) Mystic awareness is an integral component of Indian religious temperament, and many of Naidu's poetry contain such mystical suggestions. Naidu's poetry on mysticism not only represents her faith in the language of Hindu and Sufi mystic poets, but it also transmits the romantic side, because the essence of romantic poetry lies in capturing transitory moments of joy leading to the opening of doors to an eternal universe. The poem is an excellent representation of the Indian belief that God dwells within oneself because it is an archetypal divine love song. The line "I am of thee as thou art of me" comes from the Gita, where Krishna declares that he is everything.

"In the Bazaars of Hyderabad" is a rhetorical question-and-answer poem in which the speaker could loudly be asking everyone in the bazaar what they are making and selling. The speaker already knows the response. The atmosphere of the bazaar is suggested in Hyderabad, southern India, the poet's hometown. Some of the lines that truly symbolize the Indian culture are mentioned below:

*What do you weigh, O ye vendors?
Saffron, lentil, and rice.
What do you grind, O ye maidens?
Sandalwood, henna, and spice.
What do you call, O ye pedlars?*

The speaker asks the people in the bazaar, starting with the merchants, or traders, who buy from artisans, growers, and artists and then sell to others, a question in the first line of six. In addition, the speaker gives the impression of giving a prepared response to their own question, which comes across as being rhetorical. Everything from- vibrant turbans which are distinctive headgear made of wrapped cloth from various Asian and Arabic cultures to a religious item for Sikhs) to daggers. Brocade dresses... Brocade is a raised design woven fabric. Amber is a gemstone made of tree resin that is used as a decorative material. Jade is a hard mineral that is typically green but can also be white or yellow. It has also been used for centuries in sculpture and jewelry, for example. The whole poem depicts the minute details observed by Sarojini Naidu.

Ode to H. H. the Nizam of Hyderabad: This ode was given to Mir Mahbub Ali Khan, the Prince Sarojini admired and honored, at the Ramzan Darbar. The twelve-line Nissa's in Praise of Her Own Beauty song, Princess Zeb-un, is

remarkable for depicting her own beauty. This poem is an illustration of polite poetry in which the king or patron is praised. In the poem "The Song of Princess Zeb Un Nissa," portrays a sense of motherhood and the changes of one's feelings when they enter the phase of parenthood. The poem displays lavish life lived by the Mughals and the Kings and their Queens.

The poem 'Snake-Charmer' tells the English-speaking world, especially the Western world, about a common sight in India. Even today, whether in a city or the country, you can frequently spot a snake charmer. He moves about wearing a dirty ochre costume and balancing a pair of baskets containing snakes on his shoulders that are suspended from a moving bamboo. He sings it to entice a snake to enter his basket. Sarojini Naidu does not view snakes as terrifying or terrifying creatures. In contrast, the Indian myths and legends depict them as symbols of love and devotion. It is common knowledge that the Indian snake charmer has a great deal of affection for his pet. This is supported by the lines that follow:

*"Come, thou subtle bride of my mellifluous wooing,
Come, thou silver-breasted moonbeam of desire!"*

When the poetess refers to the snake as "thou subtle bride," all the disgusting and horrible qualities that are typically associated with a serpent vanish. The following description demonstrates the poet's affection for the creature:

*"I'll bear thee in a basket of rushes, green and white,
"To a palace-bower where golden-vested maidens
Thread with mellow laughter the petals of delight."*

In this poem, the poetess creates a lovely world filled with scent, color, and love, all wrapped up in lovely language and melodious rhythm. Take note of the pictures that the expressions and phrases evoke thread the delight's petals with gentle laughter"; golden-crowned ladies; subtle bride of my sweet wooing"; silver-vested moonbeams of desire, among other things the poem has a sweet atmosphere thanks to the melody of the words and the beauty of the images. This poem is characterized by its senility and picturesqueness in two fundamental ways:

*"Whither dost thou hide from the magic of my flute-call?
In what moonlight-tangled meshes of perfume,
Where the clustering keoras guard the squirrel's slumber,
Where the deep woods glimmer with the jasmine's bloom?"*

India's natural beauty is frequently celebrated in Naidu's poetry. She habitually portrayed the lavish scenes, waterways, mountains, and vegetation of the country in her stanzas.

III. HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT OF NAIDU'S POETRY

Sarojini Naidu (1879-1949) was an Indian poet, freedom fighter, and politician who shaped India's cultural and political environment in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Her poetry reflects her time's social, cultural, and political setting, tackling subjects like nationalism, feminism, and the struggle for independence. Her lyrics frequently reflected her agony and wish for independence from foreign tyranny. She employed strong imagery and metaphors to depict the Indian people's hopes and tribulations. Naidu actively participated in the Indian Nationalist Movement, which was led by Mahatma Gandhi and other well-known figures.

The poetry of Sarojini Naidu captures the essence of India's struggle for independence, the pursuit of women's rights, and the revival of Indian cultural identity, reflecting the spirit of her time. Her works are still praised for their emotional depth, lyrical beauty, and contribution to Indian literature and culture. Her works depict a variety of Indian cultural aspects, particularly the country's extensive history, mythology, and traditions. In her poetry, Sarojini Naidu frequently expressed her strong belief in Indian nationalism and her deep love for India. She praised the country's struggle for independence from British colonial rule and its rich cultural heritage. Indian mythology and folklore also frequently served as sources of inspiration for Naidu's poems. She brought to life the tales of gods, goddesses, and legendary figures from Indian epics like the Ramayana and the Mahabharata by incorporating mythological references and characters into her verses. By consolidating these components, she added an unmistakable social flavor to her verse.



Indian society's rituals, customs, and traditions are frequently reflected in Naidu's works. She captured the essence of traditional Indian weddings, dances, and music, as well as the beauty of Indian festivals like Diwali and Holi. She demonstrated the vivacity and depth of Indian traditions through her poetry.

IV. CONCLUSION

The poetry of Sarojini Naidu is adorned with the elegance of love and the simplicity of reality, earning her a prominent place among her contemporaries. Naidu much of the time utilizes images and illustrations in her verse to convey more profound implications. She explores complex themes and emotions by utilizing natural imagery, religious symbols, and mythological references.

Sarojini Naidu was a pioneering woman. She was born during the most difficult period in India's history. She set an example for women all over the country. In spite of having a cheerful settled existence with her family, Sarojini remembered her obligations towards her homeland. She worked tirelessly for years to secure India's liberation from colonial rule. She also advocated for women's rights while traveling from state to state and city to city. She helped Indian women regain their sense of self-worth.

Clad in plain Sari (Indian Clothing) talking delicately, yet without hesitation Sarojini devoted her life to the reason for her compatriots. She was genuinely the little girl of her mom, India, a girl each mother can be pleased with - The 'Songbird' of India.

Sarojini Naidu was a poet with a keen sense of aesthetics. She admired the beautiful world around her, whether it was the natural world or the many hues of Indian culture. There are more prominent writers than Sarojini Naidu however none more unique since she could look at things from a fresh perspective. She used the English language like an expert artist to beautifully convey her private fantasies and give them a universal touch.

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