

Sarojini Naidu — The Nightingale of India

Sarojini Naidu was an Indian poet and political activist. She was an important figure in India's freedom struggle and a proponent of women's emancipation. She started composing poetry at an early age and is popularly known as the 'Nightingale of India' for her ingenious, idealistic and mystical poems. She was the eldest of the eight siblings. Her brother Virendranath Chattopadhyay was a revolutionary, and another brother Harindranath was a poet and an actor. Their family had a high reputation in Hyderabad, not only for leading the Nizam College of Hyderabad but also as Hyderabad's most famous artists at that time. Being an artist in the era of British rule in India was considered a risky career, yet with their progressive values, they pursued them anyway.

At 16, she was sent to Girton College, Cambridge, but she did not make her marks in Academics as the environment did not suit her. However, she got to know some of the leading writers of her time, and encouraged by her patron Edmund Gosse, she continued writing. On her return to India, she married Dr M. G. Naidu with whom she had fallen in love at the age of 14. Not desirous of being tied down with household and family chores, she plunged into public life, publishing her poems while continuing her social and political activities. Jailed four times, Sarojini Naidu rose to become one of the best known freedom fighters of her time. She was the first woman to become the president of the Indian National Congress in 1925. Naidu was awarded the Kaisar-i-Hind Medal by the British government for her work during the plague epidemic in India, which she later returned in protest over the 13 April 1919 Jallianwala Bagh massacre.

Poetic Career:

Sarojini Naidu was a prolific writer and began writing at the age of 12. She wrote a play named Maher Muneer in Persian, which impressed the Nizam of Hyderabad. Her first collection of poetry The Golden Threshold was published in 1905. The poems were noted by critics for Sarojini's visceral use of rich sensory images in her writing. The illustration of India's fascinating and rich culture can be observed in many of her poems.

Naidu's poems follow political undertones. Her eloquent and strong words seek to arouse the spirit of patriotism and nationalism in the hearts of her countrymen. The Gift of India, included in the collection The Broken Wing, is a poem from the perspective of Mother India. It describes the sacrificial love of thousands of mothers



who had selflessly sent their sons into battle. This was a tribute to the Indian soldiers martyred in World War I.

Indian Weavers is a poem that has deep connotations of life and death. The poet talks about three types of dresses that the Indian Weavers weave at three particular times of the day. Each dresses and times of the day symbolise the different stages of life. Naidu's poetic abilities can be seen in this short and simple poem. Abundant usage of literary devices such as personification, similes and alliteration, is a characteristic of her poems.

Another main theme of Naidu's poems is femininity. In The Bangle Sellers, she compares the different bangles to the different stages in a woman's life, from youth and fertility to old age, independence, and wisdom. Naidu's views on womanhood were not similar to the conventional concepts of her time, though she took pride in the rich culture of India.

Another of Naidu's major collection of poems is The Bird of Time (1912). It consists of poems on life, death and nature. In the Bazaars of Hyderabad, a poem appreciating the majesty of the Hyderabad traditional bazaar, was published along with this.

**"O Bird of Time on your fruitful bough
What are the songs you sing? ...
Songs of the glory and gladness of life,
Of poignant sorrow and passionate strife"**

Even in her early poems, Sarojini Naidu shows us anguished awareness of the ravages of time and the inevitability of death. Most poems from The Bird of Time are full of worldly wisdom, words that flow from a heart that has bravely fought through thick and thin. Throughout her poetry, we can see an effervescent touch of faith, optimism and courage. Her acute awareness of sorrow on the one hand and her unflinching determination to overcome sorrow on the other, create a pleasing paradox of grief and courage, hope and despair, faith and doubt in several of her poems.

The collections The Sceptred Flute (1943) and The Feather of the Dawn (1961) were published posthumously.

Analysing her political legacy, English writer and philosopher Aldous Huxley wrote, "It has been our good fortune, while in Bombay, to meet Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, the newly elected President of the All-India Congress and a woman who combines in the most remarkable way great intellectual power with charm, sweetness with courageous energy, a wide culture with originality, and earnestness with humour."

THE FACT CORNER

Did you know?



If you pour a handful of **salt** into a full glass of water, the water level will actually go down rather than overflowing the glass

Did you know?



1 spoonful of matter from a neutron star would **weigh more** than Mt. Everest or 900 pyramids of Giza

Did you know?



Methane exists in **Mars'** atmosphere, but scientists aren't sure whether it comes living things or volcanoes

Did you know?



The **bowling ball** was invented in 1862

BRAIN TEASERS

1 Q. Divide 30 by 1/2 and add 10. What is the answer?

2 Q. A man builds a house rectangular in shape. All sides have southern exposure. A big bear walks by, what color is the bear? Why?

3 Q. If there are 3 apples and you take away 2, how many do you have?

4 Q. How many two cent stamps are there in a dozen?

5 Q. There's one sport in which neither the spectators nor the participants know the score or the leader until the contest ends. What is it?

6 Q. What famous North American landmark is constantly moving backward?

7 Q. What fruit has its seeds on the outside?

8 Q. Only four words in Standard English begin with the letters "dw". They are all common. Name two of them.

SOLUTION:

1. 70. 30 divided by 1/2 would have made 25. But 30 divided by 1/2 equals 60. Plus 10 equals 70.

2. White. Because a house with southern exposures on all 4 sides must be at the North Pole, where they only have Polar Bears.

3. You have two, because YOU took away two!

4. 12! A dozen of anything is still 12.

5. Bowling.

6. Niagara Falls.

7. Strawberry.

8. "Dwarf", "dwell", "dwindle", and "dweeb"

English Proverbs and Meanings

*** A bad penny always turns up.**
An unwanted or disreputable person constantly comes back.

*** A bad tree does not yield good apples.**
A bad parent does not raise good children.

*** A bad workman blames his tools.**
Blaming the tools for bad workmanship is an excuse for lack of skill.

*** A black plum is as sweet as a white.**
People should not be judged by

their appearance.

*** A broken friendship may be soldered but will never be sound.**
Friendships can be rebuilt after a dispute but will never be as strong as before.

*** A burden of one's own choice is not felt.**
Something difficult seems easier when it is done voluntarily.

*** A constant guest is never welcome.**
If you come to visit too often, your host will be less pleased to see you.

Rajma Sandwich



Ingredients needed

Brown bread - 6,
Onion - 1
Ginger - 1/2 inch piece finely chopped
Green chilli - 1 finely chopped
Rajma /kidney beans - 1/2 cup cooked
Pepper powder to taste, Salt

Butter for toasting the bread

For the seasoning

Oil - 2 tsp, Cumin seeds - 3/4 tsp

Preparation

Wash and soak rajma overnight or for 6-7 hours and pressure cook until soft. After it cools, grind it to a coarse paste.

Method -

Heat 2 tsp of oil, add cumin seeds, when it splutters, add finely chopped onions, green chillies, ginger and saute until onions turn transparent. If it is for kids, you can add 1/2 tsp chilli powder instead of green chillies. Add the ground rajma, needed salt, pepper powder and mix it well.

How to prepare sandwich toast

Butter both sides of the bread, place 1-2 tbsp of the rajma filling and cover it with another buttered bread. Place it in a sandwich toaster and toast until golden brown. If you do not have a sandwich toaster, use a tawa to toast the bread. Cut diagonally and serve hot with tomato ketchup or tomato chutney.

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Chilli Dosa



Ingredients needed

Thick spongy dosas -3
Cheese, Onion -2
Tomato -2
Green chilli - 1 finely chopped (optional)
Ginger - a small bit finely chopped
Capsicum - 1 medium
Red chilli powder - 3/4 -1 tsp
Turmeric powder -1/4 tsp
Kitchen king masala or garam masala powder - 1/4 tsp
Salt as required
Oil - 1 1/2 tbsp

Method

Heat oil, add onions, green chilli, ginger and saute till onions turn translucent. Then add Cheese, tomatoes, chilli powder, turmeric powder and cook till tomatoes become mushy. Now add capsicum, kitchen king masala and cook for a few more minutes. Do not overcook the capsicum. The capsicum should retain its crunchiness. Add salt needed. Now add the dosa bits and mix well till the dosa gets coated with the masala. Serve warm. Enjoy it with tomato Ketchup.