

**SPIRITUAL INSIGHTS AND SYMBOLISM IN SAROJINI NAIDU'S
POEM "INDIAN WEAVERS"**

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Sarojini Naidu is one of the most sensitive, prolific, exuberant, and humanitarian poets of our country. Not only in India, she is widely recognised, and respected abroad as well. Her dynamism was contagious and mesmerising, and that is why she is known as the "Nightingale of India". "Indian Weavers" is considered to be one of Sarojini Naidu's most spiritual and remarkable poems, it reflects through various metaphors, and symbols, her profoundness of thought, and courage to delve in-to subjects like life and death, that are generally ignored and avoided. Her optimism made even the feared matters revered, her family background was one of intellectual inclination, and supported her scholarly pursuits of reading, writing, learning and deliberating upon subjects, hitherto unexplored in all their depth. This paper aims to explore the spiritual insights, and symbolism in Sarojini Naidu's poem "Indian Weavers" which is considered as one of her most remarkable, and breathtakingly beautiful poem.

Sarojini Naidu is one of the most celebrated figures of the Indo-Anglian poetry. Her Indian sensibilities were brought to the brim, in all her exuberant and magical creations. She is one of the greatest pioneers, and flag-bearers of the Indo-Anglian poetry, which is incomplete without mentioning, her immense contribution, to its prestigious traditions. Her contribution to her craft is unparalleled and outstanding, and there are very few poets and writers, who could be compared to her. Her poetry expresses a deep, gracious, vivid, and brilliant exposition of her thoughts, ideas and ideals. Naidu is remarkable in the sense, that she is not only an enlightened poetess, but also a leader and a freedom fighter, of great calibre. Her contribution to the freedom struggle of India is immense, and widely appreciated. Her courage in the midst of difficult circumstances, made her special, and revered by one and all. She was a freedom fighter and an activist as well, she participated with Mahatma Gandhi, in the "Salt Satyagraha" of 12th March, 1930, and various other movements held for India's freedom. Her respect, reverence and admiration, for beloved leaders Gopala Krishna Gokhale, and Mahatma Gandhi, were immense.

Her resolve, fortitude and resilience, as well as, enthusiasm and courage, in the midst of India's difficult struggle, of great magnitude, were praiseworthy. Her magnificent, cultured and magnetic personality is truly reflected in her amazing poetry, and purposeful writings. Her determination, efforts and willpower, as a strong lady is commendable and exemplary. It is inspirational, as it shows that dynamic, and intellectual women, of great calibre, can do anything they put their minds and hearts to.

She was India's first woman, to become, Governor of a state (United Provinces, now Uttar Pradesh.) She was also known as the "Nightingale of India" for her great contribution to India's freedom struggle. Besides being an eminent poet, she was also an inspiration to many women, and a shining example of a zealous spirit, and striking woman-power, she was a wonderful leader and a great orator, resilient to the core, and the first Indian woman, to become the president of the Indian National Congress. Her resolve to free India from the British rule, resulted in many beautiful creations, which inspired the Indian people to diligently strive, for their liberty from the foreign yoke.

Naidu's matured outlook and philosophical bent of mind, is reflected in her amazing poem, "Indian Weavers", it is emotional, as well as humanitarian, and compassionate. It has a pure, undiluted, spiritual nuance and charm, which reflects upon the impermanence, and fragility of the human existence. Although, it appears quite simple in a literal sense, underneath it are subtle and sympathetic expressions, which reflect Naidu's deeply spiritual and philosophical mindset. Her congeniality, simplicity and strength could be seen, throughout "Indian Weavers". The poem is from the collection "The Golden Threshold", which was published in the year 1905, and was named after her home that she constructed in Hyderabad. The poem reads as follows:

“Weavers, weaving at the 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 newborn 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, weaving 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.”

“Indian Weavers” could be considered as a poem of immense spiritual implications. On the surface, it appears simple, but metaphorically it portrays the real essence of the human existence. It is a rhythmic short poem, which has three stanzas, of four lines each. The poetess

tells, her readers, about the three kinds of apparels, that the weavers weave, at three specific times of the day, which are symbolic, of the three stages of a person's life. The poetic devices of symbolism, metaphor and imagery, have been used here, by the poetess. It is a poem rich in symbolism. The childhood of a human being is characterized by vibrant colours, like blue, which represent brightness, eternity and gaiety, the child is the happiest, he or she is like a free bird, with no responsibilities, and plenty of innocent joy, and protection of their parents. The wild bird represents happiness and freedom, from the burdens of life, which is the hallmark of every human being's childhood. Also, morning symbolizes the start of human life, which is childhood. It is heavenly, and gorgeous, and a fortunate time of life for most.

The second stanza portrays youth, and its symbolic colours are purple and green, that signify optimism, vigour, wonderment, royalty and luxury. People get married in their adulthood, and start their household and familial responsibilities, and there is both happiness, and sorrow in their lives. The weavers weave bright coloured dresses; the marriage dresses proper for a queen. The second stage of a person's life, could be called a mixed-bag of joys, and sorrows, various challenges and an individual's triumph over them. The bird peacock, signifies, happiness and dance of life, amidst various difficulties, that a person is bound to come across sooner or later, during their adult lives.

The garments the weavers, are weaving, at night, when it is calm, are white. They are full of sobriety, and as if like a reality-check, death is looming large, in the end, it is the conqueror; it quietly and surprisingly appears closer and closer. With each passing moment, an individual is moving towards the end, and the very material things, that they yearned for so much, like mad people, shall all be left behind.

Night is also symbolic of a deathly calm; an eternal quietness, a horrifying and chilling moment, full of serene rays of the moon, a peaceful and sombre hour, when the white garments, signifying sobriety are being given shape, by the weavers.

Naidu through this poem is trying to tell her readers that, every man and woman, who are born on this earth, grow up, face their share of joys and sorrows, ultimately have to die one day. Death does not spare anyone, it is nature's eternal law, and that the life of human-beings is fragile, which has its share of various different phases. It is the absolute precariousness, and vulnerability of the human existence, and experience, which makes it so exciting and exhilarating, but only for the enlightened; the ignorant do not understand it till the end, and they are suddenly caught by surprise.

The exuberance of spiritual thoughts, and symbolism, has made this poem very special, and profound, in all its various unique facets, and all its different nuances, have emerged crystal clear. Literally, the reference of the weavers, weaving clothes is simple, but the profoundness, of the metaphor is breathtaking and induces certain seriousness, which is the hallmark of a great poet.

The colours as symbols, express various moods, traumas and implications. The beauty of Indian culture vividly brings to life, persistent thoughts of life and death, and how everyone has to come to terms with them. The poem is deeply striking and poignant; there is a particular and rare sensitivity, which is precious and absolutely marvellous, a reflection of a woman's heart and emotions. It enthral its readers in a manner, which cannot be just described in words.

The symbols of life and death, as stitched by the weavers are breathtaking, and awesome in the poem. The brilliant Indian philosophy and spiritual insights find their way, through various

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expressions, that are subtle, marvellous and refined. The various stages of a person's life are beautifully portrayed, and vividly explained through metaphors and symbols, as well as colours, that have a deep resonance, with Indian culture and tradition, where death is something to be celebrated, and not feared, as it is a natural progression of one's life events, and also a great equalizer of all; whether they are the rich, or the poor! Weavers could also be imagined and understood as the symbolic representation, of the Hindu trinity of Gods; Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh: The creator, the preserver and the destroyer, thus representing the three phases of human life in the poem.

The magnificence and equanimity of the ancient Indian culture, philosophy and spiritual tradition, is clearly reflected, in this wonderful piece of poetry. The vivid portrayal of the various stages of life, remind one of the greatest poets, who notwithstanding their own tragedies, and calamities that befell on them, tell the truth to their readers as it is. The sharp and crisp symbols, imageries and metaphors, used by Naidu, are like luminous halos, that have inspired successive generations of poets, and writers like a guiding star. Thus "Indian Weavers" is a poem which reflects the mesmerizing glory of the Indian spiritual and philosophical traditions, successfully incorporating, various images, symbols, allegories and metaphors, and profoundly enlightening and guiding its readers, in every-which way, beyond the mundane ordinary everyday matters, and concerns, of their meaningless, as well as profound existence.

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