

**STUDY MATERIAL FOR DEGREE-III (HONS.), ENGLISH, PAPER-VII**

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**NAME OF THE POEM : SONGS OF RADHA- THE QUEST**

**NAME OF THE POET: SAROJINI NAIDU**

The poem **Songs of Radha-The Quest** is composed by Sarojini Naidu a great Indian poet, as well as, a patriot. Sarojini Naidu is also known as the Nightingale of India. Sarojini Naidu, like Rabindranath Tagore, Aurobindo and many others, actively participated in the social, cultural and spiritual reawakening and reshaping of India. Her personality is unique because in her was blended the different experiences of life. The variety of experiences shaped her literary career.

Sarojini Naidu was a Bengali who was brought up at Hyderabad and educated in England and later became active in Indian National Movement. She spoke many languages like Bengali, Hindustani and English. She was influenced by leaders like Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore and others. In her poems, she reveals her emotions and rich imagination based on her experiences. Her poems exhibit with excellence the pure Indian sensibility. She writes on a variety of themes like love, nature, faith, patriotism and folk tradition. The myth and legends also becomes an important subject of her poems. She was influenced by Muslim art and culture which are also depicted in her poems. She has credit of writing lyrics that are rich in melody. She has been influenced by the romantic poets like Shelley and Keats. Sarojini Naidu's portrayal of folk life and the depiction of love through mythological characters like Radha and Krishna have attributed her high status in Indian literary sphere.

The poems of Sarojini Naidu were published in four volumes. They are, **The Golden Threshold** published in 1905, **The Bird of Time** in 1912 and **The Broken Wings** in 1917. The fourth book **Feather of the Dawn** was published posthumously. Some of the famous poems are, **The Bangle Sellers, The Indian Weavers, The Coromandal Fishers, The Palanquin Bearers, Pardah Nashin, In The Bazars of Hyderabad**, and many others.

In the poem, **Songs of Radha-The Quest**, Sarojini Naidu describes the pure and divine love of Radha and Krishna. Radha and Krishna are significant legendry figures of Indian mythology depicting immortal love. **The Quest** is the third lyric of the poem **Songs of Radha**. The other two lyrics are, **At Dawn** and **At Dusk**. According to the rhyming pattern of the poem there are ten couplets.

*My foolish love went seeking thee at dawn,  
Crying- O wind where is Kanhaya gone?*

The poet expresses the deep and intense emotions of Radha when she is desperately searching her flute player, Krishna. Krishna is her lover. Her efforts are all in vain as she is unable to find him. Radha's futile search makes her sad. She has been searching for Krishna from dawn to dusk and had been enquiring the wind, the glade and the river to tell her the

whereabout of her lover, Kanhaiya. At dawn she addresses the wind. In the daytime, she asks the forest glade where often her 'sweet lover' used to rest and play. The 'friendly shade' of the forest reminds her of her companion. At dusk, she desires to know from the 'dovegray tides' about the abiding place of her 'Flute-player'.

*Dumb were the waters, dumb the woods, the wind,  
They knew not where my playfellow to find.*

Radha could not get any answer for her queries. None of the forces of nature was able to help her out. This made her more impatient and she started to weep, covering her face upon her palm, for her dearest Ghanshayam. Radha was unable to console herself. Her desperation grew making her sadder. The moment of separation was becoming unbearable. Sarojini Naidu uses words like, 'Moaning', 'Crying' and 'O tell me' to express the intense feelings of a beloved waiting for union with her lover. Her passionate love for Krishna makes her sad in his absence.

Radha suddenly realises the presence of her lover who was not far away from her. The hidden laughter of Krishna makes her heart shake 'like a boat rocking from keel to rafter'. The image of rocking boat has brilliantly portrayed the realisation of true love. It seems that the laughter was to mock at her doubt. The following lines express the views:

*Thou saidst,- O faithless one, self-slain with doubt,  
Why seekest thou my loveliness without,*

The love that Radha was trying to seek in the outside world was nowhere to be found because it resided within her own heart. Hence, when she asked the wind, the waves and the flowering valley they were unable to give answer. Her lover, Krishna asks Radha to search for him into the mirror of her heart because Radha and Krishna are inseparable and eternal. The lines quoted below are the concluding lines of the poem. Sarojini Naidu explores the truth of love that lies in faith, selflessness, unconditional and complete surrender of a lover.

*I am of thee, as thou of me, a part.  
Look for me in the mirror of thy heart.*

The poem **The Quest** expresses Sarojini Naidu's strong belief in love. Through the iconic love of Radha and Krishna the poet reveals that the realisation of true love that lies in spiritual union and not in physical union.

The beauty of the poem, **The Quest** lies in the beautiful description of nature. The words like 'wind', the 'forest glade' and 'dovegray tide' convey purity and serenity of the surrounding. It enhances its beauty as well as adds flavour to the intense emotion of love. The use of images of 'hidden laughter' and 'nectar bubbling from my own heart chalice' brings out the concept of divine in the poem.

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