

# Sarojini Naidu

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**In News:** Sarojini Naidu's birth anniversary: Remembering 'Nightingale of India' who fueled freedom struggle, women's rights movement

## About Sarojini Naidu

- Poet, freedom-fighter, activist, orator and administrator, Sarojini Naidu also remembered as '**The Nightingale of India**' is one of the most revered personalities of the twentieth century.
- Born on the 13th of February, 1879 in Hyderabad to distinguished Bengali parents.
- Sarojini Naidu was an exceptional student with knowledge of Urdu, Telugu, English, Bengali and Persian.
- Her remarkable passion for writing from an early age earned her a scholarship to study abroad.
- Her creative skills led to the publication in 1905 of her first volume of poetry The Golden Threshold.
- Her work as a poet in English has been praised by leading Indian personalities including Rabindranath Tagore and Jawaharlal Nehru.
- Sarojini Naidu was one of the first women to participate in India's struggle for independence from the British.
- She was the first Indian female president of the Indian National Congress and after independence, she became the first woman Governor of Uttar Pradesh.
- Sarojini Naidu worked for the dignity of the common man and the education and emancipation of women by actively encouraging the setting up of orphanages and schools for girls.
- She also urged the student community to stand united against racial and communal discrimination.
- After the independence of India, she became the first governor of the United Provinces (now Uttar Pradesh) and

remained in the role till her death in 1949.

- Her birthday, February 13, is honoured as Women's Day in India.

### **Role in the Indian National Movement**

- She was deeply affected by the partition of Bengal in 1905 and decided to join the Indian freedom struggle.
- She met regularly with Gopal Krishna Gokhale, who in turn introduced her to the other leaders of the Indian freedom movement.
- She met Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, C. P. Ramaswami Iyer and Muhammad Ali Jinnah.
- Her relationship with Gandhi was that of mutual respect as well as of benign humour. She famously called Gandhi 'Mickey Mouse' and quipped "It costs a lot to keep Gandhi poor!"
- She met Jawaharlal Nehru in 1916, worked with him for the disheartening conditions of the Indigo workers of Champaran in the western district of Bihar and fought vehemently with the British for their rights.
- In 1917, she helped found the Women's India Association with Annie Besant and other prominent leaders.
- She travelled extensively to the United States of America and many European countries as the flag-bearer of the Indian Nationalist struggle.
- In March 1919, the British government passed the Rowlatt Act by which the possession of seditious documents was deemed illegal. Mahatma Gandhi organized the Non-Cooperation Movement to protest and Naidu was the first to join the movement.
- Sarojini Naidu religiously followed Gandhi's example and actively supported his other campaigns like the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms, the Khilafat issue, the Sabarmati Pact, the Satyagraha Pledge and the Civil Disobedience Movement.
- When Gandhi was arrested after the Salt March to Dandi

in 1930, she led the Dharasana Satyagraha with other leaders.

- She accompanied Gandhi to London to take part in the Round Table Talks with the British Government in 1931.
- Her political activities and role in the Freedom struggle led to several stints in prison – in 1930, 1932, and 1942. Her 1942 arrest led to imprisonment for 21 months.
- She went to England in 1919 as a member of the All-India Home Rule Deputation.
- As a result of her selfless contribution to the cause of freedom, she was elected as the President of the Indian National Congress Party in 1925.
- She travelled to Europe and even to the United states to disseminate Gandhian principles and was partly responsible for establishing him as this icon of peace.