

Sarojini Naidu: Patriatisam and Nationalisam in her Poems

Dr. Y. Sumithra¹, Dr. N. Vimala Davi²

¹Lecture in English, SWR GDC(G), Kanchikacharla, A. P.

²Lecture in English, JMJ College for Women, Tenali, A. P.

Abstract:

Sarojini Naidu (born February 13, 1879, Hyderabad, India—died March 2, 1949, Lucknow) was a political activist, feminist, and poet. She was the first Indian woman to be president of the Indian National Congress and to be appointed an Indian state governor. She was called “the Nightingale of India” by Mahatma Gandhi.

Her poetry, rich in lyrical romanticism, celebrated Indian culture’s beauty and diversity, blending Indian themes with Western stylistic influences. Born into a Bengali family, she studied literature in England, where she engaged with the women’s suffrage movement and intellectual circles, shaping her dual identity as a writer and activist.

Though raised in Bengali and Urdu traditions, Naidu wrote in English, the colonizer’s language, transforming it into a tool of resistance and self-expression. Her poetry, filled with vivid imagery and emotional depth, often portrayed women as symbols of nature and expressed themes of longing and youthfulness. In 1917, she shifted focus from poetry to public life, using her final poem as a call for India’s liberation. Her legacy endures as a pioneer in literature and politics, inspiring generations of female freedom fighters and poets.

Bengali Daughter became the Daughter-in-law of Andhra by marrying M. G. Naidu. National Women's Day is celebrated in India on **February 13th** to commemorate the birth anniversary of Sarojini Naidu.

Keywords: Nightingale, lyrical romanticism, diversity, transforming, self-expression, generations

Introduction:

Into the strife of the throng and the tumult,
The war of sweet 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 that fail,
The tidings of joy when Peace shall triumph,
When Truth shall conquer and Love prevail. (Naidu, Bird 80)

The above lines speaking volumes about a sincere commitment, a noble poetic mission and a lofty idealism record a daring optimism rarely found even in the greatest of literary works. These lines also

reflect the poet's unwavering belief in her poetic prowess. A poet who writes with so sweet a language, who possesses a creative talent so vigorous and who is enamoured of beholding the world so beautiful and pleasant certainly deserves to be called a nightingale.

She was the eldest daughter of Aghorenath Chattopadhyaya and Varada Sundari. The Chattopadhyayas belonged to an ancient line of great Sanskrit scholars who were held in high esteem in Bengal. He had widely read the literature of the East and the West. In addition, he was a distinguished scholar in English, Hebrew, French, German, and Russian. He was a great supporter of women's education.

Her literary output includes five volumes of poetry. The first volume entitled *The Golden Threshold* was published in 1905 followed by *The Bird of Time* and *The Broken Wing* in 1912 and 1917 respectively. All the poems that figured in these three volumes were later collected in a single book entitled *The Sceptred Flute* which was published in 1943.

Objectives:

1. To examine the representation of **patriotism and nationalism** in the poetry of Sarojini Naidu.
2. To analyse how Naidu uses **Indian cultural imagery, nature, motherhood, and national symbols** to express her love for India.
3. To study selected poems such as "**Coromandel Fishers**" and "**The Gift of India**" as expressions of national consciousness and patriotic sentiment.
4. To explore the relationship between **Naidu's literary identity and her involvement in India's freedom struggle**.
5. To highlight the contribution of Sarojini Naidu as a **woman poet, nationalist, political activist, and advocate of social and cultural unity**.

Poems on Nation:

As Naidu was actively involved in the Freedom Struggle of India, her poetry bears an indelible mark of her political interest. She loves the whole world as a poet while as a political activist her love for the motherland is boundless. Therefore, we find in her poems on nation an ardent patriotic fervour which is subsequently transformed into a benevolent concern for the entire humanity. Although her lyrics on nation demonstrate her admirable patriotic urge, they grow all the more appreciable while they endeavour to encompass the entire humanity. In certain poems that are the poet's emotional tribute to the motherland, the poetic outlook of Naidu rises beyond the confines of national boundaries and tends to be lofty. It is her cosmopolitan outlook born out of her limitless love for Mother India. Her patriotic songs, therefore, need to be divided into two categories- the first one concerning her devotion to the nation, the other displaying her cosmopolitanism. The poems included in the first category entitled 'Patriotic Urge' would be employed to scrutinize her nationalistic zeal while those incorporated in the other named 'Cosmopolitan Outlook' would be assessed critically to bring out the element of universality.

Patriotism:

"Rise, brothers, rise; the wakening skies pray to the morning light, The wind lies asleep in the arms of the dawn like a child that has cried all night. Come, let us gather our nets from the shore and set our catamarans free, To capture the leaping wealth of the tide, for we are the kings of the sea! No longer delay, let us hasten away in the track of the sea gull's call, The sea is our mother, the cloud is our brother, the waves are our comrades all. What though we toss at the fall of the sun where the hand of

the sea-god drives? He who holds the storm by the hair, will hide in his breast our lives. Sweet is the shade of the cocoanut glade, and the scent of the mango grove, And sweet are the sands at the full o' the moon with the sound of the voices we love; But sweeter, O brothers, the kiss of the spray and the dance of the wild foam's glee; Row, brothers, row to the edge of the verge, where the low sky mates with the sea.”(Coramandal Fishers,31,32)

The above poem “ Coramandal Fishes” portrays Patriotism. The "wakening skies" signify a new dawn of political awareness. Naidu is urging the citizens of India to wake up from their slumber under colonial rule, unite as "brothers," and actively join the freedom movement. By declaring the fishermen the "kings of the sea," Naidu asserts that the resources of India belong to Indians. It is a direct rejection of British colonial control over Indian land and wealth, motivating the youth with a sense of national pride and sovereignty. This line mirrors the concept of *Bharat Mata* (Mother India). By framing the sea as a nurturing mother and nature as family, Naidu fosters a deep emotional connection to the motherland. It tells the freedom fighters that the entire nation is united with them in their struggle. The sea storms represent the violent oppression and hardships imposed by the British rulers. Naidu reassures the freedom fighters that a higher power (or the collective spirit of the nation) will protect them, urging them to face political danger without fear. The domestic comforts (shade, mango groves, peaceful nights) represent an easy life under submission. Naidu argues that the dangerous struggle for freedom ("the kiss of the spray") is far sweeter and more honorable than living comfortably under colonial chains. The horizon ("the edge of the verge") represents the ultimate goal—complete independence (*Purna Swaraj*). The poem ends with a forward-moving command to keep fighting until that final goal is reached.

“One heart are we to love thee, O our Mother,
One undivided, indivisible soul,
Bound by one hope, one purpose, one devotion
Towards a great, divinely-destined goal”. (Bird 89)

The poem beautifully expresses the devotion and loyalty of the Indians towards Mother India. It helps us to visualize the burning patriotic urge of the poet. Turning our attention to “The Gift of India”, another patriotic poem, we learn that the poem is written for the Indian soldiers who fought from the side of the British in the First World War. The poem commemorates the sacrifices of these brave soldiers of India and personifies as Mother India.

“Can ye measure the grief of the tears I weep
Or compass the woe of the watch I keep?” (Broken17)

The poet condemns any victory achieved through violence. She advocates peace and love to be the real means to victory. A mighty nationalistic spirit, no doubt, runs through the entire poem. War can render no good to any society as violence gives birth to further violence. So, the poem, in addition to its nationalistic appeal, draws the attention of the readers to qualities like love, peace and humility which according to it are timeless virtues.

Naidu's love and Patriotism for the motherland is so intimate and pure that, it rises beyond the narrow confines of nationalism and seeks to embrace the entire humanity. Through emotional bonding with the native land, her poetic consciousness is elevated to a new height where she entertains the vision of the world as a family.

Scope of the Study:

The scope of this study is limited primarily to the examination of patriotism, nationalism, national identity

ty, sacrifice, freedom, and universal humanism in selected poems of Sarojini Naidu. Particular attention can be given to *The Golden Threshold*, *The Bird of Time*, and *The Broken Wing*, along with poems subsequently collected in *The Sceptred Flute*.

The study focuses especially on poems such as “Coromandel Fishers,” “The Gift of India,” and other poems in which India is represented through images of the motherland, nature, sacrifice, unity, and collective identity. The research also considers the historical context of the Indian freedom movement to understand the relationship between Naidu’s poetic expression and her public life.

The study does not attempt to provide a comprehensive analysis of every poem written by Naidu. Instead, it concentrates on poems that most clearly demonstrate her patriotic and nationalistic consciousness. It also considers an important dimension of her poetry: her movement from love of the Indian nation towards a broader vision of peace, humanity, and universal brotherhood. Thus, the study understands Naidu's nationalism not merely as political resistance to colonial rule but also as a literary expression of cultural identity and human solidarity.

Major Findings:

1. Patriotism is a central dimension of Naidu’s poetry. Her poems express a strong emotional attachment to India through images of the motherland, nature, cultural traditions, and collective identity.
2. Nature functions as a powerful vehicle for national consciousness. In “Coromandel Fishers,” images of the sea, dawn, wind, coconut groves, and mango trees are connected with the lives and aspirations of Indian people.
3. The idea of Mother India is significant in Naidu’s nationalist imagination. By presenting the nation through maternal imagery, she transforms patriotism into an emotional and intimate relationship between the individual and the homeland.
4. Naidu associates nationalism with unity. Her references to “one heart,” “one hope,” “one purpose,” and “one devotion” emphasize collective responsibility and solidarity among Indians.
5. “The Gift of India” connects nationalism with sacrifice. The poem commemorates Indian soldiers who participated in the First World War and draws attention to the human cost of war and the sacrifices made by Indians.
6. Her nationalism is not limited to political independence. Naidu links national freedom with broader values such as peace, love, courage, dignity, and justice.
7. Naidu’s patriotism develops into universal humanism. Although her poetry celebrates India, it also moves beyond national boundaries towards a vision of humanity as a larger family.
8. Her position as a woman poet and political activist enriches her representation of nationalism. Her literary work demonstrates that women's voices were an important part of India's cultural and political awakening.
9. English becomes a medium of cultural expression rather than merely a colonial language. Naidu adapts English poetic forms and lyrical techniques to express Indian landscapes, traditions, emotions, and nationalist concerns.
10. Naidu combines lyrical beauty with political consciousness. Her poetry demonstrates that nationalist literature can communicate political ideas through symbolism, music, imagery, emotion, and poetic imagination rather than through direct political argument alone.

Conclusion:

The study reveals that Sarojini Naidu's poetry presents patriotism as an emotional, cultural, and ethical commitment to India. Her nationalism is expressed through images of Mother India, nature, sacrifice, unity, freedom, and collective identity. At the same time, her poetic vision does not remain confined to the nation. Her concern for peace and humanity allows her patriotism to develop into a broader cosmopolitan humanism. Therefore, Naidu's contribution to Indian English literature lies not only in her lyrical celebration of India but also in her attempt to connect national freedom with universal values of peace, love, and human solidarity.

Sarojini Naidu's poetry abounds in human values such as love, sympathy, empathy, cooperation, brotherhood, faithfulness, unity in diversity etc. She can be a perennial source of solace for our generation that experiences degradation of human values as an everyday phenomenon. The lofty idealism she subscribes to in love and other kinds of human relationship forms a solid foundation of a healthy social set-up. Sarojini Naidu, no doubt, justifies herself as the 'Nightingale of India'. But in addition to the sweet and enchanting rhythm, she also reflects on graver concerns of life such as the dynamics of human relationship. Her philosophical reflections are as powerful as her music. Her poems are everlasting records of the dynamics of human relationship.

References:

1. Naidu, Sarojini. *The Bird of Time*. Forgotten Books, 2015.
2. Naidu, Sarojini. *The Broken Wing*. Forgotten Books, 2015.
3. Naidu, Sarojini. *The Feather of the Dawn*. Asia Publishing House, 1961.
4. Naidu, Sarojini. *The Golden Threshold*. Dodo Press, 1905.
5. Naidu, Sarojini. "Coromandel Fishers", William Heinemann (London), 1905.