

## Gandhian Philosophy of Communal Harmony Voiced by Sarojini Naidu

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### ABSTRACT

*The present paper is largely based on the study of 'Speeches and Writings of Sarojini Naidu' published by G.A. Natesan & Co. In the study of this comprehensive source, Speeches and Writings of Sarojini Naidu, it has been pointed out that Sarojini Naidu realised that there were numerous hurdles in the progress of the nation. She thought that if freedom is to be achieved from British, firstly we shall have to improve ourselves at every scale of society to confront them. Therefore, she took up every vital issue of that time such as: Emancipation of Women, Communal Harmony, Self-Government for India, Reform and Rowlatt Bill, Satyagraha, Patriotism, Khilafat issue, Punjab Tragedy, Bardoli Programme, Use of Spinning Wheel and Khadi, National Education, Congress Programme: Question of Entry into Councils, Indenture Labourers and position of Indian settlers in South Africa, etc., and spoke fearlessly to remove the problems Indians faced.*

*In the present study an attempt will be made to focus on Sarojini Naidu's views and thoughts on 'Communal Harmony', which Sarojini Naidu considered essential to the progress and liberty of India. A careful study of the efforts to ensure communal harmony during the national movement unfolds the active role played by Sarojini Naidu as staunch supporter of Gandhi, a true patriot and spokeswoman of communal harmony who tried through her speeches to unite the people coming from all castes, creeds and communities against the colonial rule.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Sarojini, Communal Harmony, Caste, Creed, Community, Hindu- Muslim Unity, Ideology, Non-Violence, Self Government, British Government, Freedom, Speech, Brotherhood, Untouchability, Unity, Democracy etc.*

Sarojini Naidu was known to the world as a renowned freedom fighter, great orator, political leader and a poet. She was the first Indian woman to become the president of Indian national Congress (26 December 1925), first woman to become the Governor of Uttar Pradesh of Independent India (15 August 1947), first woman to preside over the Asian Relation Conference (22 March 1947).

Sarojini Naidu was not only a good friend of Mahatma Gandhi but also a staunch supporter of him. She was much impressed by the Gandhian ideology of non-violence, truth, peace and communal harmony. On the advise of Gokhale and Gandhi, she joined Indian National Movement and worked for the freedom of India. . If one side Mahatma Gandhi as a 'Man of India', worked through the weapon of non-violence to get freedom from British, on other side it was Sarojini Naidu who as a 'Woman of India' spread the message of Gandhian philosophy of non-violence, truth and communal harmony in all over India and motivated Indians to be a part of Indian freedom struggle

against British rule through her speeches. She was the woman who as a follower of Mahatma Gandhi participated in every movement of self-Government for India and went door to door, attended meetings where she strengthened the thought of Gandhi 'of Communal Harmony' among the Indians.

The present paper is largely based on the study of '*Speeches and Writings of Sarojini Naidu*'. The volume titled *Speeches and Writings of Sarojini Naidu* published by G. A. Natesan<sup>1</sup> & Co., in 1925, is a comprehensive source containing an exhaustive collection of speeches and writings of Sarojini Naidu from 1903-1924. This source unleashes vast knowledge about Sarojini Naidu's work for the betterment of Indians under the pressure of British rule from 1903 -1924 in India and across the world. It consists a collection of sixty six speeches and writings of Sarojini Naidu in four hundred forty four pages.

Sarojini Naidu travelled extensively all over India and worked to accomplish the dream of Gandhi- "Communal Harmony" whenever opportunity came to her.

Following are these themes of that time to unite the Indians on which she reflected:

- **True Brotherhood**
- **Speech at Muslim League: Tried to unite Hindus and Muslims for Self-Government**
- **Sarojini Naidu on Hindu-Muslim Unity**
- **Sarojini Naidu's Understanding on the Ideals of Islam**
- **Co-operation among Communities**
- **Speech at the Lucknow Congress to Unite Hindus and Muslims**
- **Raising People's Spirit to unite Hindus and Muslims on the Khilafat Question**
- **Sarojini Naidu on Brahmin and Non-Brahmin Standoff and Removal of Untouchability**

### **True Brotherhood**

The volume of *Speeches and Writings of Sarojini Naidu* report that in 1903 Sarojini Naidu spoke on "True Brotherhood" at a public meeting held under the auspices of the Historical Society at Pachayappa's College, Madras. In this speech she made a clarion call to unite the people of all castes, creeds and communities. She said: "You know that you are provincial and you are more limited than that - because your horizon is bounded almost by your city, your own community, your own sub-caste, your own college, your own homes, your own relations, your own self. I know I am speaking rightly, because I also in my earlier youth was afflicted with the same sort of short-sightedness of the love. Having travelled, having conceived, having hoped, having enlarged my love, having widened my sympathies, having come into contact with different races, different communities, different religions, different civilizations, friends, my vision is clear. I have no prejudice of race, creed, caste or colour. Though, as is supposed, every Brahman is an aristocrat by instinct, I am a real democrat, because to me there is no difference between a king on his throne and a beggar in the street."<sup>ii</sup>

Sarojini Naidu was a Brahman by caste and during that time it was very admirable that being a Brahman woman she had not the feeling of communal animosity towards non-Brahmanas. After having joined the National Movement she realised that the relations among all communities and the feeling of brotherhood were at the lowest ebb, getting more and more strained. At this meeting her

mission was to unite the people of all communities and with this end in mind she emphasised, “it is not your pride that you are a Madrasi, that it is not your pride that you are a Brahman, that it is not your pride you belong to the South of India, that it is not your pride you are a Hindu, but that it is your pride that you are an Indian.....that is a home of Indians and not of Hindus or Brahmans.....It does not matter where are you and who are you. Even a sweeper of streets can be a patriot”.<sup>iii</sup> In this speech she pleaded with the Indians to strive for unity among all communities and to abandon all the ill feelings of provincial and communal hatred. She stressed the necessity of overcoming caste and religious prejudices and said that each of you should long for unity and to dedicate his life to the betterment of the country because unity in every sense was essential to nationalism.<sup>iv</sup>

She cherished great ideals and encouraging her countrymen and said that this was “not limited even to the Indians, but let it be your pride that you are a citizen of the world, that I should love my country. I am ready to lay my life for the welfare of all India.”<sup>v</sup> These words of Sarojini Naidu touched the heart of everyone. She was the woman who was full of hope to dedicate her life not only for the betterment of the citizens of India but also for the citizens of the whole world. She said to the Indians that your ideals of patriotism should extend to the welfare of the world and not confined to the prosperity of India.<sup>vi</sup> Sarojini Naidu was the woman who wanted all around development of the world as well as that of India.

### **Speech at the Muslim League Conference: Hindu-Muslim Unity for Self-Government**

The volume under study *Speeches and Writings of Sarojini Naidu* provides her insights into the national agenda of Hindu-Muslim unity as reflected in her speech at Lucknow in 1916. Besides speaking on the resolution of “Arms Act” in the same year she delivered a speech in support of the resolution on “Self-Government” at the conference of the All-India Muslim League Conference at Lucknow, she supported the resolution of Self-Government for India and emphasised the need to unite Hindus and Muslims to work for Self-Government. She said: “I do not know what claim I have to stand before you today except that I have been for many years a faithful comrade of the young generation of the Muslims and champion of the women of the Muslim community and fought with their men-folk for the privilege that Islam gave long ago but which you denied to your women-folk. I stand before you today to support this great cause of Self-Government for India”.<sup>vii</sup>

The concept of Hindu-Muslim unity infused great strength in Sarojini Naidu to get Self-Government for India and it was the perfect platform for her to develop a feeling of unity between Hindus and Muslims. In order to complete this goal she reminded her audience to recall the session of Muslim League<sup>viii</sup> which was held four years ago in 1912: “I remember the occasion nearly four year ago, that the historic occasion on which the young generation of Islam passed a new constitution and brought within the range of practical politics to be realized by effective measures and co-operation with the Hindu Community this great dream-it seemed a far off dream-Self-Government or the Government of the people by the people, the investment of power in the hands of people.”<sup>ix</sup> Here Sarojini Naidu wanted to make the people of India aware with the work of Muslim League done four year ago at the historic session of Muslim League (1912) in order to get Self-Government by joining hands with Hindu community. At this session a new constitution was adopted by the younger generation of Muslims to work for the great dream of Self-Government of India by bonding with the Hindu community.

On this occasion, she praised Mohammad Ali Jinnah, Pandit Bishan Narayan Dhar<sup>x</sup> and Wazir Hasan.<sup>xi</sup> She also appealed the Indians to recognize this indomitable determination to go up with the demand for Self-Government with one voice. She told Muslims that she was not playing politics. She again said that “we are one, undivided and indivisible whole. I spoke to you as a lover of my country and I charge you, Muslims of India, to remember the high responsibility of your desires. No one can give to you what you do not have capacity to take.” Here she encouraged the Muslims to work for Self-Government for India with one voice and by standing united. Here we find that Sarojini Naidu, after participating in this Muslim League Conference held at Lucknow in 1916, emerged as a true representative of all communities of India who was not stuck to any single group.<sup>xii</sup>

### **Sarojini Naidu on Hindu-Muslim Unity**

In a public meeting held at Patna on 13 October 1917, Sarojini Naidu delivered a speech on “Hindu-Muslim Unity” under the auspices of the Patna City Students’ Association. This meeting was attended by a large gathering of both Hindus and Muslims. This meeting was presided by honourable Rai Bahadur Krishna Sahay.<sup>xiii</sup> At this meeting Sarojini laid great emphasis on the need of the hour to unite Hindus and Muslims by highlighting relations of the two religious communities in the province of Bihar. She said “I wish to invoke in your hearts the sense of anxiety, a sense of responsibility that nothing should come to disturb the future harmony of Bihar, the fair progress of Bihari people, who have always stood for peace and good-will in the past and whose united hearts should not cut asunder. It used to be the boast of Bihar that there was no Hindu-Muslim problem in this province and I have heard over and over again of tributes paid by the leaders of other provinces, saying that when the national sky was overcast with doubt and despair, Bihar stood kindling the torch of love and union. There was no Hindu-Muslim problem, but only the shining prescience of a hopeful unity that was real and not merely born of any political exigencies.”<sup>xiv</sup>

With introspection she said that after much discord and differences, both Hindus and Muslims had a relation of true brotherhood in Bihar without any political pressures. She said that the split existed between Hindus and Muslims in India is only because we are ignorant that we are divided. She pleaded that we shall have to start the sacred mission of enlightenment to bring about not the lesson of quarrel but the lesson of peace and unity.<sup>xv</sup>

At this meeting, Sarojini Naidu wanted to make the people of India realise that both Hindus and Muslims have a different way of worship and different way of living, but their aim of life is the same, their aim of worship, love and faith are the same. There is only one God. In one language He is called ‘Parmeshwar’ by Hindus, and in another language He is called ‘Allah’ by Muslims but their God is One. It is the lack of knowledge to understand this truth of life among Indians. She said both Hindus and Muslims had great contribution in the evolution of India. Rama and Savitri taught us the lesson of sacrifice, courage, wisdom and truth, while on the other hand Islam taught us the principles of brotherhood and democracy.<sup>xvi</sup>

In this meeting Sarojini Naidu’s demonstrated by her words that she was on a mission that aimed to unite Hindus and Muslims as brothers to each other and to make concerted effort to work for the nation’s progress. She said that all citizens are neighbours of one another. They share their tears, grief and happiness. Their dream is the same. Both Hindus and Muslims are the tillers of the soil. There is no difference between their duties to the nation.<sup>xvii</sup>

She asked that does he, whether he be a Hindu or a Muslim, not suffer from drought, from the failure of harvest, from pestilence, from locusts? The schoolmaster, whether he be a Hindu or a Muslim, has he not the same responsibility of creating a bond between brother and brother whether he be a Hindu or a Muslim? Then, when floods come and famines come, and plagues come, do not all of us suffer equally? Why make difference between men? Does not every man feel that he must cooperate with each other, what matters if he be a Hindu or a Muslim?<sup>xviii</sup>

In this speech she brings home the point that all human beings suffer equally on account of the calamities caused by famines and flood; they face the same problem in their daily life. They have the same mission for the progress of the country. They share the same for building the nation. Then, why they should stay in separation from each other. She stressed that both Hindus and Muslims should have to cooperate with each other. Here Sarojini Naidu's main mission was to unite Hindus and Muslims for the progress and freedom of India from the colonial yoke. She thought that without the cooperation of both Hindus and Muslims, freedom of India is not an easy task. Thus, we find that in this speech she touched every aspect of life to unite Hindus and Muslims. After hearing her speech both Hindus and Muslims became very conscious and started working together for the cause of their motherland as witnessed during Non-cooperation Movement and Civil Disobedience Movements, etc.

### **Sarojini Naidu's Understanding of the Ideals of Islam**

Sarojini Naidu showed respect to all the religions, and according to her every religion had a great worth to learn for the betterment of human life. The volume under study *Speeches and Writings of Sarojini Naidu* includes an important speech she delivered under the auspices of the Young Men's Muslim Association, at Lawley Hall in Madras on 19 December 1917. Maulana Yakub Hasan Sait<sup>xix</sup> presided this meeting. The huge crowd of Madras came to attend this meeting. In her speech Sarojini Naidu laid emphasis on the ideals of Islam and said that Islam taught lesson of brotherhood and unity. In this speech Sarojini tried to make Muslims aware the ethics of Islam to re-generate the feeling of unity. She said that "Brotherhood is the fundamental doctrine that Islam taught-Brotherhood of civic life, of intellectual life, of spiritual life in the sense of leaving other religions and creeds free to offer their worship.....This is what we call civilization, this is what we call the real understanding of human characteristics, the real understanding of those sources that bind human hearts to one another."<sup>xx</sup>

With the broad aim to unite the people of all creeds, she explained the meaning of *Hajj*. She asked: "What is the meaning of *Hajj*? Did it matter to God that thousands of Muslims went to one place or another since He is everywhere? No. The meaning is that streams of pilgrims from various lands, speaking various tongues, having various traditions and customs, should meet together in one common place and through one common association and memory to consolidate the brotherhood that Islam preached."<sup>xxi</sup> She said that it was the first religion that preached and practised democracy. When in the mosque the minaret is sounded and the worshippers are gathered together, the democracy of Islam is embodied five times a day when the peasant and the king kneel side by side and proclaim, "God alone is great."<sup>xxii</sup>

Here she said that Islam does not recognise when Muslims people gather in the mosque for the worship of Allah) This symbolises brotherhood and unity among Muslims. She highlights the virtue of Islam in that it taught brotherhood and unity, not discrimination or division on the basis of language, colour or nationality of the believers coming to pray as also in their social dealings.

She urged upon the Muslims to contribute with all their might to the progress of the nation. She asked: "How should the ideas of Islam enrich national life? What are the special qualities and gifts that Muslims have to contribute to United India?" She said that we want the courage of a soldier who kept the sword swift in defence of the country, to revenge any insult to the honour of manhood or womanhood he was supposed to defend. The young Muslim is to put his contribution not by the sword made of steel but the sword of the Islamic spirit which has been re-tempered in the older fires of the Vedic cult. The sword of Muslim love was to be dedicated to the Service of Vedic India. This is how Sarojini Naidu pleaded with the Muslims to make their contribution in the unity of the nation. She urged the Muslims to cooperate in the service of their motherland, to establish the new India of tomorrow.<sup>xxiii</sup>

Sarojini Naidu always encouraged Indians to create unity: "You who are young Muslims- I speak to you and to you alone tonight, you who have yet to live your lives and hold the destinies to be co-trustees with your Hindu brethren. The battleground of animosities has become the flower-garden of unity. They in the north who are so eager to unite with the Hindus for national unity are building it up day by day with great sacrifices. I want you, young Muslims in the South, to take your share in that great work here, and that unity will come when you too spend your energies in manifold directions".<sup>xxiv</sup> Here she stresses that Muslims in South India should emulate the example set by their counterpart in North India in going all out for Hindu-Muslim unity. In this speech Sarojini Naidu's mission was to make Muslims aware about their duty that Islam has taught them and to unite both Hindus and Muslims with faith in brotherhood.

### Cooperation among Communities

After attending the Special Provincial Conference, when Sarojini Naidu reached home, she received a letter from a community of Southern India. This letter contained an appeal to Sarojini Naidu (as a friend of every community, assuring co-operate with all communities and to make unity among the people of all communities of Southern India.) The volume under discussion, that is *Speeches and Writings of Sarojini Naidu*, includes another speech of Sarojini Naidu which aimed to bring unity among the people of all communities. On 22 December 1917 in moving a resolution on the Subject of "Co-operation among Communities" at the first Annual Conference of the Madras Presidency Association, Sarojini Naidu spoke to build unity among all the communities of South India. This conference was held to make an appeal to various communities of South India to sink their local differences in the supreme interest of India's struggle for freedom and sincerely cooperate with each other for the general uplift of the motherland.<sup>xxv</sup>

At this conference, Sarojini Naidu urged upon both Hindu and Muslim brethren of South India to learn the brotherly ways of give and take, to always work in harmony, in cooperation, without showing any sign of resentment. She asked the people to remove the cleavage and differences that still exist between two races and urged them to cooperate with each other. In this speech she also made an appeal to the people of South India to respect and value the religion and feelings of each other if they truly wished to see a united India. She encouraged Indians, not only the people of South but also the whole of India to demand freedom which was their birthright, with one voice of many million chords and a single Indian heart.<sup>xxvi</sup>

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### Speech at the Lucknow Congress to unite Hindus and Muslims

Sarojini did not leave any opportunity to plead for unity among people of all denominations. When she reached at Lucknow to support the resolution of self-government in 1916, she also availed the occasion to make exhorted her countrymen to close ranks. She articulated her thoughts: “Nothing can prevent us from achieving the desire of our heart for.....the final issues are in your hands. The ultimate decision is yours. Who will deny you the birthright of freedom? If the millions of India speak with one voice and say, ‘ours is the right of freedom; we claim it, we take it, you dare not deny to us the birthright of humanity, nobody dare deny it. Centuries have gone by, the old divisions are healed, old wounds have got covered. Instead of building our regeneration on hatred and division, we stand to-day building our national future on the secure and imperishable foundations of love and united service.”<sup>xxvii</sup>

At this meeting Sarojini encouraged Indians to come together and exert themselves in the service of their motherland. She also expressed her gratitude to the young Muslim generation for their love and respect which they had showered on her. Here she was full of praise for her guru Gopal Krishna Gokhale<sup>xxviii</sup> who was a great supporter of Hindu-Muslim unity. He said to her that we are united today due to the efforts of the Muslim League. Here Sarojini Naidu’s main concern was to make Hindus realise the Muslim contribution to making Hindu-Muslim unity possible.<sup>xxix</sup>

### Raising People’s Spirit to unite Hindus and Muslims on the Khilafat Question

Sarojini Naidu was the only Indian lady in freedom struggle of India who laid great emphasis on Hindu- Muslim unity and delivered several speeches to unite them against the British whether she was in India or travelling abroad. In 1920, Sarojini Naidu was in London where she delivered a speech on “Khilafat Question”<sup>xxx</sup> in a meeting held at Kingsway Hall, London, where she tried to unite Hindus and Muslims on the issue of “Khilafat Question” against British. This meeting was presided by George Lansbury on 22 April 1920.<sup>xxxi</sup>

At this meeting she said that it is not simply words, but it is the message of the spirit of India which she is going to reveal before the people. Of course, Sarojini Naidu was a Brahmin by birth but for her humanity was the first religion. In her speech Sarojini Naidu tried to dispel the misconception created by European historians about Brahmins that they are the hereditary enemies of the Muslims. She told that after much conflict, division and antagonisms Hindus and Muslims in India are united as son of one mother. They are united in an unbeatable harmony to work together for the betterment of nation and its progress. She said that “Brahmins are supposed by European historians to be the hereditary enemies of the Muslims. However, this conclusion of historians is wrong. We today, Hindus and Muslims, after centuries upon centuries of conflict, hatred, division, enmities, are at last reconciled in an invincible harmony and unity, welded together in the flame of a common national name, aspiring together to the stars in one flame of national patriotism and aspiration and hope. We are asking today that the religious sentiment of the Muslims be respected in the decision about the Turkish Empire, it is not the demand of a slave people for concessions or of people asking reward and recompense for mere commercial alliances. No, we ask but that thing which is our human birthright; justice, only justice”<sup>xxxii</sup>

These words of Sarojini Naidu were not only a strong rebuttal to the misconception about Brahmins perpetuated by the European historians; but they also pointed to a concerted effort to unite in all earnestness all Hindus and Muslims against the rule of the British Empire. At this platform she

presented herself as a leader of Muslim Community and put a demand in the protection of the honour of Khalifa. Here she demanded only for justice, for human birthrights, not for concessions, rewards and recompense for commercial alliances.<sup>xxxiii</sup> In this speech, Sarojini Naidu talked about the birthright of Muslims to protect the institution of Khalifat. She made an emotional appeal to both Hindus and Muslims to make concerted effort jointly to get rid of the colonial rule.

Sarojini Naidu never hesitated to express her opinion and told the British openly that “You talk of destroying the Turkish Empire. I do not care mere words, Turkish or European or Egyptian. I care for the honour of democratic Islam, I care for the honour of that great religion that has added dynamic power to human progress. I care for that all conquering faith that marched into barbarous Europe bearing the light of learning to human progress.”<sup>xxxiv</sup> Sarojini Naidu did not believe in caste, sect or communal divide. She wanted to fight for the restoration of justice. She wanted an all-around development of the Indian society. Humanity for her was the first religion and caste for her. At this gathering she beseeched the British to leave the matter of Turkish Empire in their hand. She said that let the Turkish Empire settle its own destiny. At this meeting she demanded the right of every individual to freedom and equality.<sup>xxxv</sup> This speech of Sarojini Naidu left a deep impression on the minds of Muslims as well as Hindus and helped in uniting both communities in future, especially in Non-cooperation movement.

### **Sarojini Naidu on Brahmin and Non-Brahmin Standoff and Removal of Untouchability**

This volume of *Speeches and Writings of Sarojini Naidu* also includes Sarojini Naidu’s speech and concern on Brahmin and Non-Brahmin problem that existed among Hindus which was causing hindrance in the unity of India. On 22 October 1922, after coming from Colombo, she addressed a crowded audience on the beach opposite the Presidency College, Madras. In this speech she tried to dispel the concept of untouchable and spoke on the long standing Brahmin and Non-Brahmin differences. Further, she stated the responsibilities of those people who are free and those who must demand their own freedom. She also criticised the ideology that made social discrimination between a Brahmin and non-Brahmin. Being a Brahmin woman she never hesitated to present her vision before the people of India and argued that cardinal ideal of Brahmin was that none is greater than community and the caste. For Brahmin nothing is greater than their community and their caste. The person did not matter at all for them as also their caste and community.<sup>xxxvi</sup>

Naidu asked: “Have we who pride ourselves on three thousand years and more of unbroken historic continuity of culture, fulfilled that trust respond in us as guardian and custodians of those whose opportunities have been less than ours? She said that Brahmin was the symbol of the supremest discipline and renunciation. Let us ask ourselves how far have we been true to our trust? Have we not chosen to exercise our intellect for the monopoly of power? Have we not made our culture a sword with which to destroy the intelligence and liberty of those who were disinherited from our caste.”<sup>xxxvii</sup> On this occasion, Sarojini Naidu reminded the Brahmins about their responsibility for which they were recognized over centuries as the symbol of supreme discipline. She also urged upon them to abandon the concept of discrimination against non-Brahmin. On the other hand, Sarojini Naidu also beseeched the non-Brahmin to give up the indignation and bitterness of their entire race against the Brahmins if they want unity.<sup>xxxviii</sup>

During the meetings at Kerala Conference in 1923, as a president of this conference she raised the question of untouchable and on the terrible problem of untouchable in India. In the defence of untouchables she said that “Of course they (untouchables) may have their own wells. Why not give



them their own temple? But I say my friends, are they not like you human made of the same clay and brought to the same destinies of tears, of laughter and do they not feel like us, eat like us, breath like us, are they not enslaved like us, and more enslaved because of us? Is it not for you today in the 20<sup>th</sup> century daring to ask for equal status with the free nations of the world that have broken down those barriers of oppression and division.....is it not for us to remove this curse from the brow of our Mother?''<sup>xxxix</sup> Sarojini Naidu thought that the concept of untouchable was a great obstacle in the unity of Indians. Therefore, at this conference she urged upon the Indians not to distance themselves from certain castes whom they wrongly consider untouchables.

At the said meeting held in Madras, Naidu said that as you call me an untouchable, so you have made your Bharata Mata an outcaste in the eyes of the world. Your central problem therefore is to solve that question of untouchable before you can presume to be fit to talk of freedom for India. She asked the people of India: "What after all is freedom? Will you go into the Councils of Delhi and Simla.....what will you do in the Council? Who will represent you?"<sup>xl</sup> At this meeting Sarojini wanted to make the Indians aware that they have no right to speak as representative of their people because they were not united and shackled with orthodox religious norm of untouchable. Here she insists that if the Indians wanted to represent their people in the Council, firstly they shall have to be united first as Indians to confront the British. In her opinion, Indians shall have to assure equality among themselves. They are required to give up all the barriers which came in the path of equality and unity like: untouchable, concept of caste and outcaste, concept of Brahmin and non-Brahmin, concept of religion, concept of division and province, etc. At this meeting she brought home the point that if Indians still define themselves in terms of sects and provinces and castes and division, there is no Swaraj for us, there is no Swaraj for young generation.<sup>xli</sup>

After analysing these speeches one can figure out her role as a spokesperson of 'communal harmony', a role which did not receive due attention in our researchers. Sarojini Naidu was a Brahman by caste and during that time it was very admirable that being a Brahman woman she had not entertain any ill-feeling like social discrimination on the basis of birth and communal animosities. When she joined Indian Freedom Struggle, she realised that relations among Indian communities and the feeling of brotherhood were getting more and more strained. There were many women like Ramabai Ranade (1863-1924), Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit (1900-1990), Aruna Asaf Ali (1909-1996) and Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay (1903-1988) who participated in the Indian Freedom Struggle. Among these leading women Sarojini Naidu stands out as an important political and social figure who understood the subject of 'communal harmony' as a strong asset for freedom and progress of India and delivered several speeches to unite Indians such as: True Brotherhood (communal harmony), Hindu-Muslim unity, ideal of Islam, cooperation among communities, Brahman and Non-Brahman Problems, removal of the discriminatory principle of untouchable, etc.

In her speeches under discussion she touched upon almost every important aspect of life, religion and society to create a feeling of unity among Indians. She even gave several examples of existence of nature, faith and humanity to open the eyes of narrow-minded people and made them aware about their first duty to strive for freedom and contribute to uplift India with united hands and one voice. These speeches of Sarojini Naidu were not merely speeches had great didactic value as they were delivered to guide the people of every caste, creed and community to unite as Indians against the colonial misrule. Her speeches motivated people coming from different socio-religious groups. Wherever she delivered her speeches, huge crowds of Indians gathered to listen to her. People attending her meetings applauded her determined and bold efforts to unite Indians against all odds.

Her speeches made great impact on the people belonging to all castes, creeds and communities and succeeded to unite them as Indians as was witnessed in particular during the Non-Cooperation Movement, Khilafat and Civil Disobedience movements.

**ENDNOTED:**

<sup>i</sup> G. A. Natesan was a writer, journalist, publisher and freedom fighter (1873-1948) who collected all the Speeches and Writings of Sarojini Naidu from 1903 to 1924 and arranged them in chronological order. G. A. Natesan established a publishing house named- G. A. Natesan & Co., in Madras. This volume of Speeches and Writings of Sarojini Naidu was also published from G. A. Natesan & Co., Madras by G. A. Natesan in 1925.

<sup>ii</sup> Naidu, Sarojini, *True Brotherhood*, 1903, Pachayappa's College, Madras, G. A., Natesan, & Co., Speeches and Writings of Sarojini Naidu 3<sup>rd</sup> eds. Madras, 1925, p. 5.

<sup>iii</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>iv</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 5-7.

<sup>v</sup> *Ibid.*, p.7.

<sup>vi</sup> *Ibid.*, p.7.

<sup>vii</sup> Naidu, Sarojini, *Speech at the Muslim League*, December 1916, Lucknow, G. A. Natesan & Co., *Speeches and Writings of Sarojini Naidu*, *op.cit.*, p. 63.

<sup>viii</sup> Session of Muslim League- Four Years Ago on 22 March 1912, the session of Muslim League was held at Lucknow where the young generation of Muslims passed a new constitution to seek a loyal cooperation of sister communities in all the matters of national welfare and its progress. Sarojini Naidu also addressed this session and told about it in the booklet- '*Gokhale The Man*' which was written by her in Praise of Gopal Krishna Gokhale.

<sup>ix</sup> Naidu, Sarojini, *Speech at the Muslim League*, December 1916, Lucknow, G. A. Natesan & Co., *Speeches and Writings of Sarojini Naidu*, *op.cit.*, p. 63.

<sup>x</sup> Pandit Bishan Narayan Dar (1864–1916) was an Indian politician who served as the President of the Indian National Congress for one term in 1911. He belonged to a prominent Kashmiri Pandit family from Lucknow. His uncle Pandit Shambhu Nath was the first Indian Judge of the Calcutta High Court. Dar studied at the Church Mission High School and Canning College in Lahore. Dar went to England where he practised as a lawyer. After his return to India, he joined the Indian National Congress in 1887. He was the President of the United Provincial Conference in 1911 and the President of the Indian National Congress in the same year. In 1914, he was elected as a member of the Imperial Legislative Council from the United Provinces.

<sup>xi</sup> Sir Syed Wazir Hasan (14 May 1874 – August 1947) was an Indian jurist and Secretary and later President of the All-India Muslim League. A practitioner in the Judicial Commissioner's Court, he was the first Indian Chief Justice of the Awadh Chief Court (1930–1934).<sup>[21]</sup> His Presidential address at the 24th Session, of Muslim League, held on 11–12 April 1936 in Bombay, was noted for its call

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of Hindu-Muslim unity, before the call for separate Muslim state was raised by Jinnah the very next year.

<sup>xii</sup> Naidu, Sarojini, *Speech at the Muslim League*, December 1916, Lucknow, G. A. Natesan & Co., *Speeches and Writings of Sarojini Naidu*, op.cit., pp. 63-64.

<sup>xiii</sup> Rai Bahadur Krishna Sahay was a social reformer. He was a pioneer in rousing public and political consciousness in Bihar. In 1908, he rendered great service to the Bihar Congress Committee and was elected its Vice-president. He was a member of the Executive Council of Bihar and Orissa.

<sup>xiv</sup> Naidu, Sarojini, *Hindu-Muslim Unity*, 13 October, 1917, Patna, G. A., Natesan & Co., *Speeches and Writings of Sarojini Naidu*, op.cit., pp. 80-82.

<sup>xv</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83.

<sup>xvi</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 82-86.

<sup>xvii</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 89-90.

<sup>xviii</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90.

<sup>xix</sup> Maulana Yakub Hasan Sait (1875–1940) was an Indian businessman, freedom-fighter and politician who served as the Minister for Public Works in the Madras presidency from 1937 to 1939. Sait was born in Nagpur and educated in Aligarh University. At a very young age, he moved to Bangalore for business purposes and settled in Madras in the year 1901. He served as a member of the Madras Corporation and as a member of the Madras Legislative Council. From 1937 to 1939, he served as the Minister of Public Works in the Rajaji government. Sait was a member of the Muslim League and later, the Indian National Congress. He was the only Muslim minister in Rajaji's 1937 cabinet.

<sup>xx</sup> Naidu, Sarojini, *Ideals of Islam*, 19 December 1917, Madras, G.A. Natesan & Co., *Speeches and Writings of Sarojini Naidu*, op.cit., pp. 102-103.

<sup>xxi</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.

<sup>xxii</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105.

<sup>xxiii</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 106-107.

<sup>xxiv</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 108.

<sup>xxv</sup> Naidu, Sarojini, *Co-operation Among Communities*, 22 December 1917, Madras, G. A., Natesan & Co., *Speeches and Writings of Sarojini Naidu*, op.cit., pp. 139-144.

<sup>xxvi</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 139-144.

<sup>xxvii</sup> Naidu, Sarojini, *Speech at the Lucknow Congress*, December 1916, Lucknow, G. A. Natesan and Co., *Speeches and Writings of Sarojini Naidu*, op.cit., pp. 149-151.

<sup>xxviii</sup> Gopal Krishna Gokhale, (born May 9, 1866, Ratnagiri district, India—died Feb. 19, 1915, Pune), social reformer who founded a sectarian organization to work for relief of the underprivileged of India. He led the moderate nationalists in the early years of the Indian independence movement. In 1902 Gokhale resigned as professor of history and political economy at

Fergusson College, Pune, to enter politics. As an influential and respected member of the Indian National Congress, the leading nationalist organization, Gokhale advocated moderate and constitutional methods of agitation and gradual reform. Three years later he was elected president of the Congress. In addition to his political activities, Gokhale's deep concern with social reform led him to found the Servants of India Society (1905), whose members took vows of poverty and lifelong service to the underprivileged. He opposed the ill-treatment of untouchables, or low-caste Hindus, and also took up the cause of impoverished Indians living in South Africa. In his autobiography, Gandhi calls Gokhale his mentor and guide. Gandhi also recognised Gokhale as an admirable leader and master politician, describing him as "*pure as crystal, gentle as a lamb, brave as a lion and chivalrous to a fault and the most perfect man in the political field*". Despite his deep respect for Gokhale, however, Gandhi would reject Gokhale's faith in western institutions as a means of achieving political reform and ultimately chose not to become a member of Gokhale's Servants of India Society.

<sup>xxix</sup> Naidu, Sarojini, *Speech at the Lucknow Congress*, December 1916, Lucknow, G.A., Natesan & Co., *Speeches and Writings of Sarojini Naidu*, op.cit., pp. 150-151.

<sup>xxx</sup> Khilafat Question- When the Khilafat Movement was started by Mulana Abdul Kalam and Ali brothers (Muhammad Ali and Shaukat Ali) against the British to preserve the authority of the Ottoman Empire as the Khalifa of Islam, during that time Sarojini Naidu was in London and spoke on the issue of "Khilafat Question" in a large meeting held at the Kingsway Hall, London, on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1920.

<sup>xxxi</sup> Naidu, Sarojini, *The Khilafat Question*, 22 April 1920, Kingsway Hall, London, G. A. Natesan and Co., *Speeches and Writings of Sarojini Naidu*, op.cit., p.242.

<sup>xxxii</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 242-243.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 243-244.

<sup>xxxiv</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 244.

<sup>xxxv</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 244-245.

<sup>xxxvi</sup> Naidu, Sarojini, *Speech in Madras*, 22 October 1922, Madras, G. A. Natesan & Co., *Speeches and Writings of Sarojini Naidu*, op.cit., pp. 335, 339-340.

<sup>xxxvii</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 340.

<sup>xxxviii</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 335-339, 341.

<sup>xxxix</sup> Naidu, Sarojini, *Address to Kerala Conference*, May 1923, Kerala, G. A. Natesan & Co., *Speeches and Writings of Sarojini Naidu*, op.cit., pp. 352, 365.

<sup>xl</sup> Naidu, Sarojini, *Speech in Madras*, 22 April 1922, Madras, G. A., Natesan & Co., *Speeches and Writings of Sarojini Naidu*, op.cit., p. 341.

<sup>xli</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 339-341.