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Life History of Sarojini Naidu, The Nightingale of India

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Sarojini Naidu, also known as Sarojini Chattopadhyaya, was a famous Indian poet and a major freedom fighter who became the first Indian woman to be appointed the president of the Indian National Congress and the Governor of any state in India. Most of all, she was a noted child prodigy and a master of children's literature. Naidu was given a sobriquet Bharat Kokila (The Nightingale of India) on account of her beautiful poems and songs.

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Some of her best books that established her as a potent writer include **The Golden Threshold, The Gift of India, and The Broken Wing**. An active participant of the Indian Independence movement, Naidu joined the national movement taking Gandhi's call and joined him in the popular Salt March to Dandi. With the Indian Independence in 1947, Sarojini Naidu was made the Governor of the Uttar Pradesh in the wake of her contribution to the movement.

Childhood & Family

Sarojini Naidu was born on 13 February 1879 in Hyderabad, India to the scientist, philosopher and a political educator Aghornath Chattopadhyaya and Barada Sundari Devi. She was the eldest daughter of her parents. A political activist, her father was a co-founder of the Nizam College and the first member of the India National Congress in Hyderabad. Chattopadhyaya was removed from his position as a penalty for his active participation in Indian Independence movement.

Virendranath Chattopadhyaya, Sarojini's brother, was a political activist who played a key role in establishing the Berlin Committee and was influenced by Communism. He was allegedly killed by the Russian troops in 1937. Sarojini's second brother Harindranath Chattopadhyaya was a noted poet and playwright.

Education, Marriage & Children

A brilliant student, Sarojini won appreciation and fame by being selected in Madras University at just 12. In 1895, she went on to study at King's College in London and later at Girton College, Cambridge University. She developed a liking and passion for reading and writing poems whilst still in college where she became proficient in many languages including Urdu, English, Persian, Telugu and Bengali.

Whilst still in college, Sarojini met Dr. Muthyala Govindarajulu Naidu and both grew closer by the end of her college. Upon finishing her studied at age 19, she married him in 1898 during a period when inter-caste were marriages were rare and considered a crime in the Indian society. Nonetheless, the successful marriage of the couple prevented people from intervening into their personal life and taking it onto another stage.

The couple had four children; Jayasurya, Padmaja, Randheer and Leelamani. Her daughter Padmaja followed in to her footprints and became the Governor of West Bengal. In 1961, she published a collection of poems entitled *The Feather of The Dawn*.

Indian Independence Movement

Sarojini Naidu had many credits to her, including a notable contribution to the Indian Independence Movement. She joined the movement at the rear of Bengal partition in 1905 and

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since then, she stuck to her commitment to the cause. While working for the Indian National Congress, she was introduced to many eminent personalities such as Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Jawaharlal Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi with whom she shared a special bond and a very good rapport.

During 1915-1918, she traveled across the India lecturing on social welfare, women empowerment, emancipation and nationalism. Inspired by Jawaharlal Nehru, she embarked on providing help and support for the indigo workers in Champaran who were being subjected to violence and oppression. In 1925, Naidu was appointed the President of the National Congress thus making her the first Indian women to hold the post.

With the introduction of the Rowlett Act in 1919, Sarojini joined the Non-Cooperation Movement organized and led by Mahatma Gandhi. In the same year, she was appointed the Home Rule League's ambassador to England. In 1924, she became a delegate to the East African Indian Congress.

Sarojini Naidu as poet

The Nightingale of India, Sarojini Naidu was a prolific writer and poet. The first volume of her poetries *The Golden Threshold* was published in 1905, after which two more collections *The Bird of Time* and *The Broken Wing* arrived in 1912 and 1917 respectively. Meanwhile in 1916, she authored and published a biography of Muhammad Ali Jinnah entitled as *The Ambassador of Hindu-Muslim Unity*. Other acclaimed poems that came following are *The Wizard Mask* and *A Treasury of Poems*. Other selected works written by her include *The Magic Tree* and *The Gift of India*. She was given the name *Bharat Kokila* on account of the beautiful and rhythmic words of her poems that could be sung as well.

Later Life & Death

In her last years, Sarojini actively participated in the freedom movement and was a part of the Round Table summit held in 1931. In 1942, she was arrested along with Mahatma Gandhi for her involvement in the Quit India movement and was jailed for almost 2 years. After her release from the jail, she presided over the Steering Committee at the Asian Relations Conference. With the independence of India in 1947, Sarojini Naidu was made the Governor of the Uttar Pradesh in the wake of her contribution to the movement. She was the first woman to become the governor of a state. She died of a heart attack while working in her office on 2 March 1949.

Timeline

1879- Sarojini Naidu was born on 13 February.

1895- She went on to study at King's College in London.

1898- Sarojini married Dr. Muthyala Govindarajulu.

1905- The first volume of her poetries *The Golden Threshold* was published.

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1916- She published a biography of Muhammad Ali Jinnah entitled as The Ambassador of Hindu-Muslim Unity.

1919- Rowlett Act was introduced.

1924- She became a delegate to the East African Indian Congress.

1925- Naidu was appointed the President of the National Congress.

1942- She was arrested along with Mahatma Gandhi for her involvement in the Quit India movement.

1947- Sarojini Naidu was made the Governor of the Uttar Pradesh.

1949- She died of a heart attack on 2 March.

1961- Her daughter Padma published a collection of poems entitled The Feather of The Dawn.

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