



The ecstasy of rustic India through Sarojini Naidu's *Indian Weavers and Wandering Singers*: A study

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Abstract:

India is the abode of the sense of ethnic beauty which emits colours of variety for generations and will go on producing the same. Her true emancipation lies inside the heart of the people who belong to the rustic culture. We, the people of India, always get associated with the hue of our societal, religious, familial and connection which transforms every relationship pious among our culture as if worship. This particular harmony of India was seen in the writing of the 'Nightingale of India', Sarojini Naidu, an epitome figure of struggle, education, politics, protest and freedom whose voice of literature still resonates among us. In Indian English literature, Naidu's writing has got very prominent footsteps for the study and research. During the time of freedom movement, her writing rejuvenated the ethnicity of India. Her poetry shows us how the rustic beauty of India can be drawn for the fortification of the true sense of patriotic identity. This article seeks the significant nature of Sarojini Naidu's poetry which produces the variety of shades, colours, emotion and the landscape of rustic India, particularly through two of her poems, *Indian Weavers* and *Wandering Singers*. Textual analysis is followed by the comparative relevance which has been stated during the description of the facts and the way all the facts are getting interrelated with the sources taken from various domains. Descriptive methodology has been taken into the consideration for the analysis of the text and other resources are used as the secondary sources for the same.

Keywords:

Freedom, Harmony, Labours, Nationality, Rustic

Introduction:

India is not a simple name of a country; it is indeed the receptor of culture amidst the scent of spiritual environment for genesis. The regional excellence from their nature, practice of one's own religion, languages, inclusiveness and so on and so forth; comes under the amalgamation which truly feels like bestowed from heaven. The land of flora and fauna, India is the most significant example of congregating various notions emitting from philosophers, academicians, thinkers, patriots, laureates and scholars. It has been a pretty wonderful phenomenon of this country while the artistic creation and innovation of bards, wandering singers, clay artists, pot makers, weavers, cloth painters and so on; come in contact to every region. This colourful delineation of rustic ethnicity is highlighted in this article through Sarojini Naidu's writing. Sarojini Naidu has been truly marked as a freedom fighter and a celebrated poet in the 20th century. She had also been a proponent of advocating for women's rights in her time. Even being an eminent scholar of English and a graduate from England, Naidu has never diluted her own nationality and cultural background which was latched in her soul during the time of freedom fighting. She was always a fierce voice of liberty, democracy, freedom, own identity, cultural upliftment and patriotism which contributed a huge role for the independence of India and education. Naidu was quite successful in igniting political awareness simultaneously the importance of appeasing the true essence of Indian culture and artistic value. The conscious attempt of her literary creation to make people aware of the British rule during colonial time was very conspicuous and adamant. Her literary journey has produced magnificent manifestations such as, *The Golden Threshold*, *The Bird of Time*, *The Broken Wing*, *The Father of The Dawn*, *The Sceptred Flute: Songs of India*, etc, signifying Naidu's deep love for her country and the essence of Indian tradition. Scholars, researchers, students have celebrated her poems for the lyrical beauty and patriotic fervour. Truly, the title, 'Nightingale of India' suits her trajectory. Sir Edmund William Gosse, an English poet, author and critic, once had truly called Sarojini Naidu as "the most accomplished living poet in India" in 1919. Naidu was not only known for the writing and her enigmatic struggling phase of India's freedom movement, but also in the post-independent time, her role seemed powerful. Her appointment as the Governor of the United Province marked the most magnificent achievement of her political career which broke the gender barriers. Her advocacy for the communal harmony and raised voice for the woman's right in a typical form marked her journey to the utmost escalation. The following section of this article will be focussing on the two

poems, *Indian Weavers* and *Wandering Singers* subsequently to address the statement of the true nature of the ecstatic Indian rustic culture.

The significant imagery of the circle of life:

Indian Weavers was published in 1905 which was taken from *Golden Threshold*. Sarojini Naidu has depicted the circle of life right from the beginning of the birth of a child, goes through the merriment of marriage and ending in death. Her cunning association of this natural happening of one's own individual life with the weavers signifies her poetic wisdom, simultaneously the mirth, joyousness, naturality, pensiveness and sorrow which is associated with nature.

The poem has been designed in three consecutive sections where Naidu directly addresses 'Weavers' in three different times of a day with the change of the light, mood, situation and emotional outburst. Most interestingly, it also signifies the endless and unchanged hassle of the tremendous patience and labour of the weavers despite being the occurrence of the change of the situation. If we put a deeper insight in the textual analysis, we must observe that this poem has been associated with the colours which show the different contrasts of life. Three times in each section of the poem, the poet asks a question addressing the weavers. The sections can also be depicted as a first-person narrative while the poet is being the first person. As per as the interpretation of the times is concerned, it goes through the questions and with subsequent answers. This is how the whole statement is structured, so that the narrative becomes a dialogue. Sarojini Naidu, being a freedom fighter, also stands by the side of the weavers, for their laborious job of continuous patience and work. She has depicted weavers' nature of being tedious and careful labour who are being associated with others' joyousness and sorrowfulness of life but, ignoring their own.

In the first stanza of the poem, the poet starts with the morning associating a new-born child,

“WEAVERS, weaving at break of day,

Why do you weave a garment so gay?...

Blue as the wing of a halcyon wild,

We weave the robes of a new-born child.” (*Indian Weavers*, Lines 1-4)

This clearly signifies the happiness of a child's birth by associating it with a colour of blue which is similar to the wing of a halcyon. It signifies the blooming smile and hue of a new possibility which is compared with a baby's arrival in the world. Such imagery connects human's deep-core emotion of immense mirth like the wind swing of a halcyon. The poem starts with a question and each stanza ends with an answer by the weavers states the lively communication between the poetic phenomena and the artistic pleasure to express such beautiful emotion.

In the next stanza, the mood and time of the day goes through a shift as the weavers are being asked by the poet at the time of the fall of the night.

“Why do you weave a garment so bright?...” (*Indian Weavers*, Line 6)

The brightness mentions the emotion and blush out of excitement of something newly upcoming.

“Like the plumes of a peacock, purple and green,

We weave the marriage-veils of a queen.” (*Indian Weavers*, Lines 7-8)

Significantly, the time is evening and the occasion is marriage which states the growth, fertility, reproduction, possibilities by associating with the peacock and its colours. Marriage is a crucial part for both bride and groom. It comes with immense possibilities; dreams and it ties up the betrothal knot which signifies two lives' circles mingled in the same. The association of peacock not only shows the mediation of the colours, but also states the variety of life.

In the last stanza, the mood of the poem exactly turns down to the pensiveness. It is a moonlit night and the weather is chilly. Compared to the previous two stanzas, this time is not so gay, not so bright and warm. The only reason, now the theme is getting involved with 'death'.

“White as a feather and white as a cloud,

We weave a dead man's funeral shroud.” (*Indian Weavers*, Lines 11-12)

Very clearly the comparison of the colour is with the white feather and white cloud signifying the paleness and dismal situation of a time. The circle of life revolves around blooming nature to brightness and eventually the ultimate consequence which no one can escape, i.e. 'death'. The white seems to be very natural as death is associated with the emptiness. But, if we notice one subtlety of the poet, this colour

association never ends with black or darkness. The death could have been remarked with the darkness. If it happened, it could sum up to the end to some extent. But, by making the circle of life as a theme and the colour as a symbol, the poet sets up the end in white which amalgamates every colour in the circle of life. Nobody knows what possibility is upcoming, but anything it can be, it is obviously not the end. So, the poet has made the imagery of death not as an end, but the beginning of a new day which may rise with another possibility to the infinity.

The freedom and spirit of the '*wandering*' minstrels:

Sarojini Naidu took her poetic expression towards the sense of emancipated knowledge. She depicted the traditional values of the Indian rustic singers whose wandering nature signifies the freedom and spirited happiness out of every circumstance. The poet has delineated the spirited nature of Indian rustic culture through the wandering bards, poets, singers by calling them united by paying tribute as well. This call for unification from the poet is not only to project the significant value of Indian tradition, but also it signifies the necessity to follow our tradition by the upcoming genesis of India. The harmonious value is described in the form of poetic manifestation which also does act as the thematic deliberation by Sarojini Naidu. Along the side of freedom; optimism, tradition, expectation can also be considered as the sub-themes of the poem.

Wandering Singers consists of 12 lines with the division of 3 stanzas of 4 lines each. Each stanza stands about the voice of the wandering men whose subject of the saying is pretty clear and straightforward. Very interestingly, the poet has described nature, history and the necessity of harmony very cunningly by amalgamating a whole of traditional values.

“WHERE the voice of the wind calls our wandering feet,

Through echoing forest and echoing street,

With lutes in our hands ever-singing we roam,

All men are our kindred, the world is our home.” (*Wandering Singers*, Stanza 1)

The wandering singers are following the wind which signifies the seasonal changes of nature. It is a beautiful symbol of 'wind' which clarifies Indian seasons. The 'echoing' nature of the street which is followed by the minstrels signifies the villages, among the peoples they usually make themselves a part of their wandering lives. The endless pathway that finds themselves through the connection of their voice. The voice of the minstrels has been signified as the harmony, the lyric which unites villages, i.e. India. The last line of the stanza is the most important and creative one. 'All men' and 'the world is our home' signify the unification and eradication of communal bias by embracing everything as our own. In other words, the minstrels have no other thing to call it as their own but the world they are about to put their footsteps on.

In the second stanza, the wandering men are expressing their remorse for the loss of the tradition and its value, identity of self in the cities. As it penetrates their wandering hearts,

“Our lays are of cities whose lustre is shed,
The laughter and beauty of women long dead;
The sword of old battles, the crown of old kings,
And happy and simple and sorrowful things.” (*Wandering Singers*, Stanza 2)

The wandering singers are talking about the degradation of the traditional values in the cities which have totally forgotten how to keep it up. The degeneration of the spirited value is seemingly happening and therefore the cultural aspects are continuously getting decayed. The minstrels are also talking about their subject of singing from the past as well as the present. They are not dragging them backward from expressing their remorse which represents the 'sorrowful things'.

“What hope shall we gather, what dream shall we sow?

Where the wind calls our wandering footsteps we go.

No love bird us tarry, no joy bids us wait:

The voice of the wind is the voice of our fate.” (*Wandering Singers*, Stanza 3)

The subject of the last stanza can be divided in two sections. First two lines are a pair of a decisive and spirited undertaking that has got a strong conviction of the mindset of the wandering foot of the wanderers.

Despite being in the time of facing so many obstacles and degenerating forces of the time, the bards are too

confident about the 'wind' which signifies the new pathways, new possibilities. One point to be remembered in this very portion of the poem, Naidu wrote this poem during the time of the freedom fight where the turmoil was on its high and it was not like a 'walk in the park' situation for the citizens of India to keep all of us unified. This poem also signifies the turbulence of that time in the sense of appealing harmony and hope for any possible upcoming. The last two lines clearly state the nature of optimism which is dispersed by the melodies of the wandering singers. 'The voice of the wind' means the united and spirited nature of the peoples living in the cities and villages, their understanding of the necessities of the rustic sense which touches the sacred soil of India. And, eventually it shall be 'the voice of our fate', signifying the hopeful notion for the upcoming initiatives by the poet's appeal to the society and the generations to come through the voices of the wandering singers.

Conclusion:

Both the poems show the culture, tradition and its mediation in Indian life. Starting from the circle of life and the experience and contrasts during the time of its existence become the sole idea of these two poetic manifestations. Sarojini Naidu had literally taught us the discourse of not being choked of presenting our own and having it celebrated simultaneously. It did not matter to Naidu whether the nationality and its smaller instances of existence suffered from the identity crisis or not. She had never gone under any captivation which might have seemed to us as the guised nature of her characteristics. This article represents these two poems, not only to rejuvenate the invaluable essence of our Indian rustic nature and its traditional aspects, but it celebrates with its omnipotent strength which is still getting its essentiality in 21st century society, art and political context. In this very context one quote should be mentioned which once was said by Sarojini Naidu, "we want deeper sincerity of motive, a greater courage in speech, and earnestness in action." Indeed, this statement has summarized the notion of the article what it has attempted to represent.

"When there is oppression, the only self-respecting thing is to rise and say this shall cease

today because my right is justice. If you are stronger, you have to help the weaker boy or girl

both in play and in the work."- Sarojini Naidu.

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