**Sarojini Naidu**

**Sarojini Naidu**, née **Sarojini Chattopadhyay**, (born February 13, 1879, [Hyderabad](https://www.britannica.com/place/Hyderabad-India), India—died March 2, 1949, Lucknow), political activist, feminist, poet, and the first Indian woman to be president of the [Indian National Congress](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Indian-National-Congress) and to be appointed an Indian state governor. She was sometimes called “the Nightingale of India.”

Sarojini was the eldest daughter of Aghorenath Chattopadhyay, a [Bengali](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Bengali) Brahman who was principal of the Nizam’s College, Hyderabad. She entered the [University of Madras](https://www.britannica.com/topic/University-of-Madras) at the age of 12 and studied (1895–98) at [King’s College](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Columbia-University), London, and later at Girton College, Cambridge.

After some experience in the suffragist campaign in England, she was drawn to [India’s](https://www.britannica.com/place/India) Congress movement and to [Mahatma Gandhi](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Mahatma-Gandhi)’s [Noncooperation Movement](https://www.britannica.com/event/noncooperation-movement). In 1924 she traveled in [eastern Africa](https://www.britannica.com/place/eastern-Africa) and [South Africa](https://www.britannica.com/place/South-Africa) in the interest of Indians there and the following year became the first Indian woman president of the National Congress—having been preceded eight years earlier by the English feminist [Annie Besant](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Annie-Besant). She toured [North America](https://www.britannica.com/place/North-America), lecturing on the Congress movement, in 1928–29. Back in India her anti-British activity brought her a number of prison sentences (1930, 1932, and 1942–43). She accompanied Gandhi to London for the inconclusive second session of the [Round Table Conference](https://www.britannica.com/event/Round-Table-Conference) for Indian–British cooperation (1931). Upon the outbreak of [World War II](https://www.britannica.com/event/World-War-II) she supported the Congress Party’s policies, first of aloofness, then of avowed hindrance to the Allied cause. In 1947 she became governor of the [United Provinces](https://www.britannica.com/place/Dutch-Republic) (now [Uttar Pradesh](https://www.britannica.com/place/Uttar-Pradesh)), a post she retained until her death.

Sarojini Naidu also led an active literary life and attracted notable Indian [intellectuals](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/intellectuals) to her famous salon in Bombay (now [Mumbai](https://www.britannica.com/place/Mumbai)). Her first volume of [poetry](https://www.britannica.com/art/poetry), *The Golden Threshold* (1905), was followed by *The Bird of Time* (1912), and in 1914 she was elected a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature. Her collected poems, all of which she wrote in English, have been published under the titles *The Sceptred Flute* (1928) and *The Feather of the Dawn* (1961).