

## MYSTIC URGE IN THE POETRY OF SAROJINI NAIDU

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India has produced many a distinguished poets who attained great heights in the domain of English Literature and won world wide acclaim, Sarojini is one of them. Sarojini's poetry is known for her exquisite melody and fine delicacy of feeling and expression blended with the freshness and exuberance of spirit. "She is primarily" a "singer of songs" and a "song bird", "The Nightingale of India" and "Bharat Kokila". In the opinion of Mr. Mathur, Sarojini is a "Supreme Singer of beautiful songs, songs bathed in melody and thought." He finds a moving melody in her Indian folk songs. There can be no two opinions about the predominance of lyrical impulse in Sarojini's Poetry. Her poems are mostly "short-swallow-flight of songs", some are full of rapture of spring, and some other takes us into a world of inner ecstasy and spiritual elation and many other quivers with the passion of love. There are some poems which lead us into a heaven of India's luminous past. The poetic world of Sarojini built around the themes of nature, love, life, and folk project a consistently joyous universe, reconstructed human aspiration and hope. Her poems show a sensitive awareness of the progression of life towards the immutable coordination of truth, beauty and joy. She rediscovers the inner and outer worlds and their wings in the human consciousness.

Although Sarojini rose in her life to be one of the greatest figures on the modern Indian scene, her development as a poet came to an end as soon as she entered the National Movement. But during this brief span she composed poetry which would be long remembered for its delicate fancy, haunting melody and lyrical grace. Seeing her talent, Iyengar has termed her poems as "the obscure infinities of her heart."

In her poetry, one comes across yearning and dream, action and suffering, joy and song. The impact of Indian devotional poets and Sufi mystics is tremendous on Sarojini's mind but the conception of nature does not correspond to that of the classical Indian poetry where nature is treated just as the physical environment of men and not as an automatic force.

At times, she rises above her romantic wealth and ecstasy and presents an intense study of psychological complexities of human life.

It was Goosse who convinced Sarojini to stick to Indian themes, India's great mountains, rivers, temples, social milieu, to express her poetry and "to be a genuine Indian poet of Deccan, not a clever machine-made imitator of the English classics" as was the trend. The poems included in "The golden Threshold" and other volumes were highly appreciated by critics here and abroad, for they introduced altogether a new voice, ardently and striking in itself. Love is the most absorbing theme for Sarojini. Her love poems describe various moods and emotions that evokes in human heart, ranging from passionate desire to mystic communion. Her poem has a devotional note – a note of withdrawal from the fierce of life.

D. V. K. Raghavacharyulu observes: “There are many elements in Sarojini’s poetry which either derive from a mystic attitude to life, or employ the imagery and symbolism and the characteristic rhetoric of the mystic’s experience of the transcendental reality”. Thus, we can analyse the subtle Spirituality of Sarojini’s songs such as spirituality reflected in her songs of Soul, Life, Death, Love, Nature and even in the most ordinary daily routine of an Indian.

Mystic awareness is a part of Indian religious temperament and Sarojini is no exception. Nature is to her a mystic garden, a symbol of mysterious forces breaking into life of the individual as well as the race. It is a manifestation of the cosmic being, Purusha, revealing himself as Prakriti. It is a retreat from strife and conflict, encouraging solitary contemplation and renewing man’s collection with the world.

Sarojini’s spiritual hunger knows no bounds. Her inquisitiveness sieves through her songs. In “The Joy of the Springtime,” She shows a mystic urge to know the secret of spring’s magical mirth:

Springtime O Springtime, what is your secret,  
The bliss at the core of your magical mirth,  
That quickens the pulse of the morning to wonder  
And hastens the seeds of all beauty to birth,  
That captures the heavens and conquers to blossom  
The roots of delight in the heart of the earth (p. 89)

In “The Garden Vigil” the perception of nature’s beauty leads to an encounter with truth. The poet takes a venture into the unknown, unfamiliar region and gains mystic realization in a heightened state of consciousness.

O glorious light of hope beyond all reach !  
A lovely symbol and sweet sign of him  
Whose voice I yearn to hear in tender speech  
To comfort me or teach. (pp. 172-73)

Some of Sarojini’s folk songs have distinct mystical suggestions. Apparently simple poem like “Indian Weavers” is richly interlaced with mystic consciousness. The three stanzas of the poem symbolize the whole process of existence through the three stages of creation maintenance and annihilation. The weaver is the ‘Divine’, invisible creature force, engaged in weaving the yarn of life

The poem projects an essentially Indian view of the mystery of existence:

“Weavers weaving at break of day  
while you weave garment so day  
blue as a halcyon white  
we weave the ropes of a new born child .  
Weavers, weaving at fall of night,  
Why do you weave a garment so bright.....  
Like the plumes of a peacock, purple and green,  
We weave the marriage-veils of a queen.  
Weavers, waving solemn and still,  
What do you weave in the moonlight chill?...  
White as a feather and white as a cloud,  
We weave a dead man’s funeral shroud. (p.5.)

The blue wings of the halcyon is the boundless sky and the bird halcon symbolizes the spirit at the beginning of the creations The poem offers a glimpse of the mystery of creation.

“The Flute player of Brindaban” is completely mystic in tone and implication. The poet’s soul is a “homeless bird”, struggling hard to reach its divine destination. Lord Krishna, the flute player of Brindaban, plays the tune of infinite to lure every human heart away from mortal’s care and attachment. The soul experiences a mystic longing to merge completely in the flame of the divine. The last stanza has strange mystic note, the soul has progressed a long way on spiritual path. It is now fully detached with the mortal’s worldly attachments and yearns for the ecstasy of the divine union.

Nothing can impede the way to the cosmic centre:

No peril of the deep or height

Shall daunt my winged foot;

No fear of the time-unconquered space,

Or light untraveled route,

Impeded my heart that pants to drain

The nectar of thy flute (Page.-162)

In the festival of serpents “the serpent acquire a mystic significance.

“O ! lift your dreamy heads

From their trance of edgeless wisdom

And weave your mystic measures

to the melody of the flute. (Pg.-110)

They are the symbols of the ancient silence. The mystical note is distinctly audible,

“Swift are ye as streams and soundless as the dewfall,

Subtle as the lightning and splendid as the sun;

Seers are ye and symbols of the ancient silence,

Where life and death and sorrow and ecstasy are one.”

(p.111)

In the poem ‘The Quest’, Sarojini’s mysticism appears interlaced with mystic thought. The quest shows Radha’s hectic search for Kanhaiya right from dawn to dusk. When no information is received, she starts weeping and bemoaning. The soul separated from its source experiences utter grief and pain. Suddenly Radha hears Kanhaiya’s hidden laughter mocking her. He tells her that she, fraught with doubt and distrust, is uselessly seeking for him outside where as he is always within her. The soul yearns for its total merger in the infinite.

I bowed my weeping face upon my palm,

Moaning— o where art thou, my Ghanashyam ?

Then, like a boat that rocks from keel to rafter,

My heart was shaken by thy hidden laughter.

Then didst thou mock me with thy tender malice,

Like nectar bubbling from my own heart’s chalice.

Thou sadist-O faithless one , self-slain with doubt

Why sleekest thou my loneliness without,

And askest that within thyself doth dell,

The secret that within thyself doth dwell?

I am of thee, as thou of me, a part.

Look for me in the mirror of thy heart.3

Loving devotion in God is an end in itself as a devotee who has reached such heights of devotion, transcends all duality and exist only for His sake. The same idea appears resonant in the poem 'The Quest'. Seeing her talent Rajyalakshmi rightly remarks that "Sarojini leans more towards Rahasyavads (mysticism) in modern Indian poetry exploring the evanescent, exciting forms of beauty that come to her in a sudden Phosphorescent wake of mystery." The 'Homing bird' is a constant symbol in Sarojini's poetry suggesting the soul's upward or homeward flight. "In salutation to the Eternal Peace". She says

"Who know the silver wings that gleem and glide  
The homing pigeons of thin eventide .

(Pg.-127)

In "Zoom Sunset" the evening scene is set with the homing birds  
"The air is a glow with the glint and whirl  
of swift wild wings in their homeward flight

(Page -192)

In "The Flute Player of Brindavana" the soul separated from its source is like "a homeless bird" (Page -161), craving to reach its destination, and in "The Bird Sanctuary" the poet's soul is a homing bird yearning for sanctuary and shelter.

"O master of the birds, grant sanctuary and shelter also to a homing bird that bears a broken wing".

In "To a Budha seated on a Lotus" the Poet experiences its spiritual urge for "Mystic Rapture" attained by Lord Budha, fully aware of the mortal suckles of hopes and dreams, she wants to transcend them. The soul bound up by dreams and desire on this earth suffers and shows a natural urge for a spiritual elevation. The soul always experiences "an in -assessable desire" and "heavenward hunger" to reach the divine i.e. illusive and afar. The soul in the bondage of the finite, is never happy, and is, naturally lived by the boundless freedom and the joy of the infinite.

The end, elusive and afar,  
Still lures us with its beckoning flight,  
And our mortal moments are  
A session of the Infinite.  
How shall we reach the great, unknown  
Nirvana of thy lotus- throne (P-62)

. "In Alone" nothing comforts the restless soul, progressing towards illumination, neither the accustomed alloys of 'delight' nor the "moon" enchanted "estuary of dreams". It craves for peace & joy.

Sarojini is possessed with a mystic urge, and, in her inspired moments, tries to venture the region of the unknown and unfamiliar. With an eternal hunger for the mystery of the unknown, Sarojini finds herself continually shifting from one zone of experience to another. Rajyalakshmi rightly observes : "She is goaded by a hunger for the eternal, the unknown and the infinite and seeks, poetically rather than metaphysically, to relate herself to the universe".

Sarojini's songs thus bring forth the subtle spirituality in Indian poetry in English which is true culmination of the East and the West. Her tool was Western but the context was purely Eastern. Heading towards the next millennium, India needs to be well-equipped with the Western tools and technology but armed with the true Eastern thought and philosophy.

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