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The work aims at throwing light on the genesis of nationalistic ideology in the days of freedom struggle so that it becomes easier for the present generation to understand it's true spirit.

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V. Aruna Kumari G. Manibabu Dr. D. Uma Rani

# **Indian English Literature with** Freedom Struggle as Background Indian English Literature with Freedom Struggle as Background



**Edited by** Dr. D. Uma Rani G. Manibabu V. Aruna Kumari

# Indian English Literature with Freedom Struggle as Background

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#### **Publisher**

## Shriyanshi Prakashan

8,Gandhi Nagar,Near Paliwal Park , Agra-282003 - UP ( India )

Branch office- A-31/119, Mata Mandir, Gali No-2, Maujpur,

New Delhi-110053

Mob : 09761628581

e-mail: shriyanshiprakashan@yahoo.com

Published by Alok Shrivastava

© 2022 August by Editor

First Edition: 2022 August

ISBN : 978-93-81247-01-3

**Indian English Literature** 

with Freedom Struggle as Background

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Laser - Manoj Graphics, Agra Printer - pooja Press, Agra

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#### CHAPTER-26

## Manifestation of Patriotic fervour in Sarojini Naidu's poem Coromandel Fishers

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Patriotism is defined as love of one's country, recognition with it, and singular apprehension for its welfare and that of fellow citizens. Patriotism is based on Greek patriStçs, which is recorded in the 1500s. It means "fellow-countryman or lineage member." The most basic description of patriotism is defined as a group's loyalty towards their members and the land they share in living. According to Nathanson a professor in Philosophy:

Patriotism consists of 4 main components which are a special affection towards one's country; defining himself or herself through his or her country; being interested in country's welfare; and sacrificing for the sake of country's welfare. So patriotism is a feeling of attachment and commitment to a country, nation, or political community. <sup>1</sup>

One can find these elements in the literature during the freedom struggle in India. The pre-Independence Indian English literature during the freedom fight plays a great role to hearten and initiate the spirit of freedom in people. The poets/writers like Henry Derozio, M.M.Dutt, Sarojini Naidu, Rabindranath Tagore, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay,

#### 194 Indian English Litera ture With Freedom Struggle As Background

and others infused patriotism and augmented the freedom struggle through their works. Among them Sarojini Naidu needs no special introduction in the field of Indian English poetry. She was hailed from a prestigious Bengali literary family. She was a celebrated political activist, feminist, and poet. She was the first Indian woman to be president of the Indian National Congress. She was a promoter of civil rights, women's liberation, and anti-imperialistic ideas. Sarojini Naidu as a poet belonged to an era of struggle, slavery, and freedom fighting. Mahatma Gandhi gave her the sobriquet 'the Nightingale of India because of the imagery and lyrical quality in her verse. Some of her famous poems are Ecstasy, Indian Dancers, The Indian, In The Forest, Palanquin Bearers etc. Her poems were admired by many prominent Indian politicians. Her language was simple and provoked patriotic feelings. She had also portrayed the beauty of nature and its importance to one's life through her poems. She was remarkably inspired by prominent thinkers and writers like Rabindranath Tagore and Gopal Krishna Gokhale. She used all these influences to portray her ideas and feelings of patriotism in her poetry. The poems like *The* Gift of India, An Anthem of Love, and The Coromandel Fishers reflected her patriotic fervor towards mother India and the freedom struggle. The components of patriotism mentioned by Nathan were reflected effectively in the poem Coromandel Fishers. They were: a singular liking for motherland, defining oneself through the poet's country, being engrossed in country's welfare and sacrificing for the sake of country's benefit.

Coromandel Fishers is a scintillating example of her patriotic call given to Coromandel fishers. Though the poem is about the fishermen, it metaphorically reflects the poet's desire for free India and thus she encourages the people of the nation to hasten their struggle. The first stanza shows a special affection towards her motherland. It is a complicated yet very beautiful poem written by Sarojini Naidu. This poem depicts the bond between the fishermen of the Coromandel Coast and the sea. She has personified nature in the best possible way. The theme of the poem is that a fisherman/woman encouraging his fellow fishermen to get to work by the dawn. The hard life style of

the fishermen and their meager earnings are beautifully portrayed by her. She also focused on the socio-political status of the freedom struggle in operation at that time. She metaphorically compares the fishermen to Indian and their stressful yet beautiful life to the freedom struggle. As a fellow fisherwoman she encourages them to rise and go for fishing on sea i.e. fight for freedom of India. They face the turbulent sea every day for their livelihood, and likewise they had to face the British to earn freedom from their clutches. She addresses them:

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!

She calls them brothers and requests them to rise because it is already morning now i.e. it is the time the land is welcoming the independence. As the struggle is continuing, It's the duty of the countrymen to participate in it. The line "the wakening skies pray to the morning light," symbolizes it. The personification and the simile the used in this line 'The wind lies asleep in the arms of the dawn like a child that has cried all night' denotes the temporary rest taken by the children i.e freedom fighters fall asleep at night after fighting all day like the fierce wind. It also refers to the atrocities that the people had suffered in the hands of the British during their cruel rule. With independence that suffering will vanish away. They should rise from the sleep now and gather all their strength like the fishermen gathering their nets and set for their goal. The poet praises the fishermen as 'the kings of the sea' because they possess the wealth of the sea, the fishes and all the treasures of the sea world. These lines refer to the treasures of India and so all Indians are kings. The real treasure will be the independence. Here she is singing as a fisherman addressing 196 Indian English Litera ture With Freedom Struggle As Background his brethren about the life and attitude of the fishermen of the Coromandel Coast on the Bay of Bengal.

Sarojini Naidu's loyalty and her attachment towards India is reflected in some lines of this poem. This attachment can be a combination of many different feelings and language relating to one's own homeland, including ethnic, cultural, political or historical aspects. Loyalty towards one's own country above one's family is a usual phenomena during the times of Indian freedom struggle. It depends on the patriot's beliefs on the country of his/her birth. Thus the loyalty towards motherland is described emotionally in the above lines. Simon Keller argues:

Whereas one's love of and loyalty to a family member or a friend may coexist with a low estimate of the person's qualities, patriotism involves endorsement of one's country. If the patriot is to endorse his country, he must consider his beliefs about the country's virtues and achievements to be based on some objectively valid standards of value and an unbiased examination of the country's past and present record that leads to the conclusion that it lives up to those standards. <sup>2</sup>

Sarojini leads further and tries to show her interest towards the country by supporting them morally. The poet insists the fishermen to be active to go for fishing. She writes:

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.

The poet explains them that they will be tossed with the waves somewhere in the mid-sea, they needn't fear because they would be at the mercy of the waves, even where the sea god Neptune controls everything. He will protect their lives because he has a strong hold on storm. Here the God Neptune may refer to the Leaders of Freedom movement. Though the struggle is a difficult one for a common man, they need not fear because the national leaders have controlling power on the movement. They will protect like a parent. She calls 'the sea' our mother; the 'clouds' our brothers and the waves as our comrade. Thus she metaphorically claims that India is the motherland of all Indians and the people belong to one family. So they will be protected from the mother-god from the 'wind' i.e. the foreign rulers.

The last lines of the poem picturises the poet's sacrificing quality, for the sake of country's welfare. She voices out the feelings of the fishers/patriots:

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.

The final stanza elaborates that the comforts and the joys the Indians enjoy is sweet but the comforts after independence will be sweeter. So the Indians has to wage the final war on the British.

A patriot doesn't care much for the troubles they face like the fishermen for whom 'the kiss of spray wash and the dance of the wild waves are sweeter. It is due to their love of sea as well the love of the country. They are ready to face troubles for the sake of the country. The poet defines herself through her country, which bears the dedicated children like her. Majority of Indians like Sarojini Naidu are greatly

198 Indian English Litera ture With Freedom Struggle As Background influenced by the rich culture and heritage of India. They call the nation their mother and ready to inspire the fellow countrymen to participate in the freedom struggle as well prepare to sacrifice their lives to see liberated India. As an inspiring writer during the period of India's struggle for Independence, Sarojini's major aim is to wake up the minds of the freedom fighters.

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