

PREFACE

The change in literary fashions and critical attitudes leads to the debunking of the great writers of the preceding age. It is therefore not surprising that the new aesthetics which evolved in the wake of Hulme-Pound-Eliot school of modern poetry, depedestalized many literary demi-gods who were looked upon with awe and inviolable reverence by the earlier generation. The great Indian English poets like Toru Dutt, Manmohan Ghosh, Aurobindo Ghoshe, Harindranath Chattopadhyaya were all condemned as "colonialites" and criticized for "their outsize reputations". Sarojini Naidu, "the gifted poetess," the Nightingale of India of yester years, on whom Arthur Symons and Edmund Gosse showered unreserved admiration and about whom that "profound judge of life and literature", Sri Aurobindo, said that she had "qualities which make her best work exquisite, unique and unchallenged in its own kind", had also to face this literary heresy. She was relegated to mediocrity because her poetry abounded in subjectivity, exotic imagination and profound emotional rapture to the detriment of objectivity, wit, irony and arid intellectualism, the qualities which were considered the real hall mark of a great and the "whirligig of literary taste is about to come

full circle", the old poets are once again emerging in their real stature and being judged in proper perspective. Sarojini Naidu is once again being praised for her unique creative and lyrical qualities and for opening a window into the real life and spirit of India.

Sarojini Naidu's delight in life is reflected in the beautiful pictures she has drawn in her poems of the myriad -- dimensional pageants of Indian life, its scenes of nature, and its religious and cultural ethos. Born in a Bengali Brahmin family of the Muslim state of Hyderabad, she was nourished on the best in the cultural traditions of the Hindu and the Islamic religions and life. Her keen perception and minute observation of life around her awakened in her love for Indian life in its varied conditions and situations. Her natural oriental spirit made her brood over the problems of love, life and death. With such profound and rich experience of life springing from the very soil of India, she wove her memorable lyrics of joy and beauty. The pictures drawn by her thus cover the wide range of Indian life and its cultural ethos.

Though there have appeared many biographical and critical studies of Sarojini Naidu's life and poetry, no attempt has so far been made to highlight in details the rich material of subject matter treated by her through

the varied themes of her poetry. Most of the studies are of general nature and deal with her colourful life and interpret her lyrical qualities and artistic use of diction and verse form. The purpose of this study is to give an indepth analysis of the major themes in Sarojini Naidu's poetry and correlate them with the rich, evocative and functional imagery used by her to convey her vision of life adequately and effectively.