

An Analysis of Individual Destiny and National Sacrifice in Sarojini Naidu's Poems 'Indian Weavers' and 'The Gift of India'

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Abstract:

This article explores the individual destiny and national sacrifice in the context of India's colonial experience, through Sarojini Naidu's poems *Indian Weavers* and *The Gift of India*. The popular genre of literature is poetry, which keeps an artistic arrangement of senses and sounds, and establishes particular feelings, emotions and moods in the readers. Sarojini Naidu, commonly known as "Nightingale of India (or Bharat Kokila)", because of her beautiful and poetic lyrics. This title was given by Mahatma Gandhi for her contributions on literature and politics. She is considered as an iconic poet in Indian English literature whose poetry highlights Romantic elements but also describe a realistic portrayal, which are related with Indian society, culture and the natural environment. This paper explores how the hearts and emotions are shown in the poems of Sarojini Naidu.

Keywords: Colonialism, Sacrifice, Patriotism, Birth, Marriage, Death, Sarojini Naidu, Indian English Literature

Introduction:

Colonialism is the dominance of powerful nation over another weaker one, which is widely represented in literature. The first objective of colonialism is political domination, and the second objective is to make possible the exploitation of the colonized country. The colonizers have dominated the colonized, and they claim the resources of the colonized country. The colonizers considered themselves as virtuous, civilized. Their relation with the colonized people was exploitative, conflictual and hierarchical. Famous theorist Frantz Fanon says, "Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content (Fanon, 239)." It means that colonialism is not satisfied with simply ruling over a people or controlling their lands, it also tries to destroy and replace their native culture, history traditions and way of thinking. It highlights the psychological and cultural dimensions of colonial rule.

Sarojini Chattopadhyay Naidu, a prominent figure for both as a poet and leadership in the struggle for independence. She was an important woman in the Indian history, who had political courage and literary brilliance. She was a fearless freedom fighter who fought for India's independence. The voice to the nation's soul and a symbol of empowerment and progress were given through her writings. She actively participated in the freedom struggle against colonial rule. Through her poems, the deep understanding of the issues is shown, which were surrounded by colonial violence. Through the poem, 'Indian Weavers' Naidu describes Indian weavers, who produce different kinds of cloth at different stages of life. This relates to three major stages of human life birth, marriage and death, which are also mentioned in the Hindu scriptures such as the Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, Purana etc. through which Sarojini Naidu contains philosophy of human life and living. In the poem 'The Gift of India' Naidu praises the sacrifices of the Indian soldiers in the World War I. In the first world war, Britain faced a serious problem of the shortage of soldiers to fight against

Germany and later they took help from colonies. The poet, Naidu here takes on the voice of Mother India and talks about the greatest gift which she has bestowed upon the Empire, the gift of her sons who have martyred in the faraway lands fighting an enemy with whom they have no immediate conflict. The poem Indian Weavers describes the journey of individual human life, while The Gift of India describes the sacrifices of individuals for the nation. Like Rabindranath Tagore and Aurobindo Ghosh, Sarojini Naidu was also more than a poet, it was one of Mother India's most gifted children.

Individual destiny in Indian Weavers:

Indian Weavers and The Gift of India are closely connected with the ideas of individual destiny. In Indian Weavers, destiny is shown through the natural journey of an individual from birth to youth and finally death. In The Gift of India, individual destiny relates to duty, war and sacrifice, where the lives of individual Indian soldiers become part of a larger national history.

In Indian Weavers, the destiny of an individual is represented through the three stages of human life. At the beginning of the poem, the weavers are asked: "WEAVERS, weaving at break of day, why do you weave a garment so gay?" The weavers answer: "Blue as the wing of a halcyon wild, we weave the robes of a new-born child." Here, the "new-born child" represents the beginning of individual life. The bright blue colour depicts innocence, hope and happiness. The break of day is also represented as the beginning of a new life. Hence, every individual enters the world with new possibilities and an unknown destiny.

The second stage of destiny in the poem is described as youth and adulthood. The weavers say: "We weave the marriage-veils of a queen, like the plumes of a peacock, purple and green." The marriage veil represents the transformation from youth to adulthood. At this stage, an individual experiences love, relationships, responsibilities and dreams for the future. The bright colours purple and green reflect the energy, beauty and richness of this stage of life.]

However, individual destiny ultimately leads towards death. In the final stanza, the weavers work silently in the cold moonlight: "Weavers, weaving solemn and still, what do you weave in the moonlight chill?" They replied: "White as a feather and white as a cloud, we weave a dead man's funeral shroud." The funeral shroud is the representation of the final stage of human life. The movement from the colourful garment of a newborn child to the white funeral shroud shows that every individual, regardless of status or achievement, eventually faces death. The poem therefore presents life as a complete cycle of birth, maturity and death.

According to Greek mythology, the Fates were personified as three very old women who spin the threads of human life's destiny. Their names were Clotho Lachesis and Atropos. Clotho spun the 'thread' of human fate, Lachesis dispensed it, and Atropos cut the thread (this determines the individual's moment of death). Hence, "Indian Weavers" can be called as an amalgamation of both the Greek and Indian mythology, responding to man's cycle of life, the makers of destiny. The poem accommodates the personal as well as the universal, in one knot, with its broadness of view.

National sacrifice in The Gift of India:

In Sarojini Naidu's The Gift of India, national sacrifice is shown through the sacrifice of Indian soldiers who gave their lives during the First World War. The poem presents India as a mother who sends her beloved sons to foreign lands to fight and die. These soldiers are described as her "priceless treasures", showing how valuable they were to the nation. The sacrifice becomes more powerful when Mother India remembers that her sons were scattered across foreign battlefields. Naidu writes, "They lie with pale brows and brave, broken hands", presenting the physical destruction caused by war. The soldiers are also compared to "pearls," "shells," and "blossoms," which suggest that they were precious, innocent, and beautiful lives lost in war.

The poem also describes that their sacrifice was not limited to one place. The sons of Mother India fought in places such as Egypt, Persia and Flanders. Their blood became part of the victory achieved by the Allied forces. Therefore, Mother India feels both grief and pride, grief because she has lost her sons, and pride because they showed courage and sacrificed themselves. The strongest expression of national sacrifice comes at the end of the poem, when Mother India asks the world not to forget her fallen children:

“Remember the blood of my martyred sons!”

This is not only a request, it is a powerful reminder that the contribution of Indian soldiers should receive recognition and honor. Thus, The Gift of India presents national sacrifice through the courage, suffering and death of Indian soldiers. Sarojini Naidu makes their sacrifice a matter of national pride which exposes the deep sorrow of a mother who has given her sons for a cause beyond their own homeland. The poem ultimately asks us to remember that behind every victory are human lives that have been sacrificed. The poem is related to colonialism because it exposes the unequal relationship between India and Britain. Naidu transforms the soldier's deaths into a reminder of both India's contribution to the Empire and the injustice during colonial rule.

Conclusion:

Sarojini Naidu's Indian Weavers and The Gift of India present individual destiny and national sacrifice within the larger context of colonial India. Indian Weavers shows the natural cycle of human life, The Gift of India reveals how colonial rule turned the lives of ordinary Indians into sacrifices for the British Empire. Indian soldiers were sent to distant battlefields to fight for a power that ruled their own country. The death of individual soldiers becomes a symbol of India's larger sacrifice under colonialism. Through these poems, she reminds us that behind the glory of empire were the lives, pain and sacrifices of Indian people. Her contribution to Indian English literature has long lasting influence, even today she is a bright example of courage and social reformer. Her ideas would take shape eventually and would have an extreme effect on contemporary Indian society for years to come.

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