

Analysis of Pantheism in the Selected Poems of Sarojini Naidu through Poetic Techniques

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Abstract: Indian English Literature brims with many great poetesses and one cannot deny the supreme position of Sarojini Naidu as a poetess in Indian writing in English. Every individual cannot pass through his school education without getting the taste of Sarojini Naidu's poetry. It is a pleasure to read her poems. Several positive criticisms has been given to her poems and this paper ventures to trace the theme of Pantheism through poetic techniques in the selected poems of Sarojini Naidu which has not been much prescribed in the school or college education. Through this attempt the other aspect of Sarojini Naidu poems will be brought into the limelight. The poems were selected from *The Golden Treasury of Indo-Anglian Poetry (1828-1965)* edited by Vinayak Krishna Gokak and published by Sahitya Akademi in 1983. The poems selected for the study are "Summer Woods", "If You Call Me", "Caprice", "Songs of Radha Kanhaya", and "Songs of Radha the Quest".

Keywords: Pantheism, poetic techniques, richness of Sarojini Poems, Indian flavour in poetry.

1. Introduction

"We need to find God and he cannot be found in noise and restlessness. God is the friend of silence. See how nature-trees, flowers, grass grows in silence; see the stars, the moon and the sun, how they move in silence... We need silence to be able to touch souls".
-Mother Teresa

Indian English Literature has a legacy of many inspirational and authentic poets. In the melting pot of creative works, one could observe the role of many Indian poets and at the same time Indian women has also proved as no exception. They have carved an identity for themselves. Indian women poets did not write from the feminist perspective alone. Their themes are broad, secular and universal in nature. Their writings cannot be simply ignored or labelled less than a single category. Always their writing enthralled and still keeps enthralling readers. Some of the most famous Indian poetess are Sarojini Naidu, Kamala Surayya, Mahadevi Varma, Nandini Sahu, Subhadra Kumari Chauhan and Amrita Pritam etc. Among this famous poetess, one of the most popular is Sarojini Naidu. Her poems are ecstasy to read. The poems are loaded with various expressions. The centuries may pass, but still, one could cull out various themes, analogy and joy from her poem.

Is Wordsworth alone nature's poet? Here is a female Wordsworth from India whose diction, life and every line of her poem is filled with a sense of admiration and worshipping

nature. Born in a Bengali Hindu family and celebrated as "Nightingale of India", one cannot deny the essence of 'Indianness' in her poem. She is a child prodigy, orator, and great freedom fighter. In short, she is a multifaceted person and her poetry made her popular. Her celebration of all themes is made possible only through nature. This article ventures to explore the pantheism elements in Sarojini Naidu poems. Repeatedly only a few poems of Sarojini Naidu is prescribed in schools and colleges. Some of her famous poems are "Palanquin Bearers", "The Royal Tombs of Golconda", and "The Gift of India" etc. This paper exceptionally takes a few other less discussed poems of Sarojini Naidu. This article further tries to analyze the pantheism in her poem through various poetic techniques.

Pantheism is defined from metaphysical and religious state. As H.P Owen opines, "God is everything and everything is God...the world is either identical with God or in some way a self-expression of his nature" (Levine). The term 'Pantheism' is derived from Greek word 'pan' meaning all and 'theos' meaning God. The presence of God is felt everywhere in nature. God is omniscient. Nature is one of the best ways to have direct connection with God and enjoy a heavenly bliss. One can find happiness by having a deep in connection with the nature in everyday life. In this modern world to get relief from the stress and frustration, nature is the best remedy. Only Nature can provide us with immense happiness. Pantheism strongly declares that God is everything and everything is God. A Pantheist has the capacity to comprehend the divinity in nature and the universe. They regard the universe or nature as manifestation of God.

Sarojini Naidu is a pantheist who ultimately celebrates God himself as someone who endorses Nature. She makes a dual celebration of Nature as God and God as Nature as they are one and the same. The beauty of nature is transcended in the words of Sarojini Naidu. For instance, the poem "Summer Woods" can be subjected to New Criticism style analysis and pantheism of Sarojini can be seen evident. The poem is filled with exotic images from nature like gulmohurs, Koels, boughs of tamarind, molsari and neem, lilly pools, golden panthers and deep-blossomed woods.

The poem calls for the cast of the routine modern world life. She is tired of painted roofs and silken floors. So, she gives a call for the shift from this toil and weariness life filled with

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praise and prayers of men. As Cleanth Brooks points out, the paradox of the poem helps in the better comprehension of poem. Nature Vs modern imagery from the poem can be divided and presented in the following way,

Nature World imagery:

1. Cassia woods breaking into flame
2. Boughs of tamarind, molsari and neem
3. Water-lilly pools
4. Golden panthers/deep-blossoming woods

Modern world imagery:

1. Painted roofs
2. Soft and silken floors
3. Canopies of crimson gulmohurs
4. Toil and weariness, praise and prayers of men.

So, connecting these contradictory images from two different worlds, one can land on the yearning of poetess,

“You And I together, Love, in the deep blossoming woods
Engirt with love-voiced silences and gleaming solitudes.
Companions of the lustrous dawn, gay comrades of the night,
Like Krishna and like Radhika, encompassed with delight”.
(152)

In one another poem “If You Call Me”, Sarojini Naidu celebrates nature and exhibits Pantheism through ‘Dramatic Monologue’ technique. The addressee is unknown in this poem and simply the second person is addressed as love. The poem begins with the speaker’s first person narration as “If you call me I will come”. In the dramatic monologue technique, the speaker uses nature images and addresses the listener. The speaker opines that just for the call of love, he/she would come swifter. The movement towards the love is compared to the movement of various images like trembling forest deer, panting dove or like a snake that flies to the charmer’s thrall.

In the second stanza both the abstract noun and the images from nature is used. However, more than the abstract noun like desire, nature’s imagery enthalls the reader as it could be imagined and envisioned. It is admirable to learn that for the call of love, the speaker would attend faster than desire, lightning’s feet and plumes of fire. Henceforth, with all fearlessness using nature’s imagery through dramatic monologue, the speaker makes a clear statement that no matter what befalls the speaker; (he/she) would come for the call of love. To substantiate,

“If you call me I will come
Fearless what befall” (153).

The above lines are also used as refrain to emphasize on loyalty of the speaker towards love.

In the poem “Caprice” through the usage of ‘figure of speech-Metaphor’, Sarojini equates the heart with a wild-flower and wine-cup with a soul. The casting away of the wild-flower is equated with the casting away of the speaker’s heart. The speaker vividly states that addressee takes the wild flower in finger tips, presses in his indifferent lips and casually tears the crimson leaves apart before casting it away. At the end of the

first stanza, the speaker states that “Alas! It was my soul” (153).

In another poem “Songs of Radha Kanhaya”, the ‘dialogue’ technique is used. The poem involves the conversation among many people in the village. Amidst the conversation one could see the blend of nature’s imagery in Krishna Leela. In this leela, the farmer complains that Krishna climbs his garden wall and strips the orchard fruits and leaves. Priest wails that Krishna feeds the sacred rice offered in temple to the birds in temple. The village girl yells that he flings their altar offerings to peacock and crows. According to village men, Kanhaya (Krishna) runs along with chattering monkey-folks to chase their frightened calves.

Sarojini Naidu synchronizes God and Nature in this poem. Even God like Kanhaya is supposed to feel delight in spending time with nature. As they are one and the same pantheism is celebrated through the narration of little Kanhaya (Krishna). Though people seem to complain about his behaviour, still one could not deny the subtle joy in celebration and play with nature. Yasodha’s reaction to her little boy like a mom is also enchanting to read.

In the next poem “Songs of Radha Kanhaya”, the technique of ‘Soliloquy’ is effectively used to celebrate the images from nature. The nature imagery used in this poem are wind, forest, friendly shade, dove-gray tides, waters, woods and nectar. The images from nature are used to express the emotion of lady-love Radha. Further, nature is also involved in the conversation within herself. The pining and yearning of Radha for Kanhaya is beautifully expressed in the following lines,

“I questioned at noon rise the forest glade
Rest my sweet lover in thy friendly shade?” (156)

Initially, she asks the wind to find the whereabouts about Kanhaya (Krishna). Apart from this during dusk, she pleads with dove-gray tides to let her know about the flute-player abide. As the lady love did not receive any reply from the noon rise of the forest or the dove-gray tides, she even goes to the extent of weeping. At last after completing all her enquiry, she realizes a fact that how come she searches for kanhaya in the outside world when he is a part of her. She can realize the presence of Kanhaya in her heart. It is evidently expressed in the below soliloquy lines of Radha. To quote,

Thou sadist, -O faithless one, self-slain with doubt,
Why sleekest thou my loveliness without,
And askest wind or wave or flowering dell
The secret that within thyself doth dwell?
I am of thee, as thou of me, a part.
Look for me in the mirror of thy heart. (156)

The images from nature have been used as a tool for the self-realization of Radha in search of kanhaya. The technique of soliloquy at the end of this poem is used appropriately to realize the reality by Radha.

So, from the analysis of the above few poems, it is possible to realize the celebration and worship of nature in different themes of the poem through various poetic devices. Pantheism

does not engross any particular religion. It encompasses the divinity in nature. Even in a few poems of Sarojini Naidu like “Songs of Radha Kanhaya” and “Songs of Radha the Quest”, Radha and Kanhaya are not celebrated as divine Gods. They are portrayed like a common human being with love, loss and mischief nature. Much more poems can be taken for exploration and Sarojini Naidu no wonder can be labelled as “Pantheist”.

2. Conclusion

This paper presented an analysis of pantheism in the selected poems of Sarojini Naidu through poetic techniques.

Glossary

Krishna: One of the Hindu Gods

Radhika: Krishna’s lady-love

Kanhaya: Other name for deity Krishna

Yasodha: Krishna’s mother

Gulmohurs: Showy scarlet flowers (A tree in the pea family)

Koels: An Asian cuckoo

Tamarind: Sticky acidic pulp used in Asian cooking

Molsari: A kind of tree from which furniture are made

Neem: A medicinal tree

Lilly: A flower

Krishna Leela: Theology of love which will lead to the salvation

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