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THE BIRD SANCTUARY

A place which is protected for diff. kind of birds

Sarojini Naidu

About the Poet

Sarojini Naidu (1879--1949), one of the foremost of Indian poets who wrote in English, was born as Sarojini Chattopadhyay in Hyderabad in 1879. She graduated from the University of Madras, but later went to King's College, London, and Gerton College, Cambridge. She actively participated in the Indian Independence Movement and was by the side of Mahatma Gandhi both during the Dandi March of 1930 and the Quit India Movement of 1942. She was arrested on both occasions along with other freedom fighters. For Naidu, her love for India served as her poetic muse. In many of her poems, she has depicted the rich and varied colours of Indian life -- natural as well as human -- to make Indians aware of the richness and abundance of their natural resources and cultural heritage. As a poet, she had an ear for music; her poems are distinctive for their sonorous quality, lilting rhythm, and felicity of diction. This earned her the sobriquet, 'the nightingale of India' from the Mahatma himself. Some of her noteworthy poems are 'Palanquin Bearers', 'In the Bazaars of Hyderabad', and 'The Queen's Rival'. Her published volumes of poetry include *The Golden Threshold*, *The Bird of Time: Songs of Life, Death and the Spring*, and *The Broken Wing: Songs of Love, Death and the Spring*.

About the Poem

In 'The Bird Sanctuary', the poet amalgamates visual, aural, tactile and olfactory images to create an idyllic haven not just for varied birds but also for tired souls needing rest and peace. She describes in vivid detail all the birds that make their home in this garden. It also seems to be a metaphor for this world that was created by 'the gardener' and all the different types of people in it, all of whom find a place that seems to be especially for them.

Manner of
pronunciation word
& uses of word

13 Feb 1879 - Cardiac 1881-87 - greatest, prominent, peace

ear Town

BEFORE YOU BEGIN . . .

1. Have you ever found or been to a place which makes you feel safe and at peace? Where was this? Write a short paragraph on your experiences.

In your quiet garden wakes a magic **tumult**¹ of winged **choristers**² that keep the Festival of Dawn, —
Blithely³ rise the **carols**⁴ in richly **cadenced**⁵ **rapture**⁶
 From lyric throats of **amber**⁷, of **ebony**⁸ and **fawn**⁹.

The bulbul and the oriole, the honey-bird and shama

Flit¹⁰ among high **boughs**¹¹ 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**¹²
 blue.

Wild gray pigeons dreaming of a home amid the tree-tops,

Fill their beaks with silken **down**¹³ and **slender**¹⁴ banyan twigs.

But the **jade**¹⁵-green gipsy parrots are only **gay**¹⁶ **marauders**¹⁷

And pause upon their sun-ward flight to **plunder**¹⁸ red ripe figs.

¹ **tumult**: commotion of a multitude with confused cries; uproar

² **chorister**: member of a choir

³ **blithely**: joyously

⁴ **carols**: (here) joyous songs

⁵ **cadenced**: rhythmical; measured movement of song

⁶ **rapture**: ecstatic delight

⁷ **amber**: yellow

⁸ **ebony**: black as the hard wood of the ebony tree

⁹ **fawn**: light yellowish brown

¹⁰ **flit**: to make short flights

¹¹ **bough**: branch of a tree

¹² **sapphire**: bright blue of the sapphire stone; azure

¹³ **down**: bird's under plumage; fluffy substance

¹⁴ **slender**: of small girth or breadth

¹⁵ **jade**: green colour of the semi-precious stone jade

¹⁶ **gay**: mirthful; sportive

¹⁷ **marauders**: those who make plundering raid

¹⁸ **plunder**: to rob by force

Take care of feeding

In your ^{kind} gracious garden there is joy and fostering¹⁹ freedom.
 Nesting place and singing space for every feathered thing,
 O Master of the Birds, grant sanctuary²⁰ and shelter
 Also to a homing²¹ bird that bears a broken wing.

Coming

Points to Ponder

Have you ever noticed how everything in nature exists in a state of balance with everything else? Every organism has a place and a purpose. What kind of a world would it be if humans learned to live as part of that balance and not as conquerors of the natural world? Would it mean making place for every kind of human—man, woman, fluid, child, adult, atheist, believer, etc.? Would it mean living with less, being more aware of the choices we make, of not eating or taking more than we absolutely need to? What would such a world be like?

COMPREHENSION

A. Answer the following questions in one sentence each.

1. What causes a 'magic tumult' in the garden?
2. What makes the poet conclude that the wild gray pigeons are looking for a home?
3. Why have 'the jade-green gipsy parrots' been called so?
4. Where does the poet find joy? Explain.
5. To whom does the poet make her address in the poem?

B. Answer the following questions in about 30-40 words.

1. What is each bird mentioned in the poem doing?
2. Explain the term: 'gay mauraunders'.
3. What qualities of the garden draw the birds to it?

¹⁹ fostering: be favourable to

²⁰ sanctuary: place of refuge

²¹ homing: coming to roost

4. What is the setting of the poem? What are the words or terms used that evoke the scene?
5. What is the poet's prayer?

C. *Answer the following questions in about 150 words.*

1. Discuss the metaphorical significance of the 'garden' and the sanctuary it provides in the poem.
2. How does Naidu bring in the play of colours and movement to describe the rapturous joy of the garden in 'The Bird Sanctuary'?