

# "Women in Literature"

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## SAROJINI NAIDU AND KAMALA DAS AS POETS OF LOVE-AN OVERVIEW

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### Abstract

While making any evaluation of Indian women poets' writings one should notice remarkable changes and widen in their thematic interests. Sarojini Naidu and Kamala Das are two important poets who expressed themselves freely in the English language. They represented the aspirations of Indian women in English and expressed in their poetry. Love is the predominant theme in the poetry of these two poets. Sarojini Naidu was called Nightingale of India for her poetry melody. Kamala Das was also hailed as love queen of Malabar. A touch of feminism was seen in both these poets. This paper throws some light on the common theme of love in these two great Indian women poets.

**Keywords:** Indian imagery, feminism, Oriental splendour, love-longing, skin communicated thing

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The phenomenon of Indians writing poetry in English is as old as one hundred and seventy-five years. The history of this poem begins with Henry Derozio (1807–1831), who was half Indian and half Portuguese. He not only wrote several poems himself but also exhorted his students to write. He is considered a pioneer of Indian English verse. But Indian poetry in English acquired a new identity only in the second quarter of the 19th century with the emergence of poets such as KashiPrasad Ghose 1809-1873, Michael Madhusudan Dutt etc. Most of the poetry written during this period was influenced mainly by the British Romantics. This influence lasted till the last quarter of the 19th century. By the beginning of this century, however, Victorianism made its way into the Indian poetry in English. Historical events, stories, and legends of heroism became the staple of this poetry. Familial works were also glorified, a feature typical of Victorian Poetry. The significant poets before independence are Henry Derozio, Michael Madhusudan Dutt, Toru Dutt, Manmohan Ghose, Sri Aurobindo, Rabindranath Tagore, and Sarojini Naidu.

In Pre- Independence India Sarojini Naidu and a host of other poets produced the best kind of poetry. Toru Dutt observes sufferings of women but does not extricate the feelings of women. Sarojini Naidu, the woman, the mother, the Patriot looks into the buried and broken heart of a woman. Her two collected poems, namely, The Golden Threshold, and The Broken Wing consists of the sensitive beauty of holiness. With these works, she became the nightingale of India. It was Sarojini Naidu who carries forward the task left incomplete by the early death of Toru Dutt. She achieves single success in the handling of Indian Imagery and the expression of Indian poetry.

Sarojini Naidu and Kamala Das are eminently representatives of their respective generations. Born and brought up in a Bengali Bhadrolok 19 the Century family, Naidu naturally subscribes to the Victorian idea of womanhood, which in her case was grafted on the Indian tradition which she shared. In both these traditions woman was mostly seen as a weak, delicate, clinging creature, wholly dependent on Man. And this is how Naidu seems to view a woman, though in her own personal life she did break the mold. On the authority of French Feminism Helen Cixous and Luce Irigaray, it may be suggested that words like 'fountain', 'floodgates' and 'drowning' refer to female participation in love-making. If this is so Naidu emerges as a pioneer in feminist writing.

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The theme of love predominates in Sarojini Naidu's poetry. Every kind of love-experience and every possible mood of love finds its place in her poetry. The longing of lovers for each other is expressed with truly oriental splendor in, A Rajput Love Song:

Haste, O wild -deer hours, to the meadows of the sunset!

Fly. Wild stallion day, to the pastures of the west!

Come, O tranquil night, with your soft, consenting darkness,

And bear me to the fragrance of my Beloved's breast!

The world of Rajput Chivalry and royal splendor has been successfully evoked in this lyric. There is a group of love poems at the end of her last volume, and the twenty-four poems that form the group are significantly given the collective title, The Temple. The deep mystic fervor that inspires them is stressed with the subtitle, "A Pilgrimage of Love". And the pilgrimage towards the temple is carefully worked out in three stages of eight poems each. The pilgrimage begins with The Gate of Delight and the poems of this stage are calculated to demonstrate that in Love's bondage is true freedom, and true bliss in the sacrifices it demands. But issuing through The Gate of Delight, the pilgrim of love must tread The Path of Tears-tears of humiliation. True love, love-suffering and self-denying must overcome pride. Accordingly, in the eight poems that make up The Path of Tears, the faithful lover bewails the others' pride and disdain and cruelty. In the third group entitled The Sanctuary, it is told of the sanctuary at which the lover must be prepared to worship with the utmost devotion, even to the point of a joyous surrender of life itself.

In spite of all trials and tragedies, love remains a prime value for Naidu. In closing pages of The Sceptered Flute, she asks " why should my true love falter or fear or rebel?" and declares, " so shall my yearning, Love, at last,/ Grow sanctified/ thro sorrow find deliverance/ From mortal pride/ So shall my soul redeemed re-born/ Attain thy side" (ISF,231)

Another noted Indian poet Kamala Das, who has published only three slender volumes of poetry, Summer in Calcutta, The Descendants, and The Old Playhouse and Other Poems, has established "her reputation as the femme fatale" of Indian English poetry.

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Her poetry deals with unfulfilled love and celebration of Sex. The uninhibited and frank description of sex characterizes her poetry. Search for love is the principal preoccupation of Kamala Das poetry. To her love is not only the physical union of bodies but also minds and bodies. Emotional and spiritual fulfillment required in love or it becomes a skin communicated thing. Thus Das wants to experience eternal bliss in a marital relationship.

While assessing both as poets of love, M.K.Naik tries to focus on modern love which "has more perplexities and paradoxes that could be dreamt of in 19th-century philosophy." In his concluding part, Naik says that Naidu's love poetry represents, by and large, the songs of the innocence of Love ... Kamala Das, on the other hand, is the poet of the 'songs of experience'. She has her moments of innocence and even naivety, but she is essentially a poet who has looked upon the Gorgon face of Love, and has lived to tell the tale: "Ah, why does love come to me like pain/ Again and again and again?" ("The Testing of the Sirens"). T.S Eliot has pointed out in Contemporary Criticism that Comparison and analysis are the chief tools of a critic. Accordingly, both Sarojini Naidu and Kamala Das poetry has been compared and analyzed in this paper.

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