



# Significance of Environmental Studies in Higher Education through Literature: Special reference to Sarojini Naidu's Poem, The Bird Sanctuary

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## ABSTRACT

Today's children and students are tomorrow's citizens of the nation. And, it is said that 'a sound mind is in a sound body', but if we want to make and keep the body sound, we should keep the environment clean, neat, and healthy. Aftermath the dangerous pandemic of Corona, the whole of humanity has understood the importance of nature and especially the need and value of pure air and oxygen. In this age of so-called 'Hollowness' for both living being and nature, it has become a huge challenge to conserve nature and the environment. Maintaining nature clean and neat is a very big challenge. It has become basic responsibility to care for and conserve nature and the environment seriously. Many prominent writers, poets, and literary figures have written about nature and the environment and tried to aware people through their literary works. Sarojini Naidu, The Nightingale of India, is one among them. In her poem, 'The Bird Sanctuary', she explores the unrefined magnificence of nature with eye-catching and ear-soothing imagery. Its soft and melodious tune makes this poem interesting for the audience. The poem attracts readers' attention toward nature and the environment. This beautiful poem attracts readers' minds and motivates us to conserve nature and the environment.

**Keywords:** Nature, Melodious, Challenge, Humanity.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Serene will be our days and bright,  
And happy will our nature be,  
When love is an unerring light,  
And joy its own security.

- *Ode to duty*, William Wordsworth

W. B. Yeats in his poem '*The Second Coming*' foresee the emergence of a more violent and savage culture giving rise to mere anarchy disintegrating human personality. This feeling of despair is most accurately reflected in the following poetic lines;

Things fall apart, the center cannot hold;  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,

The above lines are very much suggestive to show the modern anarchy of the world. In the name of modernization and human progress, we are destroying nature. It will be very much harmful and dangerous for our coming generation if we do not care seriously about it. The above lines are the alert tone for the whole of humanity.

Sarojini Naidu is the child prodigy whose poems based on the simple joys and sorrows of life, earned her the moniker 'The Nightingale of India'. She was a feminist and political activist who played an important role in India's freedom movement. She was the first woman to become the President of the National Congress Movement and be appointed worked as the Governor of an Indian State. Sarojini Naidu's nature poem is deserving of all respect. Nature serves as a backdrop for her depictions of human emotion. But, in Sarojini Naidu's poetry, the joy of the heart that away comes at the site of the world's beauty is brilliantly conveyed in words that thrill with passion for happiness. According to Rajlakshmi her poetry. "unfolds the beauties, the transformation and significance of our natural world., it reveals the world of colour, perfume and melody, and a sense of Being permeating every pore and nook and corner of our sensate landscape" (Tilak, 47).

Sarojini Naidu's interpretation of nature is colored by her romanticism. Her depiction of nature is completely different from the day depiction of Rabindranath Tagore. In her nature poetry, the diverse components of nature are so elegantly linked. Sarojini's poetry demonstrates how she associates her sentiment of delight with natural scenes and her grief with her early life. It is our duty to maintain it as it is. While telling the value and recent condition of the environment around us, the great American poet Walt Whitman writes in his poem, *Song of Myself* in the following lines:

**I think I could turn and live with the animals, they're so  
Placid and self-contained. I stand and look at them long and long.  
They do not sweat and whine about their condition,  
They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins,  
They do not make me sick discussing their duty to their God. (Whitman, 1-5)**

Naidu's poem 'The Bird Sanctuary' is a very beautiful poem about nature. This poem attracts us to the sensuous beauty of nature. Krishnakant Sing remarks about Sarojini Naidu as: "She believes that there is a close relationship between man and nature. Although she doesn't present Nature in the manner of English romantics, Naidu shows her individuality in the presentation of nature." Singh, 212). This beautiful poem attracts our minds and motivates us to conserve nature and the environment. This poem is in the influential collection, *The Golden Treasury of Indo-Englian Poetry* (1970). This is a very beautiful poem that is about the serenity, peace, musicality, and vibrancy of nature filled with lyrical songs of the winged fairies and birds. Its soft and melodious tune makes this poem interesting for the audience. There is no artificiality but it originates from the core of the poet's spirit which sings like an unnoticed nightingale in the dense woods and mesmerizes hearts with its pellucid cadence. Indeed, this poem explores the unrefined magnificence of nature with eye-catching and ear-soothing imagery. This is a metaphorical poem in which the poet praises the diversity created by the 'master of bird' as she writes:

**The bulbul and the oriole, the honeybird and Shama  
Flit among high bough that drip with nectar and with dew  
Upon the grass the wandering gull parades its sea-washed silver,  
The hoopoe and the kingfisher their bronze and sapphire blue.**

The above-mentioned lines show how beautifully the poet Naidu depicted the sanctuary of birds. According to the poet, birds like bulbul, oriole, honeybird, and Shama move swiftly among high branches from which nectar

and dew fall down. Wandering seagull parades over the grass with its sea-washed skin. The hoopoe and the kingfisher also show their bronze and sapphire blue colors. Here it is notable that this above sanctuary is possible only when we can conserve nature. But, unfortunately in the modern period, the world is going in the opposite direction. We are cutting trees and destroying forests. With full sense, humans interfere in their habitats. While writing about the seriousness of the environment, a great modern writer, Salman Rushdie writes: "The environmental crisis today haunts mankind like a nightmare. It is no more a regional problem; it has already acquired global proportions. The planet's support systems land, water and air- seems to have been damaged beyond the possibility of redemption." ( Kundu, 10).

This critical condition is very seriously depicted by the great nature poet William Wordsworth in his poem, 'The World is Too Much with Us'. Here the poet criticizes man's materialistic lust and worldly attachment. In his opinion, there is no solace without an intimate relationship with nature. Man has exploited negatively nature for his own advantage and he is against excessive interferences of man in nature or natural climate. He, after looking at the fast industrialization, declares that man is raping the soil. It simply shows us how it is very significant as has been right from the past till day to see that trees, jungles, and landscapes, are to be protected. Otherwise, man will have to pay price for nature's damage. And that time has come very near to us as in the following lines:

**The world is too much with us; late and soon,  
Getting and spending we lay waste our powers;  
Little we see in Nature that is ours;**

**We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon! (Lines, 1-4).**

In the last stanza, the poet says to God that in her gracious garden, there is joy and freedom, a home for comfort, and singing for every feathered thing. As in the following lines:

**In your gracious garden there is joy and fostering freedom,  
Nesting place and singing space for every featuring thing,  
O master of the Birds, grant sanctuary and shelter  
Also to a homing bird that bears a broken wing. ( Lines, 13-16)**

In the end, the poet prays to God, 'a master of birds' to grant sanctuary and shelter to even a bird with a broken wing. In other words, the poet prays to God not to leave even a single creature on earth homeless. Basically, the whole poem is one long extended metaphor. Sanctuary is a place that provides shelter for birds. The bird sanctuary picturized here, gives joy, fostering freedom, a nesting place and singing space to everything that has feathers. It is a gracious garden for birds in search of a comfortable and happy home. The rich variety of birds with their diversity of colour is symbolic of mankind, marked by some great number of religions, nationalities, castes, creeds, and so on. Finally, the poet wishes that the human spirit is in equal need of a sanctuary amidst a violent, uncertain, and harsh world. In the same manner, Robert Frost who is a nature poet of America and national poet of America left no stone unturned in describing the natural beauty of mountains, trees, rivers, and landscapes. His poems like 'Birches' and 'Stopping by Wood on a snowy Evening' is almost intoxicating. As in the following lines:

**Woods are lovely dark and deep,  
But I have promises to keep  
And miles to go before I sleep  
And miles to go before I sleep, (Line-13-16)**

He emphasized too powerfully in his poetry the role of nature in the healthy and happy survival of human beings. In the same manner, the very great poet Walt Whitman is one with nature. His collection is under the title 'Leaves of Grass'. He describes his natural intimacy with nature. Green grass he addresses as a symbol of the beautiful hair of people underground or it is a perfumed kerchief as a gift to God to man. And almost in major part of his poetry very powerfully ties nature with a man or describes. As D. K. Asthana and Meera Asthana say: "Everyone in this world should get at least the basic amenities of everyday life- food' clothing, drinking water, shelter, etc. in such a way that there could be no damage to other life- forms and the environment. The man should learn to live in harmony with nature. The resources of this world, if properly managed, distributed, and utilized economically, are sufficient for all living beings as the biosphere stands today. (Asthana, pg.41).

## II. CONCLUSION

In this research article the researcher has tried to show the significance of environmental studies in higher education with special reference to Sarojini Naidu's poem 'The Bird Sanctuary'. In all these above-referred poems, the poets only declare that human existence can be safe and happy as a friend of nature and not an agency of destroying nature. We can live happy, peaceful, and healthy life only when we can care for nature and the environment. And if you destroy nature, mankind will demand to be destroyed in the very process. It is an alert tone for the whole of humanity. Therefore, it is high time for a sensitive mind including government machinery to pay serious attempt to this aspect.

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