MAJOR THEMES AND IMAGERY IN SAROGINI NAIDU’S POETRY

ABSTRACT
OF THE
THESIS
SUBMITTED FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF
Doctor of Philosophy
IN
ENGLISH

BY
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DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
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Sarojini Naidu, 'The Nightingale of India', has occupied a unique position in Indian English poetry. Her poetic talent flourished in Western surroundings but she was never an imitator. Endowed with keen poetic sensibility and extra-ordinary perception, she felt the phenomenon of human life around her. Sir Aurobindo remarks,

"She springs from the very soil of India, her spirit, although it employs the English Language in its vehicle, has not other tie with the west".

Sarojini Naidu was blessed with 'bird like quality' but her songs are not only lyrical but also evocative. She contemplated life in its varied conditions and situations. She observed folk life and the fascinating natural phenomenon. She thought of man's longing for love, and his everlasting ignorance about
the mystery of life and death. These aspects were viewed in the Eastern light but their expression has an everlasting beauty of its own. Glasgow Harold observed:-

"The pictures are of the East, it is true, but there is something fundamentally human in them that seems to prove that best songs know nothing of East or West."

Sarojini Naidu in her songs tried to express her emotional tensions, but the imagery which she employed was striking and thus paved a new path in Indian English tradition of poetry. She skilfully adopted specific imagery suited to her theme, purpose, mood and situation.

Sarojini Naidu's compass as a poetess is very wide and no specific theme can be traced out in her poems. Her poetic fervour underwent a drastic change with the changing political, social and emotional
conditions. Variations in her ethos resulted in variety of themes.

Golden Threshold primarily contains the poems which reveal the picture of Indian Folk life. Along with the treatment folk life, she also reveals interest in natural sights and scenery. Beautiful word pictures are painted here.

The Bird of Time is a collection of poems in which she contemplates about life and death.

Broken Wing is a collection of her miscellaneous poems. In it 'Temple' trilogy of love poems, is her major contribution to Indian English poetry.

Feather of Dawn. The poems in this collection are remarkable for patriotism and her love for child.

In this way Sarojini Naidu's range of themes is very wide. Her treatment of different themes is original, profound, sensitive and varied.
Sarojini Naidu keenly observed, felt and responded to various human emotions, patterns of behaviour, conditions of society and beauty of nature. Thus the major themes in her poems are nature, Love, Life and Death, Indian Folk life, and patriotism. These themes in her poetry have been evaluated under the following chapter-wise scheme:

Chapter I : Her Times, Life and Works

Chapter II : Oriental and Indian Ethos in Sarojini's Poetry.

Chapter III : Patriotic Fervour

Chapter IV : Poetry of Nature

Chapter V : Theme of Love, Life and Death

Chapter VI : Imagery and Art
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

All through my teaching career I was beset with the idea of pursuing research in an area which could be both inspiring and original. It was almost near the time of my superannuation from active service that the desire could materialise. My revered teacher, Professor A.A. Ansari advised me to work on Wordsworth’s Preface to Lyrical Ballads. Professor K.K. Sharma of the university of Allahabad suggested different topics on Romantics, especially, on Wordsworth and Keats. I had not yet made up my mind when after sometime my teacher Professor Masoodul Hasan advised me to read Anglo-Indian poetry and find out a topic for myself in this area. Credit goes to Prof. Hasan for introducing Anglo-Indian literature in the Department of English. It was just during an informal chat that my friend Dr. R.K. Agarwal, Head, Department of English, Bagla College, Hathras, asked me to read Sarojini Naidu. I read the poetess with avidity and absorbing interest. I felt great fascination for the poems, ‘Indian weavers’, ‘To a Budha seated on a Lotus’, ‘Ecstasy’ and the ‘Queen’s Rival’. A study of these poems motivated me to go through all her poems with zest and verve. I found them varied in nature: religious, mystic, romantic and patriotic. The imagery permeating her work struck me a lot.
Consequently I decided to work on the Major themes and Imagery of Mrs. S. Naidu's poetry which I was able to complete after superannuation.

I am thankful to my friend Professor Farhatullah Khan for encouraging me and full of admiration for his erudite scholarship. He rendered me valuable help in giving me time for discussing about certain parts of my thesis.

I have no words to express my sense of gratitude to my senior colleague and friend Prof. H.C. Raizada who allowed me to use his personal library, gave me Mrs. Naidu's collection as gifts, borrowed books for me from different persons and places, went through my thesis word to word and suggested valuable modifications.

Thanks are also due to Mr. Mohd. Owais Khan who was nice enough to get the thesis typed for me and if there are certain errors in spelling here and there they should be construed to be the personal contribution of the typist to my thesis.

[ SYED AMIN ASHRAF ]
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PREFACE

The change in literary fashions and critical attitudes leads to the debunking of the great writers of the preceding age. It is therefore not surprising that the new aesthetics which evolved in the wake of Hulme-Pound-Eliot school of modern poetry, depedestalized many literary demi-gods who were looked upon with awe and inviolable reverence by the earlier generation. The great Indian English poets like Toru Dutt, Manmohan Ghosh, Aurobindo Ghoshe, Harindranath Chattopadhyaya were all condemned as "colonialites" and criticized for "their outsize reputations". Sarojini Naidu, "the gifted poetess," the Nightingale of India of yester years, on whom Arthur Symons and Edmund Gosse showered unreserved admiration and about whom that "profound judge of life and literature", Sri Aurobindo, said that she had "qualities which make her best work exquisite, unique and unchallenged in its own kind", had also to face this literary heresy. She was relegated to mediocrity because her poetry abounded in subjectivity, exotic imagination and profound emotional rapture to the detriment of objectivity, wit, irony and arid intellectualism, the qualities which were considered the real hallmark of a great and the "whirligig of literary taste is about to come
full circle", the old poets are once again emerging in their real stature and being judged in proper perspective. Sarojini Naidu is once again being praised for her unique creative and lyrical qualities and for opening a window into the real life and spirit of India.

Sarojini Naidu's delight in life is reflected in the beautiful pictures she has drawn in her poems of the myriad -- dimensional pageants of Indian life, its scenes of nature, and its religious and cultural ethos. Born in a Bengali Brahmin family of the Muslim state of Hyderabad, she was nourished on the best in the cultural traditions of the Hindu and the Islamic religions and life. Her keen perception and minute observation of life around her awakened in her love for Indian life in its varied conditions and situations. Her natural oriental spirit made her brood over the problems of love, life and death. With such profound and rich experience of life springing from the very soil of India, she wove her memorable lyrics of joy and beauty. The pictures drawn by her thus cover the wide range of Indian life and its cultural ethos.

Though there have appeared many biographical and critical studies of Sarojini Naidu's life and poetry, no attempt has so far been made to highlight in details the rich material of subject matter treated by her through
the varied themes of her poetry. Most of the studies are of general nature and deal with her colourful life and interpret her lyrical qualities and artistic use of diction and verse form. The purpose of this study is to give an indepth analysis of the major themes in Sarojini Naidu's poetry and correlate them with the rich, evocative and functional imagery used by her to convey her vision of life adequately and effectively.
CHAPTER ONE

Her Times, Life and Works

Introduction:

Men generally raise their eyebrows at women taking to creative writing as their chief concern in life. In reply to one of the letters of young Charlotte Byonte, Robert Southey advised her not to take to literature for the frequent indulgence in imaginative work was likely to interfere with her domestic duties and responsibilities. He wrote: "The day dreams in which you habitually indulge are likely to induce a distempered state of mind; and in proportion as all the ordinary uses of the world seem to you flat, and unprofitable you will be unfitted for them without becoming fitted for anything else. Literature cannot be the business of a woman's life, and it ought not to be."¹

The truth, however, is that women since the time of the illustrious Sapho, 'the tenth Muse', have in all ages and countries, made a very significant and salutary contribution to almost every branch of literature and art. There is hardly any language worth the name, the literature of which has not been enriched by feminine talents and which would not be much

the poorer were their contributions to be effaced. Though it is true that we have not among them some of the very greatest writers of the world, yet their achievement is none the less very substantial and significant, if not for anything else, at least for the interpretation and understanding it has given to us of the feminine mind and nature. As Arthur Compton Rickett points out: "Sex is not merely a simple matter of physical differentiation as some imagine it. Indeed in its ultimate analysis it is a psychical problem; and it is this fact that lends so great an interest to the contributions made by women to literature. Woman is not undeveloped man but diverse. Her outlook is essentially different from that of a man and her work, therefore is complementary and supplementary to the man's."  

Indian literature has ever been refulgent with the radiant lustre of the splendid writings of its women writers. From the Vedic age to the modern, many Indian authoresses at different stages of India's history, have tried to reveal through their writings in the various regional language, their outlook, their deepest longings, their profound urges, and the chief concerns of their daily lives. The modern age has, however, witnessed the growth of a totally new type of feminine writing in India. The impact of English education and Western

ideas, which led to the growth of Indian English literature, has inspired many Indian women writers to choose English as the medium for their creative writings. Most of the Indian writers owed their feeling for the alien English medium to the opportunities they have had of getting on to the inside of English either by a stay and schooling in England during childhood or from English education in India. English had become almost like their mother tongue and they were fully familiar with its cliches, idioms and licences. It is fallacious to allege that their writings in English were the outcome of an Anglomania which seized some upper class Indians in the early years of the English rule. They wrote in English because they could not express themselves better in any other Indian language. As has been pointed out by Prof. C.D. Narasimhaih: "The medium is a matter of inner compulsion and it will be rejected if it inhibits response, distorts truth, does not create what it pretends to convey."¹ If Indians wrote in English it was obviously because English was in every way a language of their sensibility and mental processes.

In the early stages of the growth of Indian English literature it was poetry more than any other branch of

literature that attracted Indians most. The writing of English verse was in reality the first response which India gave to the touch of the west and the teaching of English; and women no less than men were thrilled to sing in the alien language with sweetness and fluency of native geniuses. Internationally acclaimed as the 'Nightingale of India', Sarojini Naidu is the most talented and well known of these Indian women poets who wrote in English. She is "an ardent, versatile and dynamic genius."¹ Arthur Symons and Edmund Gosse have showered unreserved praises on her and Sri Aurobindo, the profound judge of life and literature has remarked that she had "qualities which make her best work exquisite, unique and unchallenged in its own kind."²

Sarojini Naidu's Times:

Sarojini Naidu's span of life (She had completed Biblical span of human life) of seventy years from 13th February, 1879 when she was born to 2 March, 1949, when she died, comprises one of the most momentous periods of Indian history. It was the age of cultural renaissance and national upsurge in India. Earlier Keshub Chunder Sen, Dayanand Saraswati, Mahadev Govind Ranade, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, Surendranath Banerjea and later Mrs. Annie Besant, Dadabhai Naroji, Balgangadhar Tilak, Gopal

Krishna Gokhale, Aurobindo Ghosh, Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi had infused new life and boundless enthusiasm in the country. Sarojini Naidu too like Keats could sing:

Great spirits now on earth are sojourning;
And other spirits there are standing apart
Upon the forehead of the age to come;
These, these will give the world another heart
And other pulses, Hear ye not the hum
Of mighty workings?........
Listen a while, ye nations, and be dumb.¹

Or like Wordsworth could reminisce:

Bliss was in that dawn to be alive,
but to be young was very heaven.²

It was a period in which there were taking place radical changes in every walk of life and people had begun to look at everything from a national revolutionary point of view. Sarojini refers to these changes when in her poem, "Past and future", she sings: "The new hath come and now the oldretires."³

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The national upsurge acquired an organized form and followed a definite direction when Alan Octavian Hume who had been secretary to the Government of India in the Home Department and had sensed for the British Government "extreme danger of a most terrible revolution", founded after his retirement, the Indian National Congress in 1885 to counteract unrest by appealing to the Government to initiate reforms for the amelioration of the lot of Indians and concede to their demands for greater political participation. The fast developing political events in India, however, turned the National Congress by the beginning of the twentieth century into the platform of anti-imperialism and struggle for the country's freedom. The atrocious partition of Bengal by Lord Curzon in 1905 led the Congress to play a more militant role in the political life of the country. In 1908 it clearly declared its objective to be "the attainment of a system of Government similar to that enjoyed by the self-governing members of the British Empire". The two national leaders, Gopal Krishna Gokhale and Bal Gangadhar Tilak, who dominated the Congress, however, differed in their view of the means to


2. Ibid., p. 71.
be adopted to attain the objective of freedom. The congress followed the moderate policy of Gokhale to achieve freedom "by constitutional means by bringing about a steady reform of the existing system of administration". The extremists who led by Tilak supported the violent activities of the terrotists, left the Congress in 1907 and remained out of it till the reapproachment in 1916.

With the advent of Mahatma Gandhi on Indian political scene in 1918, the national awakening percolated to Indian masses and peasants who became conscious of their stark poverty, suffering and humiliation under the alien rule. With the active support and participation of common men, the struggle for independence launched by the Congress under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi became a powerful mass movement. With the massive following of his countrymen Mahatma Gandhi launched Non violent Non-cooperation and Civil Disobedience Movement against the British rulers at the different stages of freedom struggle till within three decades he ushered in freedom in India on 15 August 1947.

1. Ibid.
Sarojini Naidu did not only participate actively in the freedom struggle but also became one of its chief leaders. She was inspired to serve her motherland by Gopal Krishna Gokhale when she met him in Poona on March 26, 1912. Stirred by some deep emotions Gokhale spoke to Sarojini of the unequalled happiness and privilege of service for India. "Stand here with me", he said, "with the stars and the hills for witnesses, and in their presence consecrate your life and your talent, your song and your speech, your thought and your dream to the Motherland. O Poet, see visions from the hill tops and spread abroad the message of hope to the toilers in the valleys." It was, however, when Mahatma Gandhi assumed the leadership of the Congress that she bade good bye to her poetic career and threw herself heart and soul into India's freedom struggle, braving all its trials and tribulations till the country attained freedom. Describing her transition from poet to politician, Yusuf Meharally writes:

There is something of oriental magic about Sarojini Naidu. Born at another period in Indian history, she would have been more concerned with her exquisite and delicately perfumed verses than with

1. Sarojini Naidu, Lovely Comrade (Bombay, 1915), Sarojini's reminiscences of Gokhale were first published as an article in Bombay Chronicle soon after his death on February 19, 1915. Later she brought it as a booklet.
the rough and tumble of politics. In India of today, so gifted and sensitive a personality, feeling acutely her country's humiliation under foreign rule, could not possibly take to the ivory tower.¹

Sarojini Naidu's keen poetical sensibility, however, did not desert her even after she had stopped writing verses and entered politics. It expressed itself through her conversations, letters and particularly her memorable speeches. Speaking on her death Jawaharlal Nehru said: "She did that amazing thing, she infused artistry and poetry into the national struggle, just as the father of the Nation had infused moral grandeur to it. "Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel called her a great politician and remarked that thoughts came to her like verses and she wove them into a pattern which has the immutable mark of her gifts of poetry. The famous Singhalese journalist, D.B. Dhanapala, said about her: "She talks politics but in the words of a poet".² Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya made a very significant observation when she wrote: "Those who are poets first and last, continue to be poets, whether they be lying in the trenches or in the enemy's


dungeons .... If Sarojini has stopped composing verses, she has certainly not ceased being a poetess. That same spirit comes out in all her movements and forms of expression."1

**Indian English Poetry Before Sarojini Naidu:**

The Indian English poetry had an Eurasian Christian, Henry Louis Vivian Derozio (1809-31), as its first significant poet. The son of an Indo-Portuguese father and an English mother, he was astonishingly precocious poet like Toru Dutt and died like her at an early age of twenty one. He worked for sometime as a clerk in Calcutta and on an indigo plantation at Bhagalpur, before joining the Hindu college, Calcutta, as a lecturer at the age of eighteen. He had a Westerner's modern outlook on life and was highly critical of superstitions and backwardness of Hindus. Young Indian students among whom he was very popular, felt the deep impact of his radical and Christian Western ideas and turned sceptical of their orthodox religious practices. The Hindu fundamentalists were alarmed by his increasing influence on young students. They mounted public opinion against him and charged him for corrupting young minds. The pressure of hostile opinion compelled the college authorities to terminate his service in 1831. Undaunted, he started a daily, *The East Indian*, but suddenly died of cholera six months later.

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Deroze published two volumes of poetry: Poems (1827) and The Fakeer of Jungheera: A Metrical Tale and Other Poems in his very brief poetic career. Though an Eurasian he was a great Indian Nationalist and patriot. His poems like "To India-My Native Land", "The Harp of India", "To the Pupils of Hindu College", etc. reveal his burning nationalistic zeal and authentic patriotic aspirations. His love for India is also reflected in his rich use of Indian myths and legends along with Western classical myths in his poetry. It is because of his great love for the country of his birth that he has been called: "National Bard/Modern India." In his moving poem "To India-My Native Land", he bewails the loss of glory that India was:

My country, in thy days of glory past
A beautious halo circled round thy brow
And worshipped as a deity thou wast,
Where is that glory, where that reverence now? ¹

His love for his students finds expression in his poem, "To the Pupils of Hindu College":

Expanding like the petals of young flowers,
I watch the gentle opening of your minds,
And the sweet loosening of the spell that binds
Your intellectual energies and powers.

¹. The Indian Contribution to English Literature, p. 10.
What joyance rains upon me, when I see
Fame in the mirror of futurity,
Weaving the chaplets you are yet to gain,
And then I feel I have not lived in vain.¹

In "The Harp of India", he traces his lineage to the great ancient poets of India:

Many a hand more worthy far than mine,
Once thy harmonious chords to sweetness gave:
These hands are cold, but if those notes divine
May be by mortal wakened once again,
Harp of my country, let me strike the strain.²

Derozio's poems reveal a strong influence of English romantic poets in sentiment, imagery and diction. His most ambitious work, the long narrative poem The Fakeer of Jungheera, is full of Byronic echoes in its powerful sentiments and satiric tone. The Indian English Poetry which has just made a start suffered a great loss in Dleroziq's early death.

Kashiprasad Ghose (1809-73) laboured hard, studying English prosody, to compose original verse in English. His volume of poems entitled The Shair or Minstrel and Other Poems which appeared in 1830, though marked by correct verses, lacks authentic emotion or poetic imagination. His use of Indian

¹ The Indian Contribution to English Literature, p. 10.
² Ibid., pp. 11-12.
material in his poems about the Hindu festivals and in lyrics like "The Boatman's Song to Ganga", however, indicates his honest attempt to strike a native note in his poetry.

Michael Madhusudan Dutt (1824-73) who earned great fame as a brilliant Bengali writer and the author of the Bengali epic, Meghnad-Badha, began his literary career as a poet in English. He became a Christian, married English women twice in succession, absorbed English influences and identified himself with the Christian West. Dutt's interest in European culture extended widely to include Greek, Italian and Spanish. In addition to some sonnets and shorter poems, he wrote two long poems in English, The Captive Ladle (1849) and Visions of the Past (1849). The former is a narrative poem dealing with the story of the Rajput king, Prithviraj and his abduction of the daughter of the king of Kanouj. The influence of Scott and Byron is clearly visible on the poem which is full of vigour and energy. The latter is a poem in Miltonic blank verse dealing with the Christian theme of the temptation, fall and redemption of Man. The poem is characterized by weighty, abstract diction, and Latin inversions.

Among the other Indian English poets of the former half of the nineteenth century, Rajnarain Dutt (1824-89) published his verse narrative, Osmyn: An Arabian Tale in 1841, Shoshre
Chunder Dutt, his Miscellaneous Poems in 1848 and Hur Chunder Dutt (1831-1901) his Fugitive Pieces in 1851. His second volume of verses, Lotus Leaves, came out after twenty years. It incorporates many of the poems of his earlier anthology of verses. The poems in these volumes fail to impress readers because they lack genuine emotions and creative imagination.

The Indian English poetry of the latter half of the nineteenth century and early decades of the twentieth century is less derivative and imitative and more authentic and original. Most of the poets of this period hail from Bengal which felt the powerful impact of Renaissance and English education earlier than other regions of India. The first notable work of Indian English poetry in this period is a family anthology. The Dutt Family Album (1870). It is a collection of 187 poems by three Dutt brothers, Govind Chunder, Hur Chunder and Greece Chunder, and their cousin Omesh Chunder. The Dutts were descendants of Rasmoy Dutt, a close colleague of Rammohan Roy. They had abjured Hinduism and embraced Christianity. Though they had developed Western outlook on life, they could not completely cut off themselves from their ancient Indian cultural heritage. Like the earlier generation of Indian English poets they also wrote under the influence of the English Romantic poets, and the major themes
of their poems were Christian sentiment, Nature, and Indian history and myths. Though full of technical competence their poems do not reveal much freshness and genuineness of response.

Babu Nobo Kissen Ghose (1837-1918) who is better known by his pseudonym "Ram Sharma" was a copious and versatile poet. He wrote lyrics, odes, satires and rare mystical verses based on his practice of yoga for forty years. His works include Willow Drops (1873-74), The Last Day: A Poem (1886), Shiva Ratri, Bhagabati Gita and Miscellaneous Poems (1903). A Collection of his poems, The Poetical Works edited by his friend D.C. Mallick appeared in 1919. Ram Sharma wrote many commemoration verses addressed or dedicated to important personalities like the Prince of Wales, Gladstone, Lord Ripon, Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, Kesub Chandra Sen, Dwarkanath Mitter, etc. Though they express genuine sentiments of the poet, they lack authentic poetic qualities. Though not critical of the British rulers, Ram Sharma responded to the sentiments of national upsurge in India.

Among his most impressive poems are sustained verses like The Last Day, Shiva Ratri or A Glimpse of Maya Fair, Bhagabati Gita or the Doctrine of Sakti Worship, Willow Drops, Daksha Yagna and the Swayambara Lila. In Bhagabati Gita, The goddess Bhagabati is visualized in all her sacred and awful
majesty, as the Eternal She, "the home-of-all, womb-of-all" created things:

Hai! Ten-armed Goddess of the lion-throne,
Whose power Time and Space and Being own!
The seed of things was in thy mighty womb,
Their source prolific and their final doom!
From Thee the mystic Trinal Unity -
Vrinchi, Vishnu, Shiva - one in three -
All sprang. Thou primal dread Divinity.¹

Ram Sharma wrote rhymed poems as well as poems in blank verse and ballad measures. An accomplished poet, he sometimes uses Western myths to convey Indian religious sentiments. In the poem, "Music and Vision of the Anahat Chakram", he describes his yogic experience as "a very sabbath of the soul' and in the poem, "The Memory of Swami Vivekananda", he shows Vivekananda meeting his master in 'Elysium'.

Toru Dutt (1856-77) is the most well-known and genuine poets of the early period. With her the Indian English poetry acquire s an authentic and mature voice. The third and youngest child of Govind Chander Dutt, Toru Lata, born a Hindu, was baptized along with the other members of the family in 1862. She learnt English at a very early age and reading and music

¹. The Indian Contribution to English Literature, p. 25.
were her chief hobbies. Sailing for Europe in 1869, she spent a year in France, studying French, and was thereafter in England for three years. Returning to India in 1873, she died of consumption four years later, at the age of twenty-one.

Toru was a prodigy who achieved the maturity of her work at the age of seventeen. Her death at the early age of twenty-one cut short a bright poetic career which held promise of great achievement. Edward Thompson spoke of her as a poet whose place was with Sapho and Emily Bronte.¹

Edmund Goss wrote on her death: "It is difficult to exaggerate when we try to estimate what we have lost in the premature death of Toru Dutt. Literature has no honours which need have been beyond the grasp of a girl who at the age of twenty one, and in language separated from her own by so deep a chasm, had produced so much of lasting worth."² During four years her pen was active she produced translations from the lyrics by about a hundred French poets, A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields (1976), and numerous poems in English, the best of which are in Ancient Ballads and Legends (1882). The amazing naturalness and spontaneity of the rendering from French Romantic poetry in A Sheaf, attracted immediate attention of eminent French and


². Jha, p. 22.
English scholars. Edmund Gosse declared emphatically: "If modern French literature were entirely lost, it might not be found impossible to reconstruct a great number of poems from the Indian version."¹ The ballads were the outcome of her deep study of Sanskrit and Vedic literature and despite the fact that she was of Christian percentage, they are deeply imbued with Hindu feelings and sentiments. In simple and aphoristic style, she makes sententious remarks suggestive of deep Hindu thought:

"Death comes to all or soon or late;
   And peace is but a wandering fire;"²

or

"I know that in this transient world
   All is delusion, - nothing true;
I know its shows are mists unfurled
   To please and vanish. ....."³

The narrative verses in the Ballads, which sing of India's heroes and heroines - Savitri, Lakshman, Jogadhya Uma, Dhruva, Prahlad, Ekalavya (Buttoo), Sita, etc. hold a mirror to the soul of India and breathe a Vedic solemnity and simplicity of temper. They are not mere tales, but are instinct with great moral values. Her short lyrics are rich in emotions and treatment of nature. In the sonnet, "Sonnet - Baugmave", she envisions Indian nature in all its rare splendour:

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¹ The Indian Contribution to English Literature, p. 17.
² Ancient Ballads and Legends, p. 47.
³ Ibid., p. 66.
The light green graceful tamarinds abound
Amid the mangoe clouds of green profound,
And palms arise, like pillars grey, between;
And o'er the quiet pools the seemuls bean,
Red; - red, and startling like a trumpet's sound.¹

"Our Casuarina Tree" is an expression of poignant grief for the loss of sister Aru and brother, Abju, recollected through the sight of the tree under whose shadow they played as children:

But not because of its magnificence
Dear is the Casuarina to my soul;
Beneath it we have played; though years may roll,
O sweet companions, loved with love instense,
For your sakes shall the tree be ever dear!
Blent with your images, it shall arise
In memory, till the hot tears blind mine eyes!²

Toru Dutt's poetic technique shows a sure grasp of more than one poetic mode—lyric, ballad, narrative. Her imagery makes evocative use of local colour and natural scenes. Her diction is of the Victorian Romantic school and, the true to the Ballad motif she employs archaisms like 'hight' and 'dight'. Her best work has the qualities of quite strength of deep emotions held under artistic restraint and an acute awareness of the abiding values of Indian life.

¹ Ancient Ballads and Legends, p. 171.
² Ibid., p. 174.
Aru Dutt, like her sister, was a versatile genius. Besides being a poet, she was an accomplished musician and could paint with ease and grace. Her creative period was, however, barely a few months as she died very young. Some of her exquisite poems, eight in number, including beautiful rendering of Victor Hugo's "Morning Serenade", which filled Edmund Gosse with surprise and almost rapture, appeared along with Toru's, in *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields*. The haunting melody of the following lines is an evidence of the mature understanding of English prosody by the young poetess:

> Stil barred thy doors! - The far east glows,  
> The morning wind blows fresh and free,  
> Should not the hour that wakes the rose  
> Awaken also thee?  
> No longer sleep,  
> Oh, listen now!  
> I wait and weep,  
> But where art thou?

Like Bengal, Bombay Presidency also showed the impact of English on Indian sensibility through its writers. The Parsi Poet, Behramji Merwanji Malabari (1853-1912), though less known now, was very popular as a social reformer and writer in his own times. His collection of verses, *The Indian Muse in English Garb* (1876) comprising thirty-two pieces appeared in the same year as Toru Dutt's first collection.
Some of these poems are written in praise of Queen Victoria, Prince Concert, Prince of Wales and Dr. John Wilson, his benefactor. The more impressive ones are, however, his satirical poems of social criticism. Among other poets of Bombay are Cowasji Nowrosi Vesuvola (Colouring the Muse, 1879), M.M Kunte (The Rishi, 1879), Nagesh Wishwanath Pai (1860-1920) and the poet who wrote under the 'spicy' name Chili Chutnee (Social Scraps and satires, 1878). Nagesh Wishwanath Pai’s The Angel of Misfortune: A Fairy Tale (1904) is a romantic narrative of about 5000 lines in ten books, recounting the legend of King Vikramaditya of Avanti and Ujjain. It is one of the important Indian English longer poems. Its verse is flowing, the story is well-knit and full of incidents that surprise and satisfy. The atmosphere of the poem is wholly Indian and contains sensuous and vivid descriptions of seasons, birds, beasts, flowers and trees.

The four Indian writers who became classics in Indian English literature and gave a stature to Indian English poetry emerged in Bengal towards the close of the nineteenth century. They are Romesh Chunder Dutt, Rabindranath Tagore, Manmohan Ghose and Aurobindo Ghose. Romesh Chunder Dutt (1848-1909), a cousin of Toru Dutt, was an Indian Civil Service official. After attaining the rank of divisional commissioner in Bengal, he retired voluntarily at the age of forty nine to devote
himself exclusively to creative writing. He earned a great name in Bengali literature as its leading historical novelist. In Indian-English literature he is known for his artistic translations from Sanskrit and Prakrit classics and of the famous epics, The Mahabharata (1895) and the Ramayana (1809). His Lays of Ancient India (1894) contains verse translations from the Rigveda, the Upanishads, Kalidas Bharavi, and Buddhist texts like the Dharmapada. His most impressive works are the condensed versions of the two Sanskrit epics. Though he skips over the vast portions of the original texts, what he presents are the original incidents of the epics as described by their poets, Vyasa and Valmiki. He very skilfully employs the "Locksley Hall" metre as the nearest equivalent to the Anustubh or sloka metre of Sanskrit epics to give his English translations the musical movements of the original texts. It goes to the credit of Romesh Chunder Dutt that he has succeeded to a very great extent to capture the real spirit of the Sanskrit epics.

A versatile man and beloved of all Muses, Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) was a unique figure, who enriched every aspect of Modern Indian life, literature and art by his rare genius. Poet, dramatist, novelist, short story writer, essayist, composer, painter, actor, thinker, educationist,
nationalist and internationalist, such were the various roles he played with uniform distinction during his long and fruitful career. Though his writings influenced the literatures of various Indian languages, he wrote mostly in Bengali. His original writings in English comprise his essays, lectures, addresses, a solitary poem - 'The Child' (1931) -, a few epigrams and translations of some of his works, particularly the collection of poems entitled *Gitanjali* (1912), which took the literary world of London by storm. Tagore was awarded in 1913 the Nobel Prize for literature for his work. W. B. Yeats, Rothenstein, May Sinclair, Professor Bradley, Henry Nevinson, Ezra Pound, Andre Gide and others showered unreserved praises on Tagore for the poems in *Gitanjali*. Yeats in his well-known Introduction to the poems wrote: "I have carried the manuscript of these translations about with me for days, reading it in railway trains, or on the top of omnibuses and in restaurants, and I have often had to close it lest some stranger should see how much it moved me. These lyrics - which are in the original, my Indians tell me full of subtlety of rhythm, of untranslatable delicacies of colour, of metrical invention - display in their thought a world I have dreamt of all my life long".  

1. The Indian Contribution to English literature, pp. 45-46.
Gitanjali made Tagore a world poet. It left sensational impact on the war-ravaged West and aroused such acclamation in the literary world as is very rare. The songs of Gitanjali are firmly rooted in the ancient tradition of Indian saint poetry and deal with man's longing and quest for the Divine. They are, however, characterized by a great variety of woods and approaches. Some poems describe the eternal play of love between god and man while score reveal how God waits eternally for the love of man. In some is expressed the poet's longing to realize God through joy as well as pain and in some through visions of nature. In some poet's humanism asserts itself against all religious orthodoxy:

Leave this chanting and singing and telling of beads...
He is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground, where path-maker is breaking stones.

(Gitanjali, poem 11)

Taken together these poems reveal the relationship between God and the human soul, God and Nature, Nature and the Soul and humanity. In some of the poems the poet's longing for the divine to refresh his 'arid' heart is clothed in the metaphor of the Indian seasons:

The rain has held back for days and days, my God, in my arid heart. The horizon is fiercely nacked - not the thinnest cover of a soft cloud, not the vaguest hint of a distant cool shower.

Send thy angry storm, dark with death, fit is thy wish
and with lashes of lightning startle the sky from end to end.

But call back, my lord, call back this pervading silent heat, still and keen and cruel, burning the heart with dire despair.

Let the cloud of grace bend low from above like the tearful look of the mother on the day of the father's wrath.

(Gitanjali, 40)

The influence of the Passion play of Germany on Tagore's mind is visible in his poem The Child which he wrote directly in English while staying in Germany. The poem deals with a Biblical theme, the nativity and birth of Christ, transformed by Indian myths, symbols and imagination into a moving drama of the ever-renewing life of man symbolised by the new-born. Men from the valley of the Nile, the bank of the Ganges, from Tibet and the 'dense dark tangle of savage wildernesses', all gather in one place and start on their journey; the trials are unendurable to everyone except the Man of Faith; he is denounced by his erstwhile followers as a false prophet. Nonetheless they reach the journey's end; the child is discovered:

They kneel down the king and the beggar, the saint and the sinner, the wise and the fool, and cry 'Victory to Man, the new born, the ever-living'.

As different from Tagore, Manohan Ghose (1869-1924) and his younger brother, Aurobindo Ghose (1872-1950) wrote only in
English. They were alienated from their native language Bengali because of their long stay in England. Their father Dr. K.D. Ghose had blind faith in Western education and hence sent his sons at an early age to receive a purely English upbringing. In England Manmohan Ghose studied at St. Paul's School and from there went to Christ Church College, Oxford on an open scholarship. Having lived in England from the age of seven i.e. 1876 to 1894 when he returned to India, Manmohan Ghose became completely English. The gods he worshipped were the brightest lights of European literature - Hesiod and Homer, The attic tragedians, Theocitus, Heleagur and Simonides, Dante and Petrarch, Shakespeare, Milton and Arnold. His love for Western, particularly English literature was so deep that on his deathbed he asked for not the Gita but Lear and Macbeth to be read out to him.

At Christ Church college, Oxford Manmohan Ghose made friends with the poets of the Decadent School, to which belonged Laurence Binyon, his lifelong friend from the days of St. Paul's School. His earlier poems appeared in the anthology Primavera (1890), which also included the work of Stephen Phillips, Laurence Binyon and Arthur Crips (brother of Sir Stafford Cripps). They are typical of the mood of world weariness and yearning and the colourful aestheticism of the Eighteen Nineties. Praising him in the Pall Mall Gazette in 1890, Oscar Wilde described him as the "young Indian of
brilliant scholarship and high literary attainment who gives some culture to Christ Church".\(^1\) About his poems in *Primavera*, Wilde wrote: "His verses show us how quick and subtle are the intellectual sympathies of the Oriental mind .... Mr. Ghose ought someday to make a name in our literature.

His first independent volume of verses, *Love Songs and Elegies* (1898), while expressing the old strain of weariness and wistfulness, adds to it a celebration of Nature, and a surer command of image and phrase. *Songs of Love and Death* (1926), *Orphic Mysteries* ('Songs of Pain, Passion and the Mystery of Death') and *Immortal Eve* ('Songs of the Triumph and Mystery of Beauty') written following the death of his wife, were published posthumously. The last two collections appeared as late as 1974, in the collected edition of his poems. Describing his wife's affliction in one of the poems of *Immortal Eve*, he writes:

My dropping flower, my Moloti,
Your dear head hang not so;
You wither on the stem, alas;
But tell me, then, your woe,
You gaze upon me speechless, dumb,
The sorrow that constricts
Your throat no utterance gives, to tell
What 'tis your heart afflicts.\(^3\)

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2. Ibid., p.1.
3. Ibid., p.7.
In Ghose's life and poetry, there is a cruel realization of his being the product of one culture and the inheritor of another. In "Myvanwy", the very first of the poems in Songs of Love and Death, he writes:

Lost is that country, and all but forgotten
Mid these chill breazes, yet, still, oh, believe me,
All her meridan suns and ardent summers
Burn in my bosom

In his 'Introduction' to Songs of Love and Death, Laurence Binyon wrote discerningly: "His verse follows the forms and traditions of English poetry, but his temperament and attitude were Eastern .... Mentally he was torn in two," On returning to India in 1894, Ghose felt himself to be an exile. He was a thorough misfit in the society of the newly-awakened and proudly nationalistic Bengalees. He was not happy at Dacca and Patna where he worked as Professor of English for some time. He was, however, finally appointed Professor at Presidency College, Calcutta, where he was immensely popular among his students.

Manmohan Ghose's younger brother, Aurobindo Ghose (1872-1950), provides a striking contrast. Though like his brother, Aurobindo also had his upbringing and education in England, he found his roots in Indian culture and thought immediately on his return to India from Cambridge in 1893. At Cambridge he

1. An English Miscellany, p. 5
was awarded a first in the classical tripes and later passed the Indian Civil Service open examination. An excellent linguist, he added German and Italian to his highly competent grasp of Latin, Greek and French. On returning to India he stayed for thirteen years in Baroda as a Professor and Vice-Principal in Baroda College. Here he learnt Sanskrit and other Indian languages and acquired through knowledge of Indian religion and Philosophy. He returned to Calcutta in 1906 and got involved in nationalist activities as a political radical, which landed him in jail for one year. In 1910 he escaped to Pondicherry and made it his permanent home thereafter. While in Alipore jail he practised yoga, which led to a remarkable mystic experience described as 'Narayana Darshan' by him. Continuing his yoga at Pondicherry, he was joined in 1914 by a French lady, Madam Miera Richard (later known as the 'Mother'), who recognized in him the guru of her own quest. Henceonwards Aurobindo started his Ashram and became a spiritual leader and thinker. He became famous as Sri Aurobindo, a great religious savant.

During all these changing facets of his life Aurobindo continued writing from 1890 to 1950 when he died. Though his writings included prose, poetry, drama, speeches, treatises, and journalism, poetry was always his first love, and English remained his principal and most rewarding medium of expression. His poetical works included verse of several kinds
- lyrical, narrative, philosophical and epic. The early Short Poems: 1890-1900 reveal the influence of the Eighteen Nineties and deal with the themes of love, sorrow, death and liberty in a typically romantic style. The poem "Envoi" in this collection, which describes the poet hearing Saraswati and the Ganges beckoning him, gives the first inklings of the mystic strain which was to dominate Aurobindo's later poetry. The Short Poems: 1895-1908 written after Shri Aurobindo's return to India reveals mystic awareness in poems like "Invitation" and "Revelation". In Short Poems: 1902-1930 and 1930-1950, he attempts reflective and symbolic verse.

Among the longer poems of the early period are three complete narratives, "Urvane", "Love and Death", and "Baji Prabhou" and few fragments. Near about 1896 he began his first draft of his magnum opus, Savitri, the definitive edition of which appeared in 1954. His entire poetic career may be seen as a long and arduous preparation for the writing of this greatest epic in the Indian English literature. The sub-title of the poem, "A legend and a symbol", indicates the poet's main aim of the poem. The ancient legend of Savitri and prince Satyavan, taken from the Mahabharata, has been made here a vehicle of Sri Aurobindo's symbolic expression of his own philosophy of Man's realization of the 'Life Divine' on this earth. Since the poetry and creative writings of Rabindranath
Tagore appeared originally in Bengali, Sri Aurobindo is the greatest Indian English poet of the period.

Thus when Sarojini Naidu brought out her first collection of verses *The Golden Threshold* in 1905, Indian English poetry had established itself as a mature, respectable and internationally known branch of Indian literature. In fact she herself played a very significant role in enriching it by her rare genius and making it acquire a prominent place in Indian literature.

**Her Life:**

Sarojini Devi was born on February 13, 1879, at Hyderabad (Deccan) in a Bengali Brahmin family, which had migrated from Brahmanagar, a village in East Bengal (now Bangladesh). She was the eldest of the eight children of Aghorenath Chattopadhyay and Varada Sundari Devi. Aghorenath Chattopadhyaya belonged to an illustrious ancient line of great Sanskrit scholars who were highly respected in Bengal. Describing her ancestors and father Sarojini wrote to Arthur Symons:

> My ancestors have been great dreamers, great scholars, great ascetics. My father is a dreamer himself, a great dreamer, a great man whose life has been a magnificent failure. I suppose in the whole of India there are few men whose learning is greater than his, and I don't think there are many more beloved. He has a great white
beard and the profile of Homer and a laugh that brings
down the roof.¹

One of Aghorenath's pupils was very much impressed by his "magnetic eyes" when he met him at Lovelock Place at Ballygunge, Calcutta, where he had settled after his retirement from Hyderabad.

His magnetic eyes and his kindly ways captivated me. How often have I in later years compared Aghorenath's eyes to those of Balzac as his friend, the poet Gautier, describes them: "There was nothing like those eyes.... two black diamonds pierced by flashes of gold; eyes to see through walls and hearts, to subdue animals, the eyes of a leader, of a conqueror". And with eyes like these Aghorenath combined the heart, and, yes, also the faith and trust of a child. A simpler soul I have seldom seen.²

Aghorenath's poet son, Harindranath Chattopadhyaya described him as "a mystic of the highest order, one who saw and realized the universe as part of his own being; this world of change and colour, as a composite pattern of time and space still in a state of childhood and quest."³ He called his father "a walking encyclopaedia .... there was nothing he did not know literally."⁴

4. Ibid., p. 23.
Aghorenath evinced keen interest in science and literature. He was a master of Sanskrit and widely read in the literature of East and West. He was a scholar in English and Hebrew, French, German and Russian. His motto was to learn something new each day. In Calcutta he met Keshab Chandra Sen and soonafter joined Sen's Naba Bidhan cult of Brahmoism. He was initiated into the Brahma faith on the same day with Sivanath Sastri and Anand Mohan Bose. When Aghorenath after completing his studies in India, sailed for England for scientific studies on a Gilchrist scholarship, in the same boat with Keshab Chandra Sen, he left his young wife Varada Sundari Devi at the "Bharat Ashram", founded by Sen. Inmates of this Ashram lived like a family and were dedicated to non possession and devoted to a life of piety and culture. Aghorenath took his degree in Physics at Edinburgh in 1877, winning in the process the Boxter Prize and the Hope Prize in Chemistry. He was the first Indian to obtain the degree of Doctor of Science, even before Jagdish Chandra Bose and Acharya Profulla Chandra Ray. From England he went to Bonn in Germany on the Vans Dunlop scholarship. Here he impressed scientists with the breadth of his mind and accuracy of research. Unfortunately on returning to India he did not fulfil his career in pure science otherwise he would have also earned fame like J.C. Bose and P.C. Ray as a pioneer Indian
scientist. It is because of this that Sarojini called her father a "magnificent failure" P.C. Ray also regretted that Aghorenath did not properly utilize his giant scientific talent.

In India Aghorenath devoted himself to the alchemy and education. His favourite subject was Chemistry, which led him to become an ardent alchemist striving with his friends to find a formula, sitting over cauldrons and working late into the night in an old gymnasium room in Hyderabad striving to turn the baser metals into gold. Sarojini wrote to Arthur Symons: "Oh, dear, night and day the experiments are going on, and everyman who brings a new prescription is welcome as a brother". Whether he succeeded in transmuting base metals into gold or not, remains a mystery. He, however, confessed to his pupil, Lama, that he did. Lama refers to this when he writes:

His (Aghorenath's) mind seemed to have strayed into a different region altogether; and he suddenly asked me if I knew that Paracelsus was right—baser metal could really be transmuted. I didn't know what to say, when he declared almost in a whisper, that he himself had done it; but he no longer possessed the formula; the secret was lost no sooner than he had found it.


Later on 'Lama' learnt from Varada Sundari how years ago at Hyderabad he had been found unconscious in his laboratory after he had shut himself in for three days, and they brought him out in a delirious condition.

As an educationist Aghorenath came to be known as "Father of Education in Hyderabad". On returning to India he was invited to Hyderabad, Deccan in 1878 where he established a school with the English medium. He then founded the Hyderabad College and was appointed its Principal. This later became the Nizam's college. Soon with his wife's help, he began to take interest in women's education. With the cooperation of other women, the girl's college was inaugurated as a part of the Osmania University. He was a great champion of women's cause and founded the "Young Women's Improvement Trust" for its furtherence. He wanted women to be financially independent. He made a great effort to abolish child-marriage and encourage the marriage of widows. He was responsible for the introduction of the special Marriage Act of British India in Hyderabad. He was also against the caste system and threw aside the sacred Brahmanical thread at the age of fourteen. His services were much appreciated in Hyderabad for many years, but he became involved in politics and was suspended from service and deported from Hyderabad for a short time. A few years later, he was recalled as Principal, Nizam's
College. His dynamic policies and nationalistic views led him to seek premature retirement and shift for Calcutta, where he spent his last years. From 1885 he took an active part in the Indian National Congress from its very inception. In Calcutta Aghorenath, on the invitation of his old friend, Principal Maitra of City College, joined his teaching staff on a strictly honorary capacity. He was very much popular among his young Bengali students.

Sarojini's mother Varada Sundari Devi was an "ideal" Hindu woman, devoted to her husband, children and household duties. Her youngest son Harindranath Chattopadhyaya pointed out that her mother's eyes were always "brimful of mercy, kindness and contemplation". She was a poet and musician. In her young age she had composed some Bengali lyrics which she often sang in her melodious voice. She had won the Viceroy's gold medal for singing when she was a student of her village school in Bengal. She was very affectionate and large-hearted woman and accorded lavish hospitality to everyone who came to her house. Her dining table always stood ready with Hindu, Muslim and Western recipes and delicious sweets cooked by her. Her husband had his friends among Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Europeans and a generous welcome awaited one and all who

came to his house. Harindranath Chattopadhyaya describes his house in Hyderabad as "a museum of wisdom and culture, a zoo crowded with a medley of strange types - some even verging on the mystic, for our home was open to all alike."\(^1\) It was really a liberal home where Hindus and Muslims and Christians, Parsies and Sikhs, Brahmins and Sudras, and indeed, all living things had an honoured and equal place. It was a strange confluence of different races and cultures. Aghorenath's closest friend was Mulla Abdul Qayyum, Principal of the Hyderabad College. Paying a tribute to him later on, Sarojini wrote:

"How happy I am to add a flower of affection to the memorial garland woven by many hands in honour of my father's beloved friend, Mulla Abdul Qayyum Sahib, whose figure and fascinating personality are integral parts of my earliest recollections. Seldom have two persons divided by such divergent circumstances of birth, education, racial heritage and religious tradition achieved such perfect friendship as these two gifted and distinguished people".\(^2\)

She describes both of them as pioneers of the Indian Renaissance. Varada Sundari Devi and Aghorenath talked to everyone in his own language. The husband and the wife spoke to each other in Bengali, to their children in Hindustani, to their servants in Telgu and to their European friends in English.

A more devoted couple than Agorenath Chattopadhyaya and Varada Sundari Devi would be hard to find. The couple seemed to be in perpetual romance. The grand old man had set to tune in almost all the well known ragas a song dedicated to his "darling", the refrain of which was: "Varada amar pran", "Varada my life". He sang it often with great gusto and vigour, his voice reverberating through the big rooms of his house.

The eight children of Aghorenath Chattopadhyaya and Varada Sundari Devi were all very talented and exceptional ones. Younger to Sarojini who was the eldest son, was Virendranath, a well known revolutionary associated with Communist activities. He was born in 1880 and was later exiled from India. He died during the Stalinist era in 1942. He was intimately known to Lenin who admired him. Bhupendranath, the third child was born in 1882. He became the Assistant Accountant General in Hyderabad and died in Bombay in 1933. Mrinalini, affectionately called "Gunnu" by the family was born in 1883. She took her tripos in Modern Sciences at Cambridge and became a popular Principal of the Girl's College, Lahore. Younger to her was Sunalini Devi who was born in 1890 and became an artist and dancer. Ranendranath was born in 1895 and died of cancer in 1959. The youngest son Harindranath was born in 1898. He was a versatile genius and earned great fame as poet, artist, and dramatist. He married
the famous socialist leader, Kamladevi Chattopadhyaya. Suhashini, the youngest child, was born in 1901. She too was a committed Communist like her eldest brother Virendranath.

Sarojini was very fortunate to have been born in such a gifted family and to such talented parents. She was a very precocious child and revealed her rare intellectual qualities from the very beginning. She was a clever student in her school and always stood first in her class. She was, however, reluctant to learn English till she was of nine years. It was only after her father punished her by shutting her in a room alone that she started learning English seriously. In no time there after she acquired a rare proficiency in the language. As a girl she also learnt Urdu and Persian and later French.

Sarojini's father wanted her to be a great mathematician or a scientist, but the poetic instinct which she inherited from her parents, proved stronger. Describing how she made a debit in poetic career, she wrote to Arthur Symons:

One day, when I was eleven, I was sighing over a sum in algebra: it wouldn't come right; but indeed a whole poem came to me suddenly. I wrote it down. From that day my 'poetic career' began. At thirteen I wrote a long poem a la 'Lady of the Lake' - 1300 lines in six days. At thirteen I wrote a drama of 2000 lines, a full-fledged passionate thing that I began on the spur of the moment without forethought, just to spite my
doctor who said that I was very ill and must not touch a book. My health broke down permanently about this time, and my regular studies being stopped I read voraciously. I suppose the greater part of my reading was done between fourteen and sixteen. I wrote a novel, I wrote fat volumes of journals; I took myself very seriously in those days."

after her early education in Hyderabad, Sarojini was sent to Madras for matriculation as there was no suitable school for girls in Hyderabad. She passed the matriculation examination in 1891 when she was only of twelve years, gaining a first class first in the Madras University which in those days covered the whole of the Southern Peninsula. It was a rare achievement for a girl of her age and her success caused surprise and fame throughout India. After passing the matriculation she returned to Hyderabad and stayed in her parental home from 1892 to 1895. These were among the happiest years of Sarojini's maturing life. She indulged in wide reading and exulted in the happy home life and the wide circle of friends of her parents. She wrote during this period from 1892 to 1895 i.e. between the age of 13 to 16 a number of verses published privately by her father under the title Songs (1896). These poems printed on rough paper bear the inscription on the cover: "Poems by S. Chattopadhyaya, dated 3rd Oct. 1896."

1. Arthur Symons, pp. 11-12.
It was during this period that Sarojini came in contact with Govindarajulu Naidu, a doctor in the service of the Nizam Government and one of the members of the wide circle of her family friends. He was the son of a military doctor and had been to England for his medical studies. Married at the age of eighteen to a very young girl who died in less than a year, he turned a widower, Sarojini and Dr. Naidu fell deeply in love with each other and aspired to be married. Aghorenath was not in favour of their marriage not because Dr. Naidu was of a lower caste, for the former being a Brahmo Samajist did not believe in the caste system. His main objection was that Sarojini was very young and Dr. Naidu was a widower and about ten years her senior. The scholarship comprising the passage to England and £300 a year, granted by the Nizam of Hyderabad to Sarojini to go to England for further studies, came as a welcome relief to Aghorenath who shipped Sarojini to England in September, 1895, accompanied by Annie Besant.

In England Sarojini, barely a girl of sixteen, took its literary world by storm. Literary celebrities like Edmund Gosse and Arthur Symons soon discerned her rare passion for poetry and praised her unreservedly. It was fortunate for her that in England she became the ward of Miss Manning who had done so much for Indian students in London and to whose modest rooms came some of the great literary figures of the day. It was here that Sarojini met Edmund Gosse, the man who put her
firmly on the path of becoming a poet. In these cultured circles the small Indian girl in her rich silks, with large shining eyes that struck everyone with their darkness, depth and intensity, was to blossom and grow.

Edmund Gosse wrote that when she was introduced to him she was "a child of sixteen, but as unlike the usual English maiden of that age as a lotus or a cactus is unlike a lily of the valley. She was already marvellous in mental maturity, amazingly well-read and far beyond a Western child in all her acquaintance with the world." He further pointed out:

By some accident now forgotten, but an accident most fortunate for us - Sarojini was introduced to our home at an early date after her arrival in London, and she soon became one of the most welcome and intimate of our guests. It was natural that one so impetuous and so sympathetic should not long conceal from her hosts that she was writing copiously in verse-in English verse.2

Sarojini left equally deep impression on Arthur Symons, the famous poet and critic. He wrote about her:

To those who know her in England all the life of the Tiny figure seemed to concentrate itself in the eyes: they turned towards beauty as the sunflower turns towards the sun, opening wider and wider until one saw nothing but the eyes. She was dressed always in clinging dresses of Eastern silk, and she was so small and her

2. Edmund Gosse, p. 3.
large black hair hung straight down her back, you might have taken her for a child. She spoke little, and in a low voice, like gentle music, and she seemed, wherever she was, to be alone.¹

The encouragement which Sarojini got from these leading figures in English literature, inspired her to dedicate the next twenty years of her life to writing poetry in English and introducing the exotic oriental world to the English speaking people.

Sarojini first started her studies in London at King's College. Later she went to Girton, Cambridge, but she did not seem interested in getting any academic degree. In Cambridge she spent her time away from her lecture rooms in wandering about in the beautiful adjoining woods. The beautiful natural sights of the English country side led her to write poems about lovely country flowers and birds. Edmund Gosse who read these poems said: "The verses which Sarojini had entrusted to me were skilled in form, correct in grammar and blameless in sentiment; but they had the disadvantage of being totally without individuality. They were Western in feeling and in imagery, they were founded on reminiscences of Tennyson and Shelly."² He advised her not to write of English robins and skylarks and to abandon a "rechauffe of Anglo-Saxon sentiment

1. Arthur Symons, p. 16.
2. Edmund Gosse, p. 4.
in an Anglo-Saxon setting" and give some revelation of the heart of India, some sincere penetrating analysis of native passion of the principle of antique religion and of such mysterious intimations as stirred the soul of the East long before the West had begun to dream that it had soul."¹ Sarojini realized her mistakes and ceased to be "Falsely English". Hence onwards she reflected the picturesque and variegated Indian ethos in her poetry.

Sarojini's over-emotional nature suffered a great strain at this time and she underwent a slight nervous break-down. She was sent to Switzerland and from there to Italy to recoup her health. She was enthralled by Italy and wrote to Symons from Florence: "This Italy is made of gold, the gold of dawn and daylight, the gold of stars, and, now dancing in weird enchanting rhythms through the magic month of May, the gold of fireflies in the perfumed darkness - 'aerial gold'."²

Sarojini returned to India in September 1898 and soon after decided to marry the man she loved. Her parents who had hoped that her sojourn to England would cool off her adolescent love, realized their mistake and gave their consent for marriage, which took place in Madras on December 2, 1898. Mrs. Ram Mohan Roy, a Brahmo lady of culture and reinforcement, acted as the bridesmaid and added grace and

1. Ibid., p. 5.
beauty to the solemnity of the occasion. The marriage broke away many obsolete traditions. It was intercaste and inter-provincial marriage, celebrated under the Special Marriage Act of 1872. Both the parties had to deny that they were of any religion.

Sarojini led a very happy married life as she settled in Hyderabad. She had her first child, Jayasurya, in 1901. He was followed in next three years by Padmja, Ranadhira and Leilamani. Her home became famous for its lavish hospitality to friends from all parts of the world and here she lived for the first few years of her married life with the sound of children's laughter and abounding love enriching her life. Though wrapped in her domestic happiness and responsibilities, she continued composing poems in rapid succession. These poems were published in *The Indian Ladies Magazine* started by her friend Kamala Satthianadhan in 1901. Later they appeared in his first anthology of verses, *The Golden Threshold*, which was dedicated to Edmund Gosse and published by William Heinemann in 1905 with an Introduction by Arthur Symons. The book took England by storm and made her famous as the 'Nightingale of India' or 'Bharat Kokila', the name given to her by Mahatma Gandhi.

Sarojini did not confine herself only to her domesticity and production of verses, her restless soul was
inquisitive to learn about the mystery of life and reach out to common humanity in its service. In her symbolic prose poem, "Nilambija" (1902), she describes herself as a young girl with lovely soul, watching the stars "till she has caught from their inaccessible fires the soaring flame of her manifold enthusiasm, a myriad-hearted passion for humanity, for knowledge, for life, about all, for the eternal beauty of universe." Sarojini was conscious of the social and political upsurge through which her country was passing and was eager to play her role in shaping its destiny. One of her passions in life was to make her countrymen realize the significance of true brotherhood of men and rise about the prejudice of race, creed, caste or colour. She wanted them not to think of themselves as Hindus, or Muslims or Brahmins, or Bengalees or Madrassees but as Indians; and not even merely as Indians but as the citizens of the world. In her lecture delivered in 1903 at a public meeting held under the auspices of the Historical Society, Pachaiyappa's College, she remarked:

If beg of you, my brothers, not to limit your love only to India, because it is better to aim at the sky, it is better that your ideals of patriotism should extend for the welfare of the world and not be limited to the prosperity of India and so to achieve that prosperity for your country; because, if the ideals be only for

the prosperity of your country, it would end where it began, by being a profit to your own community and very probably to your own self.¹

While addressing the Theistic Conference held at Calcutta in 1906, she exhorted people to realize and develop the divine spark that lies within them and treat all men as their brothers:

You, son of India, whom I speak to to-day, and you, daughters, whom I am also addressing, know that you are responsible for the call upon you for ennobled lives, not merely for the glory and prosperity of your country, but for the higher patriotism that says the world is my country, and all men are my brothers.²

Equally deeply Sarojini was devoted to the cause of the education and freedom of women in India. It was her great concern for the cause of Indian women which brought her into contact with one of the greatest national leaders of India in the early twentieth century and dragged her into politics and the struggle of the freedom of the country. Her eloquent speech emphasizing the great need for education of Indian women at the Indian Social Conference, Calcutta, 1906, concluded with the exhortation:

Does one man dare deprive another of his birthright to God's pure air which nourishes his body? How, then,

1. Speeches and Writings, p. 8.
2. Ibid., p. 12.
shall a man dare to deprive a human soul of its immemorial inheritance of liberty and life? And yet, my friends, man has so dared in the case of Indian women. That is why you men of India are to-day what you are: because your fathers, in depriving your mothers of that immemorial birthright, have robbed you, their sons, of your just inheritance. Therefore, I charge you, restore to your women their ancient rights, for, as I have said it is we, and not you, who are the real nation builders, and without our active cooperation at all points of progress all your congresses and conferences are in vain. Educate your women and the nation will take care of itself, for it is true to day as it was yesterday and will be to the end of human life that the hand that rocks the cradle is the power that rules the world.¹

At the end of her speech Sarojini received a written message from Gokhale complimenting her on her enthralling speech: "May I take the liberty to offer you my most respectful and enthusiastic congratulations? Your speech was more than an intellectual treat of the highest order ....We all felt for the moment to be lifted to a higher plane."² With this message commenced her intimate, relations with Gokhale, which lasted till the latter's death in 1915.

Between 1907 and 1911, Sarojini met Gokhale several times in Bombay, Madras, Poona and Delhi. After each meeting

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1. Speeches and Writings, p. 16.
2. "Reminiscences of Mr. Gokhale", Speeches and Writings of Sarojini Naidu, p. 22.
as she herself remarks: "I would always carry away the memory of some fervent and stirring word of exhortation to yield my life to the service of India."\(^1\) Though deeply involved in national activities Gokhale found leisure to send her, now and then, a warm message of approval, of encouragement, when any of her poem or speech or action chanced to please him or the frequent rumours of her failing health caused him anxiety or alarm. It was, however, at the beginning of 1912 when Gokhale spent a few weeks in Calcutta with her father that real intimacy was established between them. She now began to comprehend the intrinsic and versatile greatness of the man, his precise, brilliant and subtle intellect, his unrivalled gifts of political analysis and synthesis, the vigour and veracity of his far-reaching statesmanship, the lofty simplicities and sacrifices of his daily life. In him she felt that both the practical, strenuous worker and the mystic dreamer of dreams were harmonized by the age-long discipline of his Brahminical ancestry nourished on the gospel of the Bhagvat Gita and wisdom in action of true yoga. As a sincere guide of Sarojini Naidu, Gokhale with his practical sagacity often moderated her excessive enthusiasm. In 1912 there had come out Sarojini's second book of verses, The Bird of Time, with an 'Introduction' by Edmund Gosse. The book had attracted

\(^1\) Ibid., p. 23.
great attention and unreserved applause. Gokhale, however, warned her not to be swept off her feet by adulation and success. Similarly though he impressed upon her the importance of working for Hindu-Muslim unity, he cautioned her against over-optimism in this matter. Once when she spoke in terms of achieving Hindu-Muslim unity within five years, he said prophetically: "Child, you are a poet and you hope too much. Unity will not come in my lifetime, nor in yours. But keep your faith and work if you can."¹

Gokhale's health had always been delicate. During his stay in England in 1913 and 1914, he had strong premonitions of early death. Sarojini was also in England at that time and sensed his inner thoughts: "Something of the autumnal sadness of fallen leaves and growing mists had passed into his mood."² Once in the spring of 1914, he asked her: "Why should a song-bird like you have a broken wing."³ and then told her that he had just received his own death-warrant at the hands of his doctors. At another occasion he said a little wistfully: "Do you know, I feel that an abiding sadness underlies all that unfailing brightness of yours? Is it because you have come so near death that its shadows still cling to you?" "No", Sarojini answered, "I have come so near

² Ibid., p. 35.
life that its fires have burnt me".\(^1\) Gokhale's health during this period was deteriorating fast and he was forbidden to leave his room or to receive visitors. Sarojini whom he called 'the best of all his prescriptions',\(^2\) alone was allowed to see him. She was with him for the last time, two days before she sailed for India. Gokhale has begun to feel the foreshadowing of the wings of death very clearly by now. As he bade her farewell, he said: "I do not think we shall meet again. If you live, 'remember your life is dedicated to the service of the country. My work is done".\(^3\) Nearly four months after on 19th February, 1915, "The great saint and soldier of national righteousness"\(^4\) passed away. A month before Gokhale's death Sarojini lost her father. Though himself on his death bed, Gokhale wrote to her in grief: "I wish I had been anywhere near so that I could have gone to see you personally. I do hope your grief will break out into songs that will abide."\(^5\) In the death of Gokhale Sarojini lost her great guide and mentor.

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1. "Reminiscences of Mr. Gokhale", p. 32.
2. Ibid., p. 33.
3. Ibid., p. 35
4. Ibid.
In 1913 when Sarojini Naidu was staying in London she met the young liberal Muslim leader Mr. M.A. Jinnah and developed a close friendship with him which lasted to the end though their joint dream of Hindu-Muslim unity crumbled and their paths separated irrevocably. Mr. Jinnah had founded that year the London Indian Association, a new student organization, with the active and eager support of Indian students in London. It aimed to provide a permanent centre to focus the scattered student life in London and to build up such staunch tradition of cooperation and fellowship that it might eventually grow into a perfect miniature and model of the federated India of the future, the India of their dreams. Sarojini helped Mr. Jinnah to get the blessings of Gokhale for this association and persuade him to deliver its inaugural address. Sarojini called Mr. Jinnah her "Comrade and leader", and hailed him as the "ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity". Reminisceing about Sarojini, Sir C.P. Ramaswamy wrote to Padmini Sen Gupta: "Sarojini was very intimately associated with Jinnah and his activities as an Indian political leader, and perhaps, next to Gandhiji the dominating influence on Sarojini's life was that of Jinnah, although she was superior to him intellectually and spiritually, the difference being

between genius and talent."¹ Padmini Sen Gupta also relates
how great regard Sarojini had for Mr. Jinnah: "Once in 1946, I
remember going to see Mrs. Naidu and telling her that I had
written a book on "Some Great Leaders". She asked me if I had
included Jinnah, and when I replied in the negative she was
angry with me and immediately said: "But Jinnah is a great
man. You should have included him in your book."² At the 1915
session of the Congress, she recited in Jinnah's honour her poem,
"Awake".

Sarojini's another great Muslim friend was Umar Sobhani,
a prominent businessman of Bombay. He was one of the first
supporters of Gandhiji in whose cause he sacrificed his
fortune and later his life. His death on July 6, 1926,
inspired one of Sarojini's most poignant poems included in The
Feather of the Dawn.

Though Sarojini had deep love and loyalty for her
friends, her devotion to Mahatma Gandhi, once she came under
his sway, was complete and final. Gokhale who was in South
Africa in 1913 and watched Gandhiji's successful satyagraha
struggle against the persecution of Indians by the White
Government there, had advised him to transfer his activities

¹. Padmini Sen Gupta, Sarojini Naidu (New Delhi: Sahitya
². Padmini Sen Gupta, Sarojini Naidu: A Biography (1966),
p. 133.
in India. Gokhale grasped the significance of his ideas and spoke to Sarojini about the role "the little, frail, brown man" was destined to play in India's struggle for independence. He had asked Sarojini to meet him when he arrived in England.

Gandhiji arrived in England on August 6, 1914 from South Africa, two days after the commencement of the First World War. He was warmly welcomed by the Indian community in London. A few days after a reception was held at the Cecil hotel in honour of Gandhiji, in which Sarojini Naidu, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, Ananda Coomaraswamy and some other prominent Indians paid tributes to his success in South Africa. Gandhiji was in favour of offering support to the British Government during the war. He did not want to embarrass the British at the time of their hardship by asking for freedom. At a meeting of Indian students in London he insisted that "England's difficulty should not be turned into our opportunity, and that it was more becoming and far-sighted not to press our demands while the war lasted."¹ Gandhiji wanted to start an Indian Voluntary Ambulance Corps, just as he had helped the sick and wounded in South Africa during the Boer and Zulu wars. A joint letter signed by Mahatma Gandhi, Sarojini Naidu and other

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Indians was sent to British authorities offering their help. Sarojini and Gandhiji were therefore drawn together to work for the same cause. Sarojini was a member of the Lyceum, a well known ladies club, whose members undertook the sewing of garments for the Indian Voluntary Corps.

Sarojini saw as much of the Mahatma as she could before she left for India on October 10, 1914. She wrote later: "It thrilled me that men of all nations - Eastern and Western - gathered in his home, proof that true greatness speaks in a universal language and compels universal admiration."¹ She was also attracted to the wifely devotion of Kasturba: "A kind, gentle lady, with the indomitable spirit of the martyrs .... busy with a hundred small housewifely tasks, like any other woman and not the heroine of martyrdom."²

Mahatma Gandhi fell ill in London and was ordered complete rest. When he returned to India in 1915, he was asked by Gokhale to take rest for a year before he started any work. Gandhiji soon established his Sabarmati Ashram near Ahmedabad and following the advice of Gokhale studied Indian situation without taking any active part in politics. Sarojini who had returned to India earlier, soon found herself in mourning

¹. Tara Ali Baig, p. 52.
². Ibid.
because her father died on January 28, 1915. Within less than a month she suffered another shock when her mentor Gokhale passed away on February 19, 1915. On recovering from her grief she renewed her lecture tours awakening people to the need for Hindu-Muslim and supreme sacrifices for the freedom of the motherland. She devoted the years 1915 to 1917 entirely to touring and lecturing along with Annie Besant, an equally dynamic orator, and C.P. Ramaswamy Iyer. She was the most wanted and popular speaker because of her eloquence and silvery poetic speeches. In 1917 came out her third collection of verses, *The Broken Wing*, which was dedicated to "The Dream of Today and the Hope of Tomorrow." This was the last collection of her verses to be published in her lifetime because she was soon involved heart and soul in the cause of patriotism. Her poetic talent now found its expression through her eloquent speeches. Some stray poems which she wrote later on were published posthumously under the title, *The Feather of the Dawn*, in 1961.

By 1916 Sarojini Naidu had emerged as a leading Congress leader. In the Indian National Congress session held in Bombay in 1915, she had recited her poem, "Awake", in which she conveyed the idea that Mother India could be awakened from

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1. Tara Ali Baig, p. 52
slumber only through the united efforts of all the communities. The poem was dedicated to Mohammad Ali Jinnah. In the next session of the Congress held in Lucknow in 1916, she gained wide recognition both as a speaker and national leader of the first rank when she was entrusted the task of supporting the resolution on self-government for India. In her enthralling speech she declared:

I am merely a spectator from the watch-tower of dreams; and I watched the swift and troubled, sometimes chequered, but nevertheless indomitable Time-spirit marching on in a pageant of triumph to the desired goal. We stand united but united with such strength that nothing from outside, not even the tyranny of colonial domination, shall withhold from us our rights and privileges, withhold from us the liberties that are due, which we claim by our united voice.... Centuries have gone by, old divisions are healed, old wounds have got cured. To each of us has come that living consciousness, that is in united service for the motherland that constitutes the upper most hope of tomorrow. There is no one so mean so weak, so selfish as not to think that in the service to the motherland lies the joy greater than all personal joys; in suffering for her comes the supermost consolation in our personal sorrow; and in her worship is the absolution of sin; to live for her is the most victorious triumph of life; to die for her is to achieve the priceless crown of immortality.¹

¹ Tara Ali Baig, p. 55.
The resolution on Self Government was moved by the great leader Surendranath Banerjee, and seconded by Annie Besant.

Sarojini's close association with the national movement can be said to have begun at the eighteenth session of the Indian National Congress which was held at Bombay in December 1904. She was already familiar with the history and ideals of the Congress through the work done by her father. Aghorenath had, in collaboration with Abdul Qayum, established a branch of the Congress at Hyderabad. He had taken the initiative in getting the writings of Lokamanya Tilak and Bepin Chandra Pal printed and distributed in Hyderabad State. Sarojini had childhood memories of these activities. Now, at the Bombay Session of the Congress, she had opportunities of meeting some of the well-known nationalist leaders-Pherozshah Mehta, C.Y. Chintamani and Gopal Krishna Gokhale. Sarojini was invited to recite her poem, "Ode to India". The poem was heard with deep appreciation and the young poetess became immensely popular among the delegates.

It was at this time in 1904 that Sarojini met Ramahai Ramade, one of the pioneers of the women's emancipation movement in India. From now, on the cause of India's freedom, Hindu-Muslim unity and the need to improve the status of Indian women claimed more and more of her attention and became the dominant factors in her life. Her popularity as a speaker kept pace with her fame as a poet. Many educational, cultural
and social institutions in different parts of India invited her to give lectures under their auspices. She was also elected to important offices in Literary and social organisations. The period between 1904 to 1916 was for her a time of learning and, to some extent, also a period of 'rehearsal' of her future work in the social, political and literary spheres.

The year 1916 was very significant in the history of India. There took place a reapproachment between the extremists and the moderates and the extremists who had earlier left the Congress under the leadership of Tilak came in its fold again. Tilak (Annie Besant's Home Rule league was founded a year earlier) started his Home Rule League in this very year. Annie Besant's Home Rule League was founded a year earlier. The prospects of Hindu-Muslim unity appeared brighter in 1916 than ever before. Both the Congress and the Muslim league held their annual session at Lucknow and came very close to each other. Sarojini had the rare privilege to address the historic Muslim league session in March 1912 also when it adopted a new constitution embodying cooperation with Hindus in all matters of national welfare and progress. She had then created a great impression on young members of the Muslim league by her impassioned speech. It was also in the year 1916 that Jawaharlal Nehru met Mahatma Gandhi and Sarojini Naidu at the Congress Session for the first time. To
Sarojini he was instantly "a brother" and she a "comrade" and his family became her family.

Though Mahatma Gandhi did not take any active part in the Congress session of 1916, he under the persuasion of the peasant leader, Raj Kumar Shukla, started satyagraha movement in Champaran for the redress of the lot of indigo planting labour. The success of Gandhiji's direct action which resulted in the passing of the Champaran Agrarian Act, showed to Indians the efficacy of satyagraha principles based on moral courage against human exploitation. Gandhiji's new revolutionary technique into the fight for freedom found a ready response in Sarojini. Hence onwards she became a complete and blind disciple of Mahatma Gandhi.

The year 1917 and 1918 were very busy ones for Sarojini from the point of view of her speaking engagements. In January 1917, she delivered a lecture on "The Vision of Patriotism" under the presidency of Pandit Moti Lal Nehru at the Leader Building, Allahabad. Later that year she addressed the Madras Students' Convention at a meeting in the Gokhale Hall, held under the presidency of Mrs. Annie Besant. This was followed by a lecture on "The Ideals of Islam" arranged by the young Men's Muslim Association of Madras, and a talk on education at the Teachers' College with James Cousins in chair. In December 1917, Sarojini joined a deputation which
waited on the Secretary of State, Edwin Montagu, to demand equal rights for women. In March 1918, she was at Jullunder in the Punjab, opening a woman's school and lecturing on the emancipation of Indian women. In April she lectured at Lahore on national education. In May she was back at Madras and played an important part at the provincial conference held at Kanchipuram. In July she again visited Madras for the opening ceremony of National School for Girls. In September she attended the Congress session at Bombay and moved the resolution demanding equal qualifications for men and women. In December that year she addressed the provincial conference at Bijapur and spoke on women's franchise.

The year 1919 saw India deeply involved in the nationwide passive resistance movement started by Gandhiji to protest against the Rowlatt Act described as the "Black Act". Sarojini delivered speeches at Madras and Ahmedabad calling upon her compatriots to resist "this hideous nightmare" of repressive laws. The stern suppression of the movement by the alien government resulted in the brutal massacre of peaceful protesters at Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar. The barbarous atrocities of the British government and the tragedy of Jallianwala Bagh shocked the whole world. To protest against the bloody act of the government, Rabindranath Tagore renounced his knighthood and Sarojini returned her Kaiser-e-Hind medal awarded by the government in recognition
of her work in the Ambulance Corps during the war. At this time Indian Muslims were also indignant against the dismemberment of the Turkish Empire, and the abolition of the Caliphate by the British. Mahatma Gandhi supported the Khilafat Movement of Muslims and united Hindus and Muslims in a common struggle against the foreign rulers till the wrongs of the Punjab and Turkey were set right.

Sarojini went to England in July 1919 as a member of the deputation sent by the Home Rule League to submit a memorandum to the British Government regarding the situation in India. During her stay in London she through public lectures and private conversations, presented the correct picture to India's friends about the Khilafat movement and the magnitude of the Jallianwala Bagh tragedy. In one of her lectures, "The Agony and Shame of the Punjab", delivered on 3rd June, 1920 at Kingsway Hall, she made a bitter attack on the hypocrisy of British justice. Referring to the atrocities committed by General Dyer's men on the women of Amritsar, she said: "You deserve no Empire. You have today lost your soul."\(^1\)

Sarojini returned to India in July 1920. On the first of August, Mahatma Gandhi formally started the non-cooperation

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movement; which received tremendous response throughout India. Students came out of schools and colleges to work for the national cause. Distinguished lawyers like C.R. Dass and Motilal Nehru gave up their practice. People abstained from buying foreign goods and burnt British clothes publicly. In July 1921, the All India Khilafat Conference was convened with full support of the Congress. Sarojini was in the thick of the fray. She guided an organization of volunteers to help maintain discipline among the passive resisters. On 4 October 1921, she signed a manifesto issued by Mahatma Gandhi giving an outline of the methods and aims of the non-violent movement addressing students. Sarojini said: "It is a battle of self-purification, self-sacrifice and self-devotion. Come, march with me to the temple of liberty."

In its session of December, 1921, held at Ahmedabad, the Congress expressed its determination to continue the movement under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. The leaders of Khilafat Movement also joined hands with him. Thus by the beginning of 1922 started Non-violent Non-Cooperation and Civil Disobedience Movement called Satyagraha to overthrow the British Government. There was unprecedented unity among Hindus and Muslims and people throughout India were full of great enthusiasm and excitement. Unfortunately incensed by the acts

1. Naravane, p. 38.
of violence of the passive resisters at Chauri Chaura village in Gorakhpur District of U.P., Mahatma Gandhi sus-

spected the movement soon after to the great dismay and
disappointment of people. Both Hindu and Muslim leaders
criticized Gandhiji for this abrupt suspension when the
movement was at its climax. Gandhiji, however, justified his
action on the basis that the nation was not yet prepared for
non-violent movement.

A few months later Mahatma Gandhi was arrested and
tried for sedition. Sarojini was in court when the great trial
of the Mahatma Gandhi began in Ahmedabad on March 18, 1922.
writing for The Bombay Chronicle, she compared the trial with
that of Jesus Christ by Pontius Pilate: "I realized now that
the lowly Jesus of Nazareth, cradled in a manger, furnished
the only parallel in history to the invincible apostle of
Indian liberty, who loved humanity with unsurpassed
compassion, and to use his own beautiful phrase, "approached
the poor with the mind of the poor.'"¹ Gandhiji was sentenced
to six years' imprisonment. Taking leave of Sarojini, Gandhiji
said, "I entrust the destiny of India in your hands."²

1. Tara Ali Baig, p. 79.
2. Ibid.
In October 1922, Sarojini travelled to Ceylon and lectured at Colombo, Jafna, Galle and some other places. She spoke on "The Renaissance in India" and "The New World of Islam." Returning to India, she lectured at Trivandrum, Tiruchirapalli and Madras. She then went to Gaya, where the Congress session was held in December. The nationalist movement now faced a serious new obstacle. The unity between Hindus and Muslims achieved during the Khilafat agitation was cracking up. In spite of Sarojini's great efforts the Gulf between the Congress and the Muslim League went on widening with no hope of their coming closer again.

In January 1924, Sarojini went to Africa as a delegate of the Indian National Congress to attend a convention of the Kenya India Congress. She received a rousing reception when she presided at the East African Indian Congress at Mombasa. She then went to Durban where she addressed the Indian Women's Association. A touching farewell function was held for her on 22 May 1924 before she left for India. Gandhiji was by this time released by the Government because of illness. He was elected the President of the Indian National Congress at its Belgaum session in 1924. Sarojini succeeded Mahatma Gandhi as the President of the Indian National Congress in December 1925 at its Kanpur session. In her brief speech she covered a long range of subjects - Non-violence, non-cooperation,
village reconstruction, education, national militia, South Africa, and Hindu-Muslim unity. Her address was an expression of courage and hope: "In the battle for liberty fear is the one unforgivable treachery, and despair the one unforgivable sin."¹ Sarojini's elevation to the office of Congress President was welcomed as "an honour to Indian womanhood." It received a good deal of publicity even outside India. The New York Times referred to her as "The John of Arc who rose to inspire India."² Aldous Huxley who attended the Kanpur session wrote eulogistically about her in The Jesting Pilate.

In 1926 Sarojini spent a good deal of time in Bengal and U.P. In 1928 she went to America as Mahatma Gandhi's unofficial ambassador. Her journey through U.S.A. and Canada was an unqualified success. She received a warm welcome wherever she went and the press made highly favourable comments on her lectures which covered wide range of subjects related to interpretation of Indian womanhood, aspects of the modern Indian Renaissance and analysis of the spiritual ideals of India. Her speeches projected the real image of India, which an American author, Katherine Mayo, has tried to tarnish through her vicious book, Mother India, published in 1928. On returning to India in July 1929, Sarojini was taken on the Working Committee of the Congress and thus became a member of

1. Naravane, p. 42.
2. Ibid., p. 41.
what came to be known as the Congress High Command. The same year in November, she went to Kenya to preside over the East African Indian Congress for the second time, but returned soon after to attend the Congress Session of December 1929 presided over by Jawaharlal Nehru. She was present when the Congress took Independence pledge and celebrated Independence Day on 26 January, 1930.

Sarojini joined Mahatma Gandhi when he began his Salt Satyagraha movement by marching to Dandi on 12 March, 1930, to break the Salt Law. As the Mahatma picked up prepared salt, Sarojini applauded: "Hail deliverer"! After the arrest of Mahatma Gandhi on 5 May, 1930, she continued to lead the movement till she, too, was arrested. Mahatma Gandhi and other leaders, including Sarojini, were released in January 1931. They went soon after to Allahabad to see Motilal Nehru whose health had broken down in jail. Pt. Motilal Nehru passed away on 6 February, 1931, casting a gloom all over the country. In March 1931 there took place an agreement between Gandhiji and the Viceroy, known as Gandhi - Irwin Pact as a result of which Gandhiji called off Civil Disobedience Movement and went to England to participate in the Second Round Table Conference. Sarojini accompanied Mahatma Gandhi as her close adviser. After the conference, she along with Srinivasa Sastri went to Cape Town but soon returned to India as Mahatma Gandhi had
launched freedom struggle more powerfully after the failure of talks in London. Large number of Congress volunteers and leaders including Gandhiji and Sarojini were imprisoned in 1932 in the wake of cruel repression of the movement by the Government.

Sarojini was released on May 8, 1933. During 1934-1937, she extensively toured the country addressing young men and women and awakening national consciousness in them. The Congress swept the polls in the general election held in 1937 under the Government of India Act 1935 and formed Ministries in seven out of eleven provinces besides having coalition government in two other provinces. These ministries, however, resigned in the end of 1939 as a protest against the British government dragging India in the Second World War without consulting the Indian legislature. In 1940, Sarojini offered individual Satyagraha along with other Congress workers. As the World War escalated and the advancing Japanese forces in the South East Asia posed serious threat to India, the Congress was led to pass on August 8, 1942, the famous "Quit India" resolution demanding the withdrawal of the British power from India, and sanctioning a mass struggle on nonviolent lines on the widest possible scale under the leadership of Gandhiji. The mass arrest of national leaders plunged the whole country in a state of political turmoil. Sarojini was jailed with Mahatma Gandhi, Kasturba, Sushila
Nayyar, Mahadev Desai, Pyarelal, Mira Behn in the Aga Khan Palace. Her radiant and dauntless presence saved the fellow prisoners from languishing in sorrow and melancholy when Mahadev Desai died and Mahatmaji went on a twenty-one day fast at the age of seventy three. Mira Behn says: "None of us, not even Bapu, had realized up to this time of incarceration together in the Aga Khan's palace the full richness of Sarojini Devi's nature. She sparked with and showered her love on all with her motherly nature." ¹ Sarojini was released from the palace-prison on March 21, 1943 when she fell seriously ill of malaria. Almost a year later in February 1944 Kasturba, still in prison, passed away. The same year on May 6, Gandhiji was released on grounds of health.

When the World War ended and Labour Party came into power in Britain, the new government made an earnest bid to end the political deadlock in India. After the protracted negotiations, first through the Cabinet Mission and then through the Viceroy and Governor General Lord Mountbatten, a new basis of political settlement was reached by which India was partitioned and the dominions of India and Pakistan were established. The agreement came into force on 15 August, 1947 when India emerged as an independent nation.

1. Padmini Sen Gupta, p. 64.
The Asian Relations Conference, held at Delhi in March, 1947 was the last important event before independence with which Sarojini was closely associated. She presided over the Conference. Her Presidential address "was one of the most brilliant pieces of flaming rhetoric she had uttered during her life."¹ Sarojini was made governor of U.P. when India became independent. At the swearing in ceremony, she stressed the role of free India in her lyrical prose:

"Oh, world of free nations, on this day of our freedom we pray for your freedom in the future. Ours has been an epic struggle, covering many years and costing many lives. It has been a struggle, a dramatic struggle. It has been struggle of heroes chiefly anonymous in their millions. It has been a struggle of women transformed into strength they worship. It has been a struggle of youth suddenly transformed into power itself and sacrifice and ideals. It has been a struggle of young men and old men, of rich and poor, the literate and the illiterate, the stricken and the outcast, the leper and the saint.

"We are reborn today out of the crucible of your sufferings. Nations of the world, I greet you in the name of India, my mother. My mother whose home has a roof of snow, whose walls are of living seas, whose doors are always open to you. Do you seek shelter or succour, do you seek love and understanding, come to us. Come to us in faith, come to us in hope, come to us

¹ Padmini Sen Gupta, p. 68.
believing that all gifts are ours to give,
I give for the whole world the freedom of this India,
that has never died in the past, that will be
indestructible in the future, and shall lead the world
to ultimate peace."¹

In January, 1948 when Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated,
Sarojini arrived shocked, bewildered and heart-broken at
Delhi. But when she saw her friends shedding tears, she said
in her own brave manner: "What is all this snivelling about?
Should he rather die of decrepit old age or indigestion? This
was the only death great enough for him."² In her memorable
broadcast speech she said in her poetic manner: "Do not rest
in peace, my leader. Do not rest in peace, my father, but
continue to give us strength to fulfil your promises."
Concluding her speech, she cried: "The time is over for
private sorrow. The time is over for beating of breasts and
tearing of hair. The time is here and now to stand up and say,
"We take up the challenge with those who defied Mahatma
Gandhi."³

Sarojini Naidu herself was not keeping well. The strain
and grief of Mahatmaji's passing and her own arduous duties
told greatly on her always precarious health. She reached the

¹. Padmini Sen Gupta, p. 69.
². Ibid., p. 70.
³. Ibid.
age of 70 on February 13, 1949 and the next day she fell ill. On the night of March 1, 1949 she asked her nurse to sing to her and uttering her last words: "I don't want anyone to talk to me," she fell asleep listening to the song. She passed away at 3.30 A.M. on March 2, 1949. Thus ended the epic saga of a dauntless woman, a great poet, a great patriot and a great politician. Paying a heart felt homage to her in India's Parliament, Jawaharlal Nehru said: "Mrs. Naidu was a combination of various currents of culture in India, as also various currents of culture of the East and the West. She was a national figure as also a mighty international figure."¹ Brailford remembered her as a great human being and remarked: "I think she ranks not only among the greatest Indian women of her day but very high, indeed, from a world-wide standpoint. I cannot think of any other woman who shone by her grace, humour, by her artistic power and courage in quite the same way as Mrs. Naidu."²

**Her Personality:**

Sarojini Naidu's was a many-splendoured genius and personality. Diverse currents of traditions and influences mingled in her to create her unique personality. She was the

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daughter of a father who was a scientist and philosopher and a mother who had something of a poet in her. Though a Bengali Hindu, she was born and bred up in a Muslim state of Hyderabad, in the Muslim environment of which she felt quite at home. A Brahmin by caste, she married a non-Brahmin South Indian for love. A born poet weaving exquisite and delicate verses, she turned a politician braving hardships of her country's struggle for freedom. She used her pen with felicity with which she used her tongue, being a lyricist of haunting melodies and an eloquent orator of persuasive power. Though a great patriot and nationalist, she embraced peoples and cultures other than her own and belonged to the whole world. A cosmopolitan to the backbone, she loved all religions as her own. Though old and mature in wisdom she was young in spirit and by nature. She embodied diverse qualities of dignity and mirth, gravity and gaiety, which made her popular both among the old and the young. It is therefore not surprising that she was acclaimed widely as the greatest woman of her time.

Notwithstanding her precarious health, Sarojini looked graceful and charming when she visited England as a mere girl of sixteen. She was polite and dressed herself in "clinging silks" and wore her hair loose straight down her back. One could catch in her eyes the sweet quality of her mother's which were always full of mercy, kindness and compassion. Her
brother Harindranath Chattopadhyaya described her eyes as "deep pools of forest water." In his homage to her after her death Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel particularly recalled "those expressive eyes and those meaningful gestures which added such emotional appeal to her words." Arthur Symons makes a special mention of the fascination of her eyes: "All the life of the tiny figure seemed to concentrate itself in the eyes: they turned towards beauty as the sun-flower turns towards the sun, opening wider and wider until one saw nothing but the eyes."

Though quite sociable, Sarojini listened and contemplated more than she spoke. According to Arthur Symons "She spoke little and in a low voice, like gentle music; and she seemed, wherever she was, to be alone." Though she was over-emotional as a girl, yet she "possessed a passionate tranquility of mind, before which every thing mean and trivial and temporary caught fire and burnt away in smoke." Both Arthur Symons and Edmund Gosse praise Sarojini for her nature,

2. Ibid.
4. Ibid., p. 16.
5. Ibid.
wisdom even at the early age of seventeen. Arthur Symons remarks: "I have never known anyone who seemed to exist on such 'large draughts of intellectual day' as this child of seventeen, to whom one could tell all one's troubles and agitations, as to a wise old woman .... And along with this wisdom, as of age or of the age of race, there was what I can hardly call less an agony of sensation."¹ According to Edmund Gosse though a child of sixteen years when Sarojini made her appearance in London, "She was already marvellous in mental maturity, amazingly well read, and far beyond a Western child in all her acquaintance with the world."²

What made Sarojini popular in the English literary circle was her inborn talent as a poet. She was in reality eminently endowed with the temperament and nature of a true artist. Except for Keats there are very few poets who had such an overpowering passion for poetry as she. To her it was poetry that charged her every moment, to which she directed her best efforts and which she burned. This keen poetic sensibility did not desert her even after she had stopped writing verses and entered politics. It expressed itself through her conversations, letters and particularly speeches.

1. Arthur Symons, pp. 16-17.
2. Edmund Gosse, p. 3.
As an eloquent speaker, she was dear to millions of her people who fondly called her their nightingale. The magic and music of her words always thrilled them. Words danced out of her lips in perfect rhythm, and sentences after sentences she would pour out without pause or hesitation, investing the theme she would speak on with sanctity and nobility breathing intense patriotism." The symmetry thereof, the verve, the fire, the passion and sensitiveness of her utterances, her histrionic art, vivid imagery, her modulations, her silvery voice sometimes waxing warm and becoming piercing, sometimes mellowed, would keep the audience all the time in a state of animation."¹ Praising her as a great orator, K.K. Bhattacharya remarks: "There was the verve of Surendra Nath, the cadence of Srinivasa Shastri, the vitality of Annie Besant in her speeches, yet she towered alone them all because of the magnetism she imparted to her speeches."²

Sarojini Naidu's poetic sensibility was reflected in her profound passion for delight in beauty. In this respect too she came very close to Keats who prefixed to the first volume of his poems the motto from Spenser:

What more felicity can fall to creature
Than to enjoy delight with liberty?

² Ibid.
She believed in "a poet's craving for beauty, the eternal beauty" as in a letter to Arthur Symons she wrote: "What in my father is the genius of curiosity - the very essence of all scientific genius - in me is the desire for beauty. Do you remember Pater's phrase about Leonardo da Vinci, curiosity and the desire of beauty."¹ Elaborating her remark Arthur Symons wrote: "It was the desire of beauty that made her a poet; her 'nerves of delight' were always guivering at the contact of beauty."² Her love for beauty manifested itself in her private life also. She was irreproachable in her tastes and would never give up the aristocracy of the temperament. She dressed herself in the richest of silken stuff. Her house in Hyderabad, aptly called the 'Golden Threshold', was an example of decency and decoration and provided unbounded hospitality. She had always a zest for the nice things of life.

Equally important aspect of her personality was the joviality of her nature and bountifulness of spirit. Her presence anywhere - whether at the dining table, at home or literary gathering or a Congress High Comand meeting - would scatter sunshine. Even on the most solemn occasions she would laugh and make others laugh. "Of all things that life or

2. Ibid.
perhaps my temperament has given me, I prize the gift of laughter as beyond price,"¹ she once had said. No wonder the Chairman at the Colombo Conference introduced her as "the Naughty Gal of India," and George Slecombe described her as "the licensed jester of the Mahatma's little court."² She was the one person in the world who could take liberties with the Mahatma. In a jocular mood she would use for him the epithets "the little brown man," "our Mickey Mouse." "the small droll man." On becoming the Governor of Uttar Pradesh, she said: I am going to be a governess to these children." By "these children" she meant the people of the state.

Sarojini possessed a remarkable gift of warm and deep humanity. No physical inconvenience deterred her from doing a generous thing to anyone who came in contact with her. She had the knack of making lasting and loving friendships. Her steadfastness, loyalty and sincerity in her friendships point to one of the most lovable aspects of her character. Sometimes she would undertake inconvenient and long journeys to share the happiness or distress of friends. Some of her greatest contemporaries were bound to her with ties of friendship, prominent among them being Pherozeshsh Mehta, B.G. Tilak, Srinivasa Sastri, Mrs. Annie Besant, Sardar Patel,

¹. Padmini Sen Gupta, p. 18.
C. Rajagopalachari, M.A. Jinnah, Rabindranath Tagore and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. Her intimacy with three of the makers of India—Gokhale, Gandhi and Nehru—knew no bounds. She was very friendly with Mountbattens and when Prof. Amarnath Jha of Allahabad University was about to leave for England, Sarojini gave him introductions to Bernard Shaw, Walter de la Mare, Humbert Wolfe, Mrs. Munro and Lawrence Binyon. Sarojini's relations with Tagore can be gauged from the letters they exchanged in the year 1933 when she arranged a Tagore Week in Bombay. Tagore wrote to her: "You are great .... you have helped me as none else could have done but what is more important to me is that I have come close to you and known you. You have amazing gifts that would have made me envious but I have loved you and that has saved me. I am afraid my language sounds absurdly sentimental but I do not care. I express myself to your delightful laughter for I know it cannot be unkind to me." In her answers she addressed him as "Dear Master of many enchantments", and wrote: "One of the most enchanting things you have created is your gracious and tender letter to me, which moved me to both the 'delightful laughter' of which you speak and to tears of delight."\(^1\)

Influences on Sarojini Naidu as a Poet:

There is an old Latin maxium, *Poet a noscitur, non fit*, meaning "A poet is born, not made." Ben Jonson modified it by saying "a good poet's made as well as born." It is true that the inborn talent of a poet develops and gets a direction through his contact with literary artists just as his vision of life evolves through his experiences of life and contact with fellow men. Sarojini Naidu also had powerful affiliations with literary men and thinkers who shaped her art and mind to a great extent.

Sarojini's father Aghorenath Chattopadhyaya, who was a great scholar, scientist, social reformer, educationist and nationalist broadened her outlook on life and her mother Varada Devi Sundari, a woman of refined tastes and gifted with poetical and musical talents helped develop her aesthetic sensibilities. In the free and joyful atmosphere of her house, she as a girl breathed the air of catholic and liberal temper which made her a woman of rare genial and humane spirits. To her home in Hyderabad, which was "a museum of wisdom and culture" came people of different castes, creeds, races and diverse talents, some even verging on the mystic. Their presence aroused in her hatred for everything that was petty, narrow-minded and shameful. Through her contact with them she grew mature intellectually and emotionally quite early in her age and acquired
cosmopolitan and international world view. No wonder when she went to England in 1896 for her studies, she impressed those who came in her contact by her wisdom and poetic talents.

Edmund Gosse was the most powerful literary influence on Sarojini Naidu during her stay in England. The celebrated English critic recognized her genuine poetic talent and skill in form but reacted sharply against her falsely English vein, reminiscent of Shelley and Tennyson. He advised her to choose Indian subjects and sentiments and start afresh with some sincere, penetrating analysis of native passion, of the principles of antique religion, and of the soul-stirring mysterious intimations of the East. He thus gave a direction to her poetic genius and helped her to emerge as a great Indian English poet. She discarded writing about "robins and skylarks" and began to write about Indian fruits, flowers, trees and birds. Her writings thereafter tended to be typically Indian in the choice of themes and sentiments.

Even when Sarojini was writing verses in India and had not met Edmund Gosse she was attracted by his name and had an ardent desire to come under his powerful influence. When she was about fourteen or fifteen she had penned a letter for him but burned it the next day. Her life's ambition was, however, fulfilled when she got an opportunity
to meet his literary idol in England. She confessed to him in a long letter written in 1896: "I do not dare to trust myself to thank you for what you said on Sunday. You cannot know what these words meant to me .... Poetry is the one thing I love so passionately, so intensely, so absolutely that it is my very life of life - and now you have told me that I am a poet - I am a poet. I keep repeating it to myself to try to realise it." She wrote to him how happy and proud she felt when she was praised by her friends and relations for her verses, but she always felt the want of some genuine criticism of her poetic creations: "I was really on the way to have my head turned with all that flood of sincere but remarkably blind and judicious praise and flattery. About this time, I don't know how or why, the name of Edmund Gosse began to be a sort of magical legend to me. Legends were more real than realities then, and in a dim, vague kind of way I began to feel somehow the magical name was to be one of the strongest and most inevitable influence on my life." At that time England meant to her only Shelley, Keats, Edmund Gosse, Westminster Abbey and Thames. Then she went to England and got an opportunity to meet Gosse:

"Well, in January I first saw you - the magical legend had become a reality. I was not disappointed. Indeed, I shall never forget that day because with one great bound I seemed to wake into a new large
life I had always longed for and so long in vain. From that day I seemed to have put off childish things and put on garments of new and beautiful hope and ambition, and I have gone on growing and growing - I feel it - seeing more clearly, feeling more intensely, thinking more deeply, and loving more passionately, more unselfishly, that beautiful spirit of art that has now become dearer than my life's blood to me - and all this I owe to you."

Sarojini looked upon Edmund Gosse as her mentor and was always open to him for corrections. In the same letter she also wrote:

"As you have been for so long so good an influence in my life I wanted you to go on for ever: I will send you everything I write and you must tell me what you think. I want you to be more severe and exacting than ever, the better I do, because I do not want to outlast the years but the centuries. That is very conceited of me but is it not worthwhile to aim at the stars though one never gets beyond the mountain top? I don't think I am going to ask you to excuse me for taking up so much of your time, because I cannot go on being grateful to you in silence without your knowing how much cause I have to be grateful to you for. Ever believe me."¹

Sarojini dedicated her first volume of poetry, *The Golden Threshold*, to Edmund Gosse. Gosse wrote an admirable

"Introduction" to the second volume of Sarojini's verses, entitled, *The Bird of Time*, in which he remarked that Sarojini was already known to the literary world as the "most accomplished living poet of India", and that she needed no introduction at all.

Arthur Symons who wrote the Preface for the first volume of Sarojini's verses, *The Golden Threshold*, was the second important literary influence on her during her visit to England. Arthur Symons came very close to her and with his keenly discerning poetical sensibility gauged Sarojini's passionate love for beauty and her noble, mature qualities as a person. In his preface he remarked about her: "In the East, maturity comes early; and the child had already lived through all a woman's life. But there was something hardly personal, something which belonged to a consciousness older than the Christian, which I realized, wondered at, and admired, in her passionate tranquility of mind, before which everything mean and trivial and temporary caught fire and burnt away in smoke. Her body was never without suffering, or her heart without conflict, but neither the body's weakness nor the heart's violence could disturb that fixed contemplation, as of Buddha on his lotus throne."¹ Symons

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1. Arthur Symons, pp. 16-17.
also perceived the extreme sensitiveness of Sarojini to all
physical sensations which made her akin to Keats. It was
Symons who inspired her to get her poems published in
England.

Symons introduced her to the Rhymers' Club of which
he was himself an important member. The club was founded in
the 1980's by William Butler Yeats, the famous Irish Nobel
Laureate, and Earnest Rhys, the Welsh writer and original
editor of 'Everyman's library. The club had among its members
almost all the well-known English poets of the 1890's,
Arthur Symons, William Watson, John Davidson, Earnest
Dowson, Oscar Wilde, George Moore, Lionel Johnson, Henley
and others. They belonged to the Aesthetic Movement of the
nineties and attached great importance to "The verbal and
technical accomplishment" and "the mastery of phrase and
rhythm." Sarojini learnt from these poets significance of
verbal felicity, metrical discipline and musical texture and
used them in her own verses.

In fact Sarojini found in the pictorial images and
musical felicity of the verses of these poets echoes of her
own great favourites of the Romantic Movement, Shelley and
Keats. Like most of the Indian poets of different regional
languages in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and
early decades of the twentieth century, Sarojini was also
deeply influenced by the English Romantic poets, particularly Shelley and Keats. They were her early poetic idols and their influence lasted on her till the end of her career as a poet, as is evident from intense lyrical effusions and vivid, sensuous and pictorial images found in her verses. The New Indian English poets who discern her great poetic sensibility complain that she could not have proper poetic development because she was writing in wrong times. Nissim Ezekiel for instance remarks: "It was Sarojini's ill luck that she wrote at a time when English poetry had touched rock-bottom of sentimentality and technical poverty. By the time it recovered its health she had entered politics abandoning the possibility of poetic development and maturity."¹ Looking to the nature of poetic sensibility and lofty sense of beauty Sarojini had, one can assert that her poetic talents would not have burgeoned and found full expression had she been born and written in any other age. Sarojini herself did not have any favourable opinion about the Eliotesque type of modern fashion in poetry. She told Tata Ali Baig in 1946 that "modern poetry had no future and the trend would inevitably return to the disciplines and beauty of the metrical form of lyrics."²

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2. Tara Ali Baig, p. 28.
Her Poetical Works:

*Songs*, the earliest collection of Sarojini's verses written from the age of thirteen to fifteen, was published privately by her father in 1895. Its copy printed on rough paper, and with the inscription on the cover: "Poems by S. Chattopadhyaya, dated 3rd Oct., 1896", is preserved in the archives of the National Library, Calcutta. Its verses reveal precocious mind of Sarojini and hold promise for bright, mature verses in future. Her attachment to her motherland finds expression in "Traveller's Song" written in May 1892.

O'er Italia's sunny plains  
All aglow with rosy flowers,  
I wander now mid fallen fanes,  
And now a mid of the myrtle bowers-  
But, wheresoever I may roam  
I long for thee, my dear dear home!

Even as a girl of thirteen Sarojini shunned all petty joys of life and aimed at higher ideals of noble life. In the poem, "On My Birthday", written on her fourteenth birthday on February 13, 1893, she says:

My joys were not what joys to childhood seem!  
Not on unthinking sports my soul was fed,  
But nursed it was on many a brighter theme,  
And lofty high ideas formed my radiant dreams.
There are some beautiful poems on love theme. In "Love's Vision", written in November 1894, she imagines love to be a rare, lovely experience in life:

Fair as the flowers of the rich spring time,
Sweet as the music in the summer prime,
Pure as the stars are in their distant climes
Lovely as are a poet's tender rhymes
Art thou to me!

In the poem "Love", written on November 28, 1894, she expresses her intense feelings of love for her lover, Dr. Naidu:

I love thee with a love whose faith
Is changeless as the stars of night.
My love is stronger far than death,
My love is pure as morning light.
I ask not if thou lovest me,
It is enough to me thou art
The noblest, dearest, best - to thee
I yield the treasure of my heart.

These poems are full of intense romantic feelings and highly suggestive images drawn from nature.

The first collection of Sarojini's mature verses, The Golden Threshold, was published by William Heinemann of London in 1905. It has 'Preface' by Arthur Symons and is dedicated to Sir Edmund Gosse, who as the poet says showed her the way to the "Golden Threshold" of poetry. The forty poems included in the collection are divided into three
sections.\(^1\): (1) Folk Songs, (2) Songs for Music, and (3) Poems. The first section consists of twelve poems, the second one of six poems and the third one of twenty two poems. The title of the book is taken from the name of Sarojini's own house after marriage in Hyderabad.

The Golden Threshold, soon after its publication, took the English Literary scene by storm. It was widely praised by the British press. The London Times remarked: "Chiefly remarkable, considering her nationality, is her passionate delight in the beauty of the sounds and the words of our tongue and the lilt of our measures. She reveals in the swing of her verse. Her poetry seems to sing itself, as if her swift thoughts and strong emotions sprang into lyrics of themselves." The Manchester Guardian went into raptures: "It is a considerable delight to come across such genuine poetry as is contained in The Golden Threshold by Sarojini Naidu. Its simplicity suggests Blake, it is always musical, its Eastern colour is fresh and its firm touch is quick and delicate." The Review of Reviews of October 1905 wrote: "Not for many months has there been so rich a harvest of poetry as that garnered during the last month. In the forefront I must place Sarojini Naidu's exquisitely musical collection

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1. The anthologist of The Sceptred Flute has not arranged the poems in a chronological order but has created his own classifications of different sections.
of Oriental lyrics and poems. This little volume should silence forever the scoffer who declares that women cannot write poetry...... It seems remarkable that the writer of these remarkable fine verses is only 26 years of age." T.P.'s Weekly commented: "A book of verse of undeniable beauty and distinction.... Sarojini Naidu's work is remarkable, opening a window through which the West may see the East if it will." The Morning Post said: "The book is not merely of accomplishment, but beautiful verse, it is the expression of a temperament." The Academy praised it as a book" full of beauty ...... What is as delightful as surprising is its individuality: perfection of its own that owes little to anyone .... not for very long time have we seen a volume of poetry so full of promise and real achievement."¹

Another collection of her verses, The Bird of Time: Songs of Life, Death and Spring, was published in England (Heinemann, London) in 1912 with an "Introduction" by Edmund Gosse. She dedicated it to her parents. The book takes its title from a verse of Omar Khayyam.

The Bird of Time has but a little way
To fly - and lo; the bird is on the wing.

¹. All these extracts from the British Press appear in Men and Women of India, May 1906 and have been quoted by Padmini Sen Gupta, pp. 27-28.
It contains 46 short poems divided into four sections: (1) Songs of Love and Death, (2) Songs of the Springtime, (3) Indian Folk Songs, and (4) Songs of Life. When the book appeared, the English critic and poet Edward Thomas remarked: "Her poems achieve an uncommon outwards gorgeousness and inward glory." Another critic said: "She scatters memorable phrases over a page like stars and yet knows how to reserve beauty for the close of a poem." Press reviews were equally laudatory. *The Bookman* wrote: "She possesses her qualities in heaped measure"; and *Yorkshire Post* said: "Mrs. Naidu has not only enriched our language but has enabled us to grow into intimate relation with the spirit, the emotions, the mysticism and glamour of the East."¹

**The Broken Wing** is the last of Sarojini's work to appear during her life time. It was published in 1917 by Heinemann, London. Sarojini was of thirty eight years and by then deeply involved in freedom struggle. The title is derived from the opening poem, "The Broken Wing."

**Behold! I rise to meet the destined spring**

And scale the stars upon my broken wing!

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It comprises 61 short poems and is divided into four sections: (1) Songs of Life and Death, (2) The Flowering Year, (3) The Peacock Lute, and (4) The Temple.

The poems contained in these three volumes were collected in one volume under the title, "The Sceptured Flute", first published in America by Dodd, Mead and Co. Inc., and later by Kitabistan, Allahabad in 1943.

After Sarojini's death, her daughter, Padmja Naidu, edited and collected in a volume all of her mother's unpublished poems written in 1927, i.e. during a period of great political activity. It was entitled The Feather of the Dawn which is derived from a dance by the Denishawn Dancers based on the Hopi Indian legend that a feather blown into the air at dawn, if caught by a breeze and carried out to sight, marks the opening of an auspicious day. It is a slender volume of thirty poems.¹ It consists of two sections, the first one has twenty-seven miscellaneous poems, whereas the second one, "Poems of Krishna," has only three which are all about Lord Krishna. There is, however, no specific mention of two separate sections in the volume because all the poems are grouped together.

¹ If the four poems of "The Festival of the Sea" and "Three poems of "Songs of Radha" are treated separately, the volume will then be said to be containing thirty seven poems.
Oriental and Indian Ethos in Sarojini's Poetry

Sarojini's poetry is essentially native in spirit, tone and temperament. Despite her literary affiliation with the English poets and adoption of English as the medium of poetic expression, she remains rooted firmly to her soil. Her themes, thoughts and the imagery she employs in her poems are typically native in spirit and character. Very few Indian English poets have reflected the colourful pageant of Indian life in all its picturesque variety so vividly and successfully as Sarojini has done. "The panorama of India's ageless life," writes K. R. Srivastava Iyengar, "fascinates her without end."\(^1\) It is not surprising that she won her early renown in the West because of her representation of the soul of the East and the ethos of India. Edmund Gosse wrote admiringly:

It has been ...the characteristic of Mrs. Naidu's writing that she is in all things and to the fullest extent autochthonous. She springs from the very soil of India; her spirit, although it employs the English language as its vehicle, has no other tie with the West. It addresses itself to the exposition of

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emotions which are tropical and primitive, and in this respect, as I believe, if the poems of Sarojini Naidu be carefully and delicately studied they will be found as luminous in lighting up the dark places of the East as any contribution of savant or historian. They have the astonishing advantage of approaching the task of interpretation from inside the magic circle, although armed with a technical skill that has been cultivated with devotion outside of it.¹

As has been pointed out, the credit for discouraging Sarojini from providing in her verses echoes of Anglo-Saxon setting and advising her to the need of revelation of the heart of spiritual India and reflection of native passion and life, goes to Edmund Gosse. But even if such an advice had not come, she would have, in due course, turned to the Indian scene. After all, it was in India that she was born and brought up and had lived most of her impressionable years, and most of her later life, her senses catching the Indian colour and air, and her heart and mind filled with the love for her motherland. It is therefore not a coincidence that her extraordinary creative imagination has tried to capture the visions of Indian ethos in all its entirety. She was born and bred up for this mission in her career as a poet.

¹ Edmund Gosse, p. 6.
Oriental Splendour:

Being a poet in romantic tradition, Sarojini turned to the remote in place as well as in time and drew inspiration from the gorgeous East. Several of her poems reveal a spirit intoxicated with the romance of the past and striving after a perfect transmission of beauty. She loves the past for its romance and chivalry, its fabulous glamour and spectacle. Persia and its royalty, famous in history for riches, splendour and luxury, held a special fascination for Sarojini. She was familiar with Persian poetry and knew about its rich medieval heritage. Her poems, "The Queen's Rival" in The Golden Threshold, "A Persian Love Song" in The Bird of Time, "A Song from Shiraz" in The Broken Wing, and "A Persian Lute Song" in The Feather of the Dawan, give us glimpses of rich romance, beauty, music and grandeur of Persia.

"The Queen's Rival" is the fascinating tale of king Feroz of Persia and Gulnaar, his queen, unrivalled in beauty. The queen though living in fabulous luxury, suffers from ennui and desires of her husband to give her a rival in loveliness. Seven charming damsels are brought in the harem, but the queen gazes in her mirror and sighs, for none of them could be a rival to her in beauty. Spring comes and a daughter is born to the queen. The daughter grows two years old. She sets on her curls her mother's fillet with fringes
of pearls, looks into the mirror and prints on it a swift, glad kiss. The queen sees and cries out of joy: "Here is my rival, O King Feroz". The setting of the poem is romantic and it moves in the world of love, luxury, beauty and innocence. Describing the beauty and splendour of the queen and her chamber, the poet writes:

Queen Gulnaar sat on her ivory bed,
Around her countless treasures were spread;

Her chamber walls were richly inlaid
With agate, porphory, onyx and jade;

The issues that veiled her delicate breast
Glowed with the hues of a lapwing's crest;  

The images and metaphors drawn from colour, light, flowers, stars, moon tides and mountain floods further add to the grandeur of this enticing world of fancy. The seven queens round queen Gulnaar's bed shine like seven soft gems on a silken thread; like seven fair lamps in a royal tower; like seven bright petals of Beauty's flower. They are the seven new moon tides and they rise round the Vesper, the sole evening star, the queen. The queen's young daughter in blue robes bordered with tassels of gold, runs to her mother's knee like a wildwood fay and sets on her light curls her mother's fillet with fringes of pearls. The queen sighs like a murmuring rose and laughs like a tremulous rose. Her uneasy heart is 'the sky of discontent' and to be

'cleared'. The queen is, however, unable to feel happy even when spring comes and nature wakens to colourful flowers and melodious music.

When spring winds wakened the mountain floods,
And kindled the flame of the tulip buds,

When bees grew loud and the days grew long,
And the peach groves thilled to the oriole's song,

Queen Gulnaar sat on her ivory bed,
Decking with jewels her exquisite head;

And still she gazed in her mirror and sighed;
"O King, my heart is unsatisfied."

(p. 47)

The queen feels satisfied only when she sees her two year old daughter looking into the mirror. She gets a glimpse of her own beauty reflected in that of her daughter.

The central idea of "A Persian Song" is derived from Persian mysticism. It elaborates the sufi strain emphasizing the identity of the individual and God, of the lover and the beloved, and the world being seen as the manifestation of God. According to the Persian mystics, the most intimate relationship possible between two beings is through love. The sentiment of love implies an emotional progress to higher and higher levels till the lover and the loved experience identical feelings. This emotional telepathy is the emergence of the state of feeling wherein there are two bodies but one soul. This merger of "thee" and "me" is regarded by sufis as the culmination of love-life.
O Love! I know not why, when you are glad,
Gaily my glad heart leaps.
O Love! I know not why, when you are sad,
Wildly my sad heart weeps.

Hourly this subtle mystery flowers anew,
O Love, I know not why ...
Unless it be, perchance, that I am you,
Dear love, that you are I!

(p. 82)

The poem has simple diction and uses mostly monosyllabled words. Even the metaphors used - "rendering the breast" (a stock Persian figure), "the heart leaping", "the mystery flowering" - are plain and simple and parts of the common speech.

"A Persian Lute Song" is rich in romantic sentiments and imagery. It shows the singer, a princess, waiting for the arrival of her warrior lover. She wants everything around her to maintain its beauty and freshness to welcome her lover:

Sweet stars in drift on shining drift,
Weave not your dance too soon,
Be not too sudden or too swift,
To rise, O glimmering moon.

She wishes the singing girls and flute players to restrain the rapture of their music and watch with her for the golden hour when her lover comes:
Comes he for whom the lutes are strung.
For whom the feast is set.

Who holds my trembling heart in thrall,
Whose name I may not name,
His voice is like a battle call,
His eyes a beacon flame.

(The Feather of the Dawan, p. 11)

"A Song from Shiraz" describes the devotees of Islam calling from the mosque-towers of the Persian town, Shiraz, to waken people to the teachings of the prophet Mohamed for the atonement of their sins:

From the Mosque-towers of Shiraz ere daylight begin
My heart is disturbed by the loud muezzin,
But what is the voice of his warning to me,
That waketh the world to atonement of sin?
The stars shall be broken like mirrors of brass,
And Rapture be sunk like a stone in the sea,
Ere the carpet of prayer or of penance surpass
The carpet of dreams, O Mohamed Ali!

(p. 154)

Like Persia Sarojini also loves the Baghdad of fables for its Oriental splendours, its Saki-singers, its love-ghazals and its Sufi wine. In "Ode to H.H. The Nizam of Hyderabad", she recreates the old world romance of the Middle East as an objective correlative to vivify the spectacular durbar of one of the wealthiest Indian princes:
Sweet, sumptuous fables of Baghdad 
The splendours of your court recall, 
The torches of a Thousand Nights 
Blaze through a single festival; 
And Saki-singers down the streets, 
Pour for us, in a stream divine, 
From goblets of your love-ghazals 
The rapture of your sufi wine.

In the elegy, "Ya Mahbub", written on the death of the Nizam of Hyderabad, Mr. Mahbub Ali Khan, the well-beloved of his people, she again recalls the fabulous glamour of old Baghdad to describe the grandeur of the Nizam's Hyderabad:

O hands that succoured a people's need 
With the splendour of Haroun-al-Rasheed! 
O heart that solaced a sad world's cry, 
With the sumptuous bounty of Hatim tai! 
Where are the days that were winged and glad 
In the fabulous glamour of old Baghdad. 
And the bird of glory used to sing 
In your magic kingdom... when you were king?

The bazars of Hyderabad, abounding in wealth and luxury, as depicted in "Songs of My City", remind us of the glory of the ancient Oriental cities with the colourful variety of splendid articles. The rich wares displayed by merchants consist of turbans of crimson and silver, tunics of purple brocante, mirrors with panels of amber. The vendors weigh saffron and lentil. The maidens grind sandalwood and henna. The pedlars sell chess-men and dice. The goldsmiths make
bells for the feet of the blue pigeons, girdles of gold for the dancers, and scabbards of gold for the king. The fruitmen sell citron, pomegranate, and plum. The musicians play sitar and sarangi. The flower-girls make crowns for the brow of a bridgegroom and chaplets to garland his bed (pp. 106-107).

Sarojini's passion for mediaevalism reveals itself in her treatment of the beauty, glamour and romance in the royal palaces of Mughal India. In the poem, "Humayun to Zobeida", she describes how Humayun sees the beauty of Zobeida in the rose, her glory in the dawn, her sweetness in the nightingale, her whiteness in the swan. When he is awake, he thinks of Zobeida; when he is asleep he dreams of her.

You flaunt your beauty in the rose, your glory in the dawn,
Your sweetness in the nightingale, your whiteness in the swan.
You haunt my waking like a dream, my slumber like a moon,
Pervade me like a musky scent, possess me like a tune.
Yet, when I crave of you, my sweet, one tender moment's grace,

You cry, "I sit behind the veil, I cannot show my face". The lover is unable to understand the excuse of the beloved unwilling to show her face when she and he are one in heart and life:
What war is this of Thee and Me? Give O'er the wanton strife,
You are the heart within my heart, the life within my life.

(p. 22)

"The Song of Princes Zeb-un-Nissa in Praise of Her Own Beauty" is rich in sensuous imagery, ornateness and melody. The poem is remarkable for the exquisite picture of beauty it draws with the help of images drawn from nature. When Princes Zeb-un-Nissa (the eldest daughter of Aurangzeb, who was a gifted Persian poet) lifts the veil from her cheek, the roses turn pale with envy. The beauty of the princes so pierces their hearts that they "send forth their fragrance like a wail". If the caress of the wind perchance loosens even her single perfumed trees, the hyacinths languish in "a sweet distress". The Mughal Princess is so lovely that when she pauses among the groves, the nightingales awake and "strain their souls into a quivering song."

And, when I pause, still groves among,
(Such loveliness is mine) a throng
Of nightingales awake and strain
Their souls into a quivering song.

"The Royal Tombs of Golconda" expresses Sarojini's nostalgia for the departed greatness and glory of kings and queens lying buried in the royal tombs of Golconda. Though kings are dead "Yonder hill wears like a tiar/ the ruined grandeur" of their fort:
Though centuries falter and decline,
Your proven strong holds shall remain,
Embodied memories of your line,
Incarnate legends of your reign.

"Old Fate" has decreased "flower-like bodies" of queens to the tomb, but:

Death is in truth the vital seed
Of your imperishable bloom.
Each new-born year the bulbuls sing
Their songs of your renascent loves;
Your beauty wakens with the spring
To kindle these pomegranate groves.

In medieval Rajasthan Sarojini finds romance and chivalry. Through musings of Parvati at her lattice and Amar Singh in the saddle in the poem "A Rajput Love Song," the poet produces a whole culture of a vanished age. The ladies of noble rank twined a basil-wreath among their tresses. They fastened a jewelled clasp of shining gold around their sleeves. They wore silken raiment perfumed with the scent of the keora. Their girdles had a bright vermilion tassel. Scented fans lay upon their pillow. Silver lamps burned before their shrine. Warriors of noble rank rode with a hooded hawk upon their hand. The collar band of their hawk had gleaming bells. A radiant sword swung at their side and they wore an amulet of jade against the perils of the way (pp.80-81).
HINDU ETHOS

Mystic Thought:

Though not a mystic poet like Aurobindo Ghose and Rabindranath Tagore, Sarojini being deeply steeped in ancient Hindu spiritual thought, realizes the significance of the yearning of the human soul for the divine. She believes in the mystic philosophy of "the one in two and the two in one" and considers the mundane and the mortal to be the reflection of the Absolute in some supersensible world. She, however, feels that direct and immediate communion with God cannot be attained by ordinary people. In her poem, "To A Buddha Seated On A Lotus" she highlights man's persistent yearning and striving for the divine state and his inability to attain it because of his constant involvement in mundane affairs. Seeing Buddha seated on a lotus in meditation with mystic rapture and peace on his face, she addresses him:

    Lord Buddha, on thy Lotus- throne,
    With praying eyes and hand elate,
    What mystic rapture dost thou own,
    Immutable and ultimate?
    What peace, unravished of our ken,
    Annihilate from the world of men?

This mystic rapture is however, not possible in the human world:
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The wind of change for ever blows
Across the tumult of our way,
Tomorrow's unborn griefs depose
The sorrows of our yesterday.
Dream yields, to dream, strife follows strife,
And Death unweaves the webs of Life.

All efforts of man to seek communion with God end in Failure:

With futile hands we seek to gain
Our inaccessible desire,
Diviner summits to attain
With faith that sinks and feet that tire;
But nought shall canquer or control
The heavenward hunger of our soul.

The end, elusive and afar,
still lures us with its beaconing flight,
And all our mortal moments are
A session of the Infinite.
How shall we reach the great unknown
Niravana of thy Lotus- throne?

(pp. 61-62)

The two lines: "And all our mortal moments are A session of the Infinite", are a direct imaginative realization of the Vedantic philosophy.

The awareness of human experiences of joy and fame, love and pain, checks Sarojini from having sustained transcendental visions. Padmini Sen Gupta is right when she remarks: "This duality of spirit always pulls back Sarojini
from being a true mystic—she soars into the realms of dreams be they divine or not, and is back again in life tasting its mortal pains and raptures.¹ Sarojini is, however, a poet whom Nature has endowed with the imaginative vision and the faculty divine. This is why there is a peculiar trance-like quality in her poems, a mystic otherworldliness and transcendental quality—though not a sustained one. It is to be glimpsed in lines here and there. Rajyalakshmi rightly observes: "She is goaded by a hunger for the eternal, the unknown and the infinite, and seeks, poetically rather than metaphysically, to relate herself to the universe."² D.V.K. Raghavacharyulu corroborates this view when he remarks: "However, there are many elements in Sarojini's poetry which either derive from a mystic attitude to life, or employ the imagery and symbolism and the characteristic rhetoric of the mystic's experience of the transcendental reality."³ It is in recognition of the mystic urge in Sarojini's poetry that three of her poems, "The Soul's Prayer", "In Salutation To The Eternal Peace" and "To A Buddha Seated On A Lotus", are included in the Oxford Book of English Mystic Verse.

¹ Padmani Sen Gupta, p. 93.


"The Soul's Prayer" reveals Sarojini's deep mystic awareness. The poem begins with the poet's prayer to God, the Master, "who mad'st me of Thy breath", to reveal to her His "immost laws of life and death":

"Spare me no bliss, no pang of strife,
Withhold no gift or grief I crave,
The intricate love of love and life
And mystic knowledge of the grave."

The Master grants her prayer and says in his stern and low voice:

"I, bending from my sevenfold height
Will teach thee of My quickening grace,
Life is a prism of My Light,
And Death the shadow of My Face."

(p. 124)

A strong mystic note is also evident in the poem, "In Salutation to the Eternal Peace". As the poet has drunk deep the divine ecstasy and tasted the peace of eternity, she is not afraid of the sordid realities of life. Though life is full of pain and suffering she rejoices being born. She has conquered the mythic terror of life and death and finds joy in the divine manifestations being witnessed in the images of life and renewal of nature.

Say, shall I heed dull presages of doom,
Or dread the rumoured loneliness and gloom,
The mute and mythic terror of the tomb?
For my glad heart is drunk and drenched with Thee,
O inmost wine of living ecstasy!
O intimate essence of eternity!

(p. 137)

In the poem, "Solitude", Sarojini desires to escape "from the sound of this lonely and menacing crowd" to the lap of nature to listen to the mystic speech of the objects of nature in solitude:

Let us climb where the eagles keep guard on the rocky grey ledges
Let us lie neath the palms where perchance we may listen, and reach
A delicate dream from the lips of the slumbering sedges,
That catch from the stars some high tone of their mystical speech

(pp. 132-133)

Like Wordsworth she wishes to get glimpses of the Infinite through nature or catch the intimations of immortality from an ecstatic contemplation of the evening scene:

Or perehance, we may glean a far glimpse of the Infinite Bosom,
In whose glorious shadow all life is unfolded or furled,
Thro' the luminous hours ere the lotus of dawn shall reblossom
In petals of splendour to worship the Lord of the World.

(p. 133)

In "The Garden Vigil" also the poet tries to establish communion with the Supreme Self through the perception of nature's beauty:
Long ere the sun's first far-off becomes shine,
Or her prophetic clarions call afar,
The gorgeous planets wither and decline,
Save in its eastern shrine,
Unquenched, unchallenged, the proud morning star,

O glorious light of hope beyond all reach!
O lovely symbol and sweet sign of him
Whose voice I yearn to hear in tender speech
To comfort me or teach,
Before whose gaze thy golden fires grow him!

I care not what brave splendours bloom or die
So thou dost burn in thine appointed place,
Supreme in the still dawn- uncoloured sky,
And daily grant that I
May in thy flame adone his hidden face.

(pp. 172-173)

In "The Festival of Serpents" the serpents acquire a mystic significance:

O lift your dreaming heads from their trance of ageless wisdom,
And weave your measures to the melody of flutes.

(p. 110)

They are the "symbols of the ancient silence". The mystic note is distinctly audible:

Swift are ye as streams and soundless as the dewfall,
Subtle as the lightning and splendid as the sun;
Seers are ye and symbols of the ancient silence,
Where life and death and sorrow and ecstasy are one.

(p. 111)
In the poem, "Welcome", the poet welcomes pain as a positive force and death as a great release and relief from worldly bondages. In the last stanza, she tries to explore the mystery of the "vast Unknown" and seeks her own vision of Love immortal:

Open, O vast Unknown,
Thy sealed mysterious portal!
I go to seek mine own,
Vision of Love immortal.

(p. 205)

In "Alone", the poet-beloved ('human self') yearns for the vision of her lover's (Supreme Self) face. Nothing comforts the restless soul progressing towards illumination, neither the "accustomed alleys of delight "nor the" moon-enchanted estuary of dreams". It craves peace and joy in "the sanctuary" of her lover's face:

But no compassionate wind or comforting star
Brings me sweet word of thine abiding place...
In what predestined hour of joy or tears
Shall I attain the sanctuary of thy face?

(p. 79)

The Hindu myth of the temporal love of Radha, the milkmaid and Krishna, the cowherd, symbolizes the yearning of human soul for the Ultimate Reality. Here Radha, the eternal feminine or Prakriti aspires to merge in the Purusha-Kanhaiya, or Krishna or Govinda. The myth is very popular among Indians and many renowned poets like Jayadeva,
Vidyapati and Surdas have woven their memorable verses round it. Krishna, the Divine flute player of Brindaban, plays the tune of the Infinite that lures every human heart away from mortal griefs and attachments. The sweet music enchants Radha, the beautiful village belle, and spell bound by it she is drawn towards Krishna irresistibly. Krishna responds to her love but the consummation eludes her. She is unable to get the fulfilment of her soul's yearning. Sarojini has enshrined this eternal love in her poems, "Song of Radha, the Milkmaid", in The Bird of Time, "The Flute- player of Brindaban" in The Broken Wing and "Poems of Krishna" in The Feather of the Dawan.

Song of Radha, the Milkmaid" reveals how Radha is so much lost in the thought of her lover that she is unable to utter anything except his name:

I carried my curds to the Mathura fair ... 
How softly the heifers were lowing... 
I wanted to cry, "Who will buy 
These curds that are white as the clouds in the sky
When the breezes of Shrawan are blowing?"
But my heart was so full of your beauty, Beloved,
They laughed as I cried without knowing:

Govinda!Govinda!
Govinda!Govinda!
How softly the river was flowing!

(p. 112)
This absorption of the lover in the beloved is a state of the highest intensity of awareness. It is in such absolute absorption alone that life's highest realization consists. Commenting on this poem, Mulk Raj Anand remarks: "Here the poetry of romanticism, of ornate epithets and delicate similes, has become infused with transcendental experience. Sarojini has transferred love as personal desire into divine love, and given it a sense of eternity, of the Universal!"¹

It was this poem that had introduced Dr. James H. Cousins to Sarojini's poetry and he observes:

My first contact with Mrs. Sarojini Naidu's Poetry was through hearing the "Song of Radha, the Milkmaid" recited by an Oxfordman in India. I shall never forget the mantric effect of the devotee's repetition of "Govinda, Govinda, Govinda, Govinda, "as she carried her curds, her pots, and her gifts to the shrine of Mathura.²

"The Flute Player of Brindaban" describes the poet's soul as "a homeless bird" struggling hard to reach its divine destination. Lord Krishna, the flute player of Brindaban, plays the tune of the Infinite to lure every human heart away from mortal's care and attachment. The soul experiences a mystic longing to merge completely in the flame of the Divine:

Still must I like a homeless bird
Wander, forsaking all;
The earthly loves and worldly lures
That held my life in thrall,
And follow, follow, answering
Thy magical flute-call.

(P. 161)

Detached from worldly attractions, the soul yearns for the ecstasy of the divine union. It progresses undaunted by the impediments on its way to reach the Absolute:

No peril of the deep or height
shall daunt my winged foot;
No fear of the time-unconquered space,
Or light untravelled route,
Impede my heart that pants to drain
The nectar of thy flute.

(p. 162)

One of the poems in the series of Poems of Krishna, "Ghanashyam", in The Feather of the Dawan, describes how Lord Krishna symbolizing Divinity on earth manifests Himself in the objects of nature. He gives colours to mountains, laughter to snow-flecked fountains, healing breath of balm to forest pines, beauty and blackness of his hair to the storm's unbridled tresses, transcendent calm to seekers and sages. The poet's soul seeks for the ecstasy of the union with the Divine Soul:
O take my yearning soul for thine oblation,
Life of all myriad lives that dwell in thee,
Let me be lost, a lamp of adoration,
In thine unfathomed waves of ecstasy.

(p. 39, The Feather of the Dawn)

Another poem of the series, "The Quest", depicts the mystic yearning of the human self for the Ultimate Reality through the hectic quest of Radha for Kanhaiya right from dawn to dusk. When no information is received, she starts weeping. The soul separated from its source, experiences utter grief and pain. Suddenly Radha hears Kanhaiya's hidden laughter mocking her. He tells her that she, fraught with doubt and distrust, is uselessly seeking for him outside whereas he is always within her:

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

And askest wind or wave or flowering dell
The secret that within thyself doth dwell?

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

(pp. 42-43, The Feather of the Dawn)

The poem is richly interlaced with mystic thought.

The group of twenty four love lyrics, entitled "The Temple: A Pilgrimage of Love", which forms the concluding part of The Broken Wing, has aroused conflicting critical
opinions. While some consider them to be "the lacerating recordation of a personal experience,"¹ a passionate expression of some hidden love, others find them imbued with deep mystic fervour. Padmini Sen Gupta remarks: "The love which reigned in her (Sarojini's) heart was more for a mystic lover than a human being, until God and the Eternal Spirit won a supreme victory - and in His love she found the real love she sought all her life."² In fact the emotions of the poet's complete surrender before the lover are similar to those of the medieval Bhakti poets before God. A deep mystic fervour thus seems to inspire these love poems.

The poems in "The Temple" are in three parts: "The Gate of Delight", "The Path of Tears", and "The Sanctuary". These sub-titles allude to the three parts of the temple according to classical Hindu architecture: The torana (entrance way), the prakdakshina-patha (circumambulatory passage-way) and the garbha-girha (inner sanctuary). The first part shows the devotee's nervous hesitancy and hushed anguish to see God directly. She offers her heart's deathless passion and craves for no divine recompense. She does not trespass the holy premises when she finds the divine door closed. She waits till God shows his face. The devotee is:

1. Iyenger, p. 184.
Content to wait in proud and lowly fashion,
And kiss the shadow of Love's passing feet.

(p. 211)

The devotee employs the mystic universals of all faiths to define her own intimations of love. To her lost in the love of the Master (God), the world is just a manifestation of the divine lover. The world tries to lure the soul, but it derives sweeter joy in the contemplation of its lover:

But sweeter madness derives my soul to swift and sweeter doom
For I have drunk the deep, delicious nectar of your breath!

(p. 213)

The path of realization is essentially the path of tears:

All the sealed anguish of my blood shall taunt you
In the rich menace of red-flowering trees;
The yearning sorrow of my voice shall haunt you
In the low wailing of the midnight seas.

(pp. 219-20)

At last the beloved reaches the "Sanctuary" where her lover is dwelling. When she is face to face with him, she forgets all her pain and woes, and surrenders to him totally. The struggling spirit rises clean of the mortal's bondage and dust after being chastened by grief and suffering:

So shall my yearning love at last
Grew sanctified,
Thro' sorrow find deliverance
From mortal pride,
So shall my soul, redeemed, reborn,
Attain thy side.

(p. 231)

The soul undergoes the long process of purgation before it merges into the divine flame.

As has been pointed earlier, Sarojini is not a mystic poet like Tagore, Aurobindo Ghosh and Iqbal, yet she is possessed with a mystic urge, and, in her inspired moments, tries to venture the region of the unknown and unfamiliar.

**Hindu Myths and Festivals:**

Sarojini has depicted in several of her poems the Hindu religious ethos in all its variety by the treatment of Hindu gods and goddesses, myths and festivals. "Harvest Hymn" which is a choric song, describes a group of men and women singing a hymn of adoration and thanks-giving to the four great deities of Hindu pantheon, responsible for their rich harvest - Surya, the Sun god; Varuna, the god of the waters (rivers and seas); Prithvi, the goddess of earth; and Brahma, the god of creation of all life in the universe. Men sing to the gods Surya and Varuna, the women to the goddess Prithvi and then all join together to sing in devotion of the life-giver Brahma, to the accomplishment of cymbal, flute, pipe and drum.
Surya is worshipped because he is the giver of light and warmth:

\[\text{O giver of mellowing radiance, we hail thee,}\]
\[\text{We praise thee O Surya, with cymbal and flute.}\]

Varuna is praised as the giver of rains and water for the growth of their crops:

\[\text{O sender of rain and the dewfall, we hail thee,}\]
\[\text{We praise thee, Varuna, with cymbal and pipe.}\]

\[(p. 14)\]

Women feel affinity with mother earth whose womb holds and whose bosom feeds rich gifts of nature:

\[\text{O source of our manifold gladness, we hail thee,}\]
\[\text{We praise thee, O Prithvi, with cymbal and drum.}\]

\[(p. 15)\]

Devotees are beholden to Brahma, 'Lord of the Universe', "Father eternal, ineffable Om" because he is the creator of life:

\[\text{O Life of all life and all blessing, we hail thee,}\]
\[\text{We praise thee, O Brahma, with cymbal and prayer.}\]

\[(p. 15)\]

"Hymn to Indira, Lord of Rain" is the prayer of Indian peasants - men and women - to the god of Rain to favour them by his bounty for their very existence depends on his mercy:

\[\text{O Thou, who rousest the voice of the thunder,}\]
\[\text{And biddest the storms to awake from their sleep,}\]

\[\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\]
Thou who art mighty to succour and cherish,
Who savest from sorrow and shieldest from pain,
Withhold not thy merciful love, or we perish,
Hearken, O Lord of Rain!

(p. 116)

In "Lakshmi, the Lotus-Born", Sarojini recalls Lakshmi Puja which is held during Diwali festival (the festival of lights). She lifts her hands of prayer, not for her own self alone, but her entire nation. She invokes the goddess of fortune and wealth with eager devotion to adorn the threshold of her countrymen with her sweet eyelids and caressing fingers of auspicious footfalls and shower her precious gifts on her motherland:

Prosper our candles and kindred and cattle,
And cherish our hearth-fires and coffers and corn,
O watch O'er our seasons of peace and of battle,
Hearken, O Lotus-born!

For our dear land we offer oblation,
O keep thou her glory unsullied, unshorn,
And guard the invincible hope of our nation
Hearken, O Lotus-born!

(p. 150)

In "Kali the Mother", Kali, the eternal Mother of Hindu worship, symbolic of the consciousness force hidden in the womb of Nature, and active everywhere, is referred by its various mythical names, 'Uma Himawati', 'Ambika', 'Parvati', 'Girija', 'Shambhavi', 'Kali' and 'Maheshwari'.

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Her worshippers make their offerings to her and seek her blessings:

O Terrible and tender and divine!
O mystic mother of all sacrifice,
we deck the sombre altars of thy shrine
With sacred basil leaves and saffron rice;
All gifts of life and death we bring to thee,
Uma Himavati!

(p. 177)

The Radha-Krishna myth has been the source of inspiration to many Indian poets in regional languages because of its profound romantic and mystical overtones. As has been shown earlier, Sarojini has treated it in her poems, "Song of Radha the Milkmaid", "The Flute Player of Brindaban", and "Poems of Krishna". Some of the songs in the series "Poems of Krishna" have purely temporal significance. In "Kanhaya", Sarojini describes sportive antics of Krishna as a body and the great embarrassment they cause to his mother Yashoda. Villagers of Nandagaon - farmers, priests and milkmaids - bring complaints of Krishna's teasing them and tampering with their prized goods, to Yashoda, who unaware of her son being the divine incarnation, punishes him by tying his hands and feet with a rope and beating him with a rod to hush his peccant lips. The last stanza of the poem describes the complaint of village boys against Krishna:
Nanda's wife, Nanda's wife Kanhaya
Brawls and boasts
He is stronger than the fire and storm
and all the demon hosts
He says a mountain he can hold in one
hand and uproot
The forest trees of Mathura by playing
on his flute.
Boastful One! Boastful One! Yashoda
took a rod
And husband the peccant lips of him
who was a laughing god.
(p. 38, The Feather of the Dawn)

"Damayanti to Nala in the Hour of Exile" depicts
Damayanti's devoted love to her royal husband Nala, who had
lost his kingdom in the game of dice and was exiled. The
myth is taken from the famous Sanskrit epic, the Mahabharata.
Damayanti consoles her husband not to feel dejected in his
hour of calamity because she is by his side and will fill
his life with the bliss of her love:

My hair shall braid thy temples like a crown
Of sapphires, and my kiss upon thy brows
Like cithar-music lull thee to repose,
Till the sun yield thee homage of his light.
O King, thy kingdom who from thee can wrest?
What fate shall dare uncrown thee from this breast,
O god-born lover, whom my love doth gird
And armour with impregnable delight
Of Hope's triumphant keen flame-carven sword?.
( pp. 43-44)
Sarojini Naidu's songs of Hindu festivals not only project the spirit and occasion of these festivals, but also reveal the faith and enthusiasm of those who celebrate them. The Vasant Panchami is the spring festival when Hindu girls and married women carry gifts of lighted lamps and new grown corn as offerings to the goddess of the spring and set them afloat on the face of the waters. Hindu widows are denied the pleasure to take part in any festive ceremonials for they are treated as unfortunate ones and have to lead the life of sorrow and austerity. The poem, "Vasant Panchami", describes the lament of a Hindu widow at the festival of spring. The first two stanzas of the poem with rich auditory, visual and olfactory imagery, present a vivid description of the enchanting atmosphere at the time of the festival:

Go, dragn-fly fold up your purple wing,
Why will you bring me tidings of the spring?
O lilting koels, hush your rapturous notes,
O dhadikulas, still your passionate throats,
Or seek some further garden for your nest ....
Your songs are poisoned arrows in my breast.
O quench your flame, ye crimson gulmohors,
That flaunt your dazzling bloom across my doors
Furl your white bells, sweet champa buds that call
Wild bees to your ambrosial festival
And hold your breath, O dear sirisha trees...
You slay my heart with bitter memories.

(p. 90)
The poet then describes how the joyous girls and married women celebrate the festival:

0 joyous girls who rise at break of morn,
With sandal soil your thresholds to adorn,
Ye brides who streamward bear on jewelled feet,
Your gifts of silver lamps and new-blown wheat,
I pray you dim your voices when you sing
Your radiant salutations to the spring.

(pp. 90-91)

The widow wants the participants in the festival to restrain their enthusiasm for it reminds her of her own unfortunate lot:

For my sad life is doomed to be alas,
Ruined and sere like sorrow-trodden grass,
My heart hath grown, plucked by the wind of grief
Akin to fallen flower and faded leaf,
Akin to every lone and withered thing,
That hath foregone the kisses of the spring.

(p. 91)

On the festival of serpents, Nag Panchami, celebrated three days before the festival of the birth of Lord Krishna, Hindu women offer milk, maize, wild figs and golden honey to serpents and pray to them to protect their lives from dangers. The poem, "The Festival of Serpents", gives a vivid description of the festival:
We bring you kilk and maize, wild figs and golden honey,
And kindle fragrant incense to hallow all the air,
With fasting lips we pray, with fervent hearts we praise you,
O bless our lowly offering and hearken to our prayer.

Guard our helpless lives and guide our patient labours,
And cherish our dear vision like the jewels in your crests;
O spread your hooded watch for the safety of our slumbers,
And soothe the troubled longings that clamour in our breasts.

The last stanza of the poem acquires a mystic significance.
The serpents become symbols of the ancient silence:
Swift are ye as streams and soundless as the dewfall,
Subtle as the lightning and splendid as the sun;
Seers are ye and symbols of the ancient silence,
Where life and death and sorrow and ecstasy are one.

"The Festival of the Sea" gives a vivid account of "Narieli Purnima" or Coconut Day which is celebrated as the sea festival by the people of the Western India, who live by sea and prosper by it. On this day, which marks the end of the monsoon and beginning of the fishing season, fishermen, sailors, merchants and their women folk, all pay homage to
the sea -- the repository of treasure -- for their prosperity and safety by offering the auspicious coconuts to it. Women of seafaring folk pray to the ocean by chanting:

Our tribute and our tears to thee we render,
Dread, sweet, compassionate
Woman and Goddess unsurpassed in splendour
Terror and love and hate.

We worship thee with chaplets of devotion,
Cherish our dear desire,
And guard the lives we yield thee, sacred Ocean,
Lover and son and sire.

From folly and from fear our hearts deliver,
Set from all sorrow free,
Of joy and grief and hope, O triune giver,
Lakshmi, Chundee, Sarasvati.

"Raksha Bandhan" is a poem about one of the most popular and colourful festivals of the Hindus in North India. On this day following an ancient Rajput custom, Hindu women tie bracelets of gold - turned silk on the wrists of their brothers. The silken thread is a symbol both of the deep love of sisters for their brothers and of the pledge of brothers to protect their sisters:
A garland how frail of design,
Our spirits to clasp and entwine
In devotion unstained and unbroken,
How slender a circle and sign
Of secret deep pledges unspoken.

("Spinning Song" describes the celebrations of three Hindu festivals - "Vasant Panchami", "Na£ Panchami" and "Deepavati". Three spinner women, Padmini, Mayura, and Sarasvati, sing about these festivals to the rhythm of the Charakha to relieve the monotony of their work. Padmini remembers how her sisters celebrated the Festival of Spring:

My sisters plucked green leaves at morn
To deck the garden swing,
And donned their shining golden veils
For the Festival of Spring...

Mayura thinks of the Festival of Snakes when her sisters sat beside the hearth:

Kneading the saffron cakes,
They gathered honey from the hives
For the Festival of Snakes ...

The third spinner Sarasvati muses over the colourful Festival of Lights:

My sisters sang at evenfall
A hymn of ancient rites,
And kindled rows of silver lamps
For the Festival of Lights....

(pp. 114-115)
Muslim Ethos:

Born in Hyderabad, Sarojini had inculcated from this Muslim princely state not only her love for Urdu and Persian but also a deep acquaintance with and regard for Muslim life and culture. Hyderabad which was the heart of the finest Islamic culture and had retained all the glamour and values of princely Persia, reminded Sarojini of the splendour of the stories of the Arabian Nights. Its ruling prince, the Nizam of Hyderabad, was a poet of great distinction. Praising the high quality of his songs Sarojini wrote to Edmund Gosse in December 1903; "His songs were exquisite and moving, combining all the fluid mysticism and poignant human simplicity of Burns and the delicate art and melody of Tennyson. They are sung in all his four capitals alike by courtier and peasant and they appeal equally to the poor."¹ Owing to the influence and patronage of the Nizam, poetry and poets flourished in Hyderabad. Here, as in the past in Islamic societies, poets were the conscience and heart-strings of the people. Poetry to them was a vehicle of the exploration of the depths of the soul and emotions and played a great role in community life. People acclaimed the vision of poets and relied on their wisdom and insight. It was perhaps because of this poetic atmosphere of Hyderabad that poetry became the main focus of Sarojini Naidu's intellectual life, the centre of her inner being. Tara Ali Baig, is right when she remarks:

¹ Quoted by Tara Ali Baig, p. 23.
It is not surprising that all this should subconsciously affect her choice of poetry as the vehicle for her deep and passionate emotions, and under the influence of the English language and poets of another land, she began to write her colourful, melodious, verse.¹

Sarojini Naidu had close associations with Muslims with whom she had lived and played as a child. Later she developed a great friendship with the Khilafat leader Muhammad Ali and a great regard for and life-long intimacy with M.A. Jinnah. She was also held in high esteem by Muslims and had the rare privilege of addressing the Conferences of the All India Moslem League in 1912 and 1916. Referring to her close relations with Muslims she remarked in her speech delivered on December 19, 1917 in Madras in a meeting held under the auspices of the Young Men's Muslim Association:

Whenever I go to a new city, I always look for my special welcome from the Mussulmans of the place. Never have I been disappointed or defrauded of my right. It is my right, because I come from the premier Musselman city in India. The premier Musselman city in India rules over the city from which I come, and there the tradition of Islam has

¹ Quoted by Tara Ali Baig, p. 25.
truly been carried out for two hundred years, that tradition of democracy that knows how out of its legislation to give equal rights and privileges to all the communities whose destinies it controls. The first accents I heard were in the tongue of Amir Khusru. All my early associations were formed with the Mussalman men and Mussalman women of my city. My first playmates were Mussalman children.¹

In the same speech she laid emphasis on the democratic ideals of brotherhood and sense of justice in Islam, which she wanted all the peoples of the world to emulate:

Brotherhood is the fundamental doctrine that Islam taught - Brotherhood of civil 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 modern toleration, the larger outlook, this is what we call civilisation; this is what we call the real understanding of human characteristics, the real understanding of those sources that bind human hearts to one another.²

She added further:

It was the first religion that preached and practised democracy, for, in the mosque when 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

1. Speeches and Writings of Sarojini Naidu, p. 124.
2. Ibid., p. 126.
proclaim, "God alone is great". I have been struck over and over again this indivisible unity of Islam that makes a man indistinctively a brother.¹

Sarojini's fascination of Muslim life and culture is visible in her poems - "A Persian Love Song", "A Song from Shiraz", "A Persian Lute Song", "The Queen's Rival", "Humayun to Zubeida", and "The Song of Princes Zebunnisa" - picturing splendour, glory and romance of medieval Persia, Arabia and Mughal princes and princesses. Besides these poems, there are several others which give an insight into Muslim ethos in India. Some of these are related to her birth-town Hyderabad and the state's princely ruler, the Nizam of Hyderabad. Sarojini had unbounded love for her beautiful place of birth. In her poem, "Nightfall in the City of Hyderabad", she describes the stately magnificence of a flourishing Oriental metropolis. The starry sky of Hyderabad appears jewelled with embers of opal and peridot. The curve of the white river, the Musi, that flashes and scintillates, looks like a tusk from the mouth of the city gates:

See how the speckled sky burns like a pigeon's throat Jewelled with embers of opal and peridot.

¹ Speeches and Writings of Sarojini Naidu, p. 127.
See the white river that flashes and scintillates,
Curved like a tusk from the mouth of the city-gates.

One can listen to the call of the **muezzin** from the minaret
and get a glimpse of gleaming beauties behind the veil in balconies:

**Hark from the minaret, how the murzzin's call**
**Floats like a battle- flag over the city wall**

**From trellised balconies, languid and luminous**
**Faces gleam, veiled in a splendour voluminous.**

(p. 55)

Leisurely elephants wind through lanes swinging their silver
bells hung from their silver chains and round the famous
high Char Minar the sounds of gay cavalcades blend with the
music of cymbals. The city bridge is the first to feel the
majestic approach of the night:

Over the city bridge Night comes majestical,
Borne like a queen to a sumptuous festival.

(p. 56)

The two poems of "Songs of My City" - "In a Latticed Balcony" and "In the Bazars of Hyderabad" - are reminiscent of the romance and grandeur of Muslim life in the middle ages as witnessed in Hyderabad. "In a Latticed Balcony", the lady sitting in her balcony waits for her lover whom she wishes to feed "On golden - red honey and fruit" and entertain "With Th' voice of the cymbal and lute". She will
garland his hair "With pearls from the assamine close" and perfume his fingers "With Th' soul of the keora and rose". She will decorate her dearest "In hues of the peacock and love" and woo him "With delicate silence of love" (p. 105).

"In the Bazars of Hyderabad", one witnesses rare, exotic articles sold in the Oriental markets. Most significant among these are:

Turbans of crimson and silver,
Tunics of purple brocade,
Mirrors with panels of amber,
Beggars with handles of jade.

Vendors sell "Saffron and lentil and rice", while maidens grind "Sandalwood, henna, and spice", and peddlars exhibit "Chessmen and ivory dice". Goldsmiths prepare precious ornaments:

Wristlet and amulet and ring,
Bells for the feet of blue pigeons,
Frail as a dragon - fly's wing,
Girdles of gold for the dancers,
Scabbards of the gold for the king

(p. 106)

One can see fruitmen crying to sell "Citron, pomegranate, and plum" and musicians playing on "Sithar, sarangi, and drum"; or can listen to magicians chanting "Spells for the aeons to come". Flower- girls weave with tassels of azure and red:
Crowns for the brow of a bridegroom,
Chaplets to garland his bed,
Sheets of white blossoms new-gathered
To perfume the sleep of the dead.

(p. 107)

Sarojini has eulogized the loving and gracious nature
of the late Nizam of Hyderabad, Mir Mahbub Ali Khan, the
well-beloved of people, and the glamour of his princely
state in two of her poems. "Ode to H.H. the Nizam of
Hyderabad" was presented to the Nizam at the Ramzan Darbar.
In it she describes how the people of different religious
faiths flourish in his cosmopolitan state and do obeisance
to him:

The votaries of the Prophet's faith,
Of whom you are the crown and chief
And they, who bear on Vedic brows
Their mystic symbols of belief;
And they, who worshipping the sun,
Fled O'er the old Iranian sea;
And they, who bow to Him who trod
The midnight waves of Galilee.

(p. 29)

In the last stanza of the ode, the poet prays to God to give
him strength and grace to stand for truth and virtue:

God give you joy, God give you grace
To shield the truth and smite the wrong
To honour Virtue, valour, Worth,
To cherish faith and foster song.
So may the lustre of your days
Outshine the deeds Firdusi sung,
Your name within a nation's prayer,
Your music on a nation's tongue.

(p. 30)

In one of "Memorial Verses", "Ya Mahbub!", she mourns the death of the Nizam and pays a glowing tribute to him. The title of the poem is derived from the device, 'Ya Mahbub' (Beloved) designed on the state banner of the Nizam. Hyderabad under the late Nizam gave the poet the impression of the splendour of Haroun-al Rasheed in the fabulous glamour of old Baghdad. His hands were always ready to help people and his heart always solaced a sad world with the bounty of Hatim Tail.

"The Prayer of Islam" was composed on Id-uz Zuha, 1915, and in it Sarojini makes use of ten of the ninety nine beautiful Arabic names of God (being the ninety nine attributes of God) as used by the followers of Islam. God is worshipped because he is Hameed, one to whom all praise is due. He is Hafeez, the Protector. He is the Master of Life and Time and Fate, The Lord of the labouring winds and seas. He is Ghani, the Bountiful, and Ghaffar, the Forgiver. He is the kindly Light, the radiance of our ways and the Pardoner of our errors. His name is known from star to star. God is Wahab, the bestower, and Weheed, the Unique. He is the goal
to which we aspire, the bestower of happiness and sorrow, 
the principle underlying all universe, the source from which 
all things emanate, the life found in the sunbeam and the 
seed. He is Qadeer, the Almighty, and Quavi, the Powerful. 
Nothing is beyond His power. He can transmute the weakness of 
human beings into their strength, their bondage into 
liberty. God, being the Merciful, the Compassionate, will 
surely respond to the cry of those who call him. The poem 
ends with the inspiring lines:

We are the shadows of Thy light, 
We are the secrets of Thy might, 

The visions of Thy primal dream, 
Ya Rahman! Ya Raheem! 

(pp. 68-69)

In the poem, "Wandering Beggars", Sarojini with 
remarkable ingenuity weaves the refrain, "Y' Allah! Y'Allah! 
"used as the burden in the prayers chanted by wandering 
Muslim beggars:

Time is like a wind that blows, 
The future is a folded rose, 
Who shall pluck it no man knows. 
Y' Allah! Y'Allah! 

(p. 165)

These eternal itinerants care neither for wealth nor for the 

glory of the great. They are the God intoxicated mystics
like sufis and wherever they go they spread the message of God and wisdom of life.

"The Old Woman " describes an old Muslim beggar woman sitting in the street under a banyan tree begging in the name of the Almighty Allah:

Her tremulous hand holds a battered white bowl,
If purchance in your pity you fling her a dole;
She is poor, she is bent, she is blind,
But she lifts a brave heart to the jest of the days,
And her withered, brave voice croons its paen of praise

Be the gay world kind or unkind:
" La ilha illa-l-Allah,
La ilha illa-l-Allah,
Muhammad-ar-Rasul-Allah!"

(p. 126)

In the poem, "The Imam Bara", describing the famous monument, Imam Bara of Lucknow, which is a chapel of lamentation where Muslims of the Shia community celebrate the tragic martyrdom of Ali, Hassan and Hussain during the mourning month of Muharram, Sarojini gives a vivid account of the passion-play that takes place to the accompaniment of the refrain, "Ali! Hassan! Husain!"

Out of the sombre shadows,
Over the sunlit grass
Slow in a sad procession
The shadowy pageants pass
Mournful, majestic, and solemn,
Stricken and pale and dumb,
Crowned in their peerless anguish
The sacred martyrs come.
Hark, from the brooding silence
Breaks the wild cry of pain
Wrung from the heart of the ages
Ali! Hassan! Husain!

(p. 152)

The poet appreciates the mourners' underlying love for the martyrs; and on leaving the Imam Bara, she prays:

Love! let the living sunlight
Kindle your splendid eyes
Ablaze with the steadfast triumph
Of the spirit that never dies.
So may the hope of new ages
Comfort the mystic pain
That cries from the ancient silence
Ali! Hassan! Hussain!

(pp. 152-153)

Still more graphic is the description of the mourning procession depicted in the sonnet, "The Night of Martyrdom".

Blackrobed barefooted, with dim eyes that rain
Wild tears in memory of thy woeful plight,
And hands that in blind, rhythmic anguish smite
Their bloodstained bosoms to a sad refrain
From the old haunting legend of thy pain,
The votaries mourn thee through the tragic night,
With mystic dirge and melancholy rite,
Crying aloud on thee—Hussain! Hussain!
The poem ends with a subtle irony on the celebration:

Why do thy myriad lovers so lament?
Sweet saint, is not thy matchless martyrhood
The living banner and brave covenant
Of the high creed thy Prophet did proclaim,
Bequeathing for the world's beautitude
Th' enduring loveliness of Allah's name?

(The Feather of the Dawn, p. 6)

Regional Traits of Indian Men and Women:

Sarojini has revealed through her poems the emotional and mental make-up of Indian men and women, their particular traits, their fancies, and changing moods, their reactions to happiness and frustration in personal love and marital relations, their attitude to children and their age-long customs. Some of their instincts and qualities are of universal nature for being human beings they resemble men and women of all ages and countries. But in personal respects they are different from others owing to their peculiar habits and traditions.

In "A Song of the Khyber Pass", Sarojini shows how the Muslim tribes of North West Frontier prize nothing more than a maiden to love and a battle to fight:

Wolves of the mountains
Hawks of the hills,
We live or perish
As Allah wills.
Two gifts for our portion
We ask thee O Fate,
A maiden to cherish,
A kinsman to hate.

Children of danger,
Comrades of death
The wild scene of battle
Is breath of our breath.

(The Feather of the Dawn, p. 12)

"A Rajput Love Song" describes Rajput warrior's yearning for his beloved wife as he goes to battle-field riding on his stallion with his sword swinging at his side. His wife also suffers the pangs of separation from her husband and eagerly waits for his return:

Haste, O wild-bee hours, to the gardens of the sunset!
Fly, wild-parrot-day, to the orchards of the west!
Come, O tender night, with your sweet, consoling darkness
And bring me my Beloved to the shelter of my breast!

(pp. 80-81)

An Indian woman surrenders her all for the love of her husband:

O Love! of all the riches that are mine,
What gift have I withheld before thy shrine?

What tender ecstasy of prayer and praise
Or lyric flower of my impassioned days?

("To Love", p. 83)
"A Love Song from the North" describes the suffering of a woman whose lover has forsaken her:

Tell me no more of thy love, papeeha,
Wouldst than recall to my heart, papeeha,
Dreams of delight that are gone,
When swift to my side came the feet of my lover
With stars of the dusk and the dawn?
I see the soft wings of the clouds on the river,
And jewelled with raindrops the mango leaves quiver,
And tender boughs flower on the plain ....
But what is their beauty to me, papeeha,
Beauty of blossom and shower, papeeha,
That brings not my lover again.

(p. 75)

The greatest misery in the life of an Indian woman is the death of her husband. She is considered an unlucky woman and deprived of all her fine clothes and rich jewellery:

Shatter her shining bracelets, break the string
Threading the mystic marriage- beads that cling
Loth to desert a sobbing throat so sweet,
Unbind the golden anklets on her feet,
Divest her of her azure veils and cloud
Her living beauty in the living shroud.

("Dirge", p. 66)

Sometimes as shown in the poem "Suttee", she feels so miserable after her separation from her dead husband, that she dies along with him on his pyre:
Life of my life, Death's bitter sword
Hath severed us like a broken word,
Rent us in twain who are but one ....
Shall the flesh survive when the soul is gone?

As contrasted with the image of the suttee who delivers herself to the flames of fire on which lies her dead husband; is the picture of the tameless and free gipsy girl who wanders about in her wild majesty:

In tattered robes that hord a glittering trace
Of bygone colours, brodered to the knee,
Behold her, daughter of a wandering race,
Tameless, with the bold falcon's agile grace,
And the lithe tiger's sinuous majesty.

("The Indian Gipsy", p. 50)

"Village- Song" in The Golden Threshold, describes simple village girl's disgust for worldly pleasures and love for forest life in the company of flowers, birds and rivulets. She turns deaf ears to the entreaties of her mother, who lures her with the temptations of luxuries of life, and retires to the forest:

The bridal- songs and cradle - songs have cadences of sorrow,
The laughter of the sun to day, the wind of death tomorrow,
Far sweeter sound the forest- notes where forest- streams are falli
O mother mine, I cannot stay, the fairy folk are calling.

(p. 12)
The other poem of the same title in The Bird of Time depicts the fear and anxiety of a village belle who lured by the boat men's song, tarries on the banks of the river Jamuna and gets late for returning home:

Full are my pitchers and far to carry,  
Lone is the way and long,  
Why, O why was I tempted to tarry  
Lured by the boatmen's song?  
Swiftly the shadows of night are falling,  
Hear, O hear, is the white crane calling,  
Is it the wild owl's cry?  
There are no tender moon beams to light me,  
If in the darkness a serpent should bite me,  
Or if an evil spirit should smite me,  
Ram re Ram! I shall die.

(p. 103)

"In Praise of Henna" recalls a typical Indian scene. Henna is a plant the power of whose dried leaves made into a paste is applied by maidens and young women, particularly on auspicious occasions, to their palms and feet to colour them red. When the rains come, a call goes to the girls to come out and collect the leaves of henna, and sing song in its praise.

The tilka's red for the brow of a bride,  
And betel-nut's red for lips that are sweet,  
But, for lily-like fingers and feet,  
The red, the red of henna tree.

(p. 13)
"The Parda Nashin" is the picture of a veiled Muslim beauty, evoking all the grace, colour and also the paths of her life.

From thieving light of eyes impure,
From coveting sun or wind's caress,
Her days are guarded and secure
Behind her carven lattices,
Like jewels in a turbaned crest,
Like secrets in a lover's breast.

But though no hand unsanctioned dares
Unveil the mysteries of her grace,
Time lifts the curtain unawares,
And sorrow looks into her face....
Who shall prevent the subtle years,
Or shield a woman's eyes from tears?

(p. 53)

The last stanza is ironical and shows that though by imposing purdah man may protect the woman from impure eyes, but he cannot prevent the destruction of her beauty by Time.

The poem "Indian Dancers" portrays the vivid and enchanting picture of beautiful Indian dancers with "houri-like faces", their "eyes ravished with rapture" and "passionate bosoms aflaming with fire". Dressed in "glittering garments of purple", they tread" their rhythmical, slumber-soft feet "while dancing in accompaniment with "endrancing "strain of keen music"."
With rare poetic felicity Sarojini creates in her verses the rhythmic movement of the dance itself.

Now silent, now singing and swaying and swinging,
like plossoms that bend to the breezes or showers,
Now wantonly winding, they flash, now they falter.
and, lingering, languish in radiant choir;
Their jewel - girl arms and warm, wavering,
lily - long fingers enchant through melodious hours
Eyes ravished with rapture, celestially panting,
what passionate bosoms aflaming with fire!

Indian Folk Ethos:

The folk songs of Sarojini Naidu - "Palanguin - Bearers", "Wandering Singers", "Indian Weavers", "Coromandel Fishers", "The Snake Charmer", "Corn Grinders", "Village Song", "Harvest Hymn", "Cradle Song", "Bangle- Sellers", "Spinning Song", "Hymn to Indira, Lord of Rain", "Wandering Beggars" - open before us the vistas of variegated and bizarre life in India and enchant us by their lilting rhythmic music. These songs project feelings, aspirations and desires of the wide range of Indian people belonging to the lower strata of life. Sarojini has cast them in different metres and verse forms which bring out their spirit most effectively. She has tried to galvanize into life with the use of apposite diction, power of words, and picturesque imagery the sentiments, rhythmic movements, and
the flush and the fire of these folk singers and dancers. These songs beautifully express the abandon and gaiety, buoyancy and carefreeness which characterize the folk life.

"The Palanquin Bearers" with its romantic setting and imagery, successfully recreates the scene of careful and tender swaying and heaving of palanquin bearers as they carry a beautiful maiden sitting in their palanquin. The palanquin is veiled and its bearers sing songs in rhythmic harmony with their foot steps to assuage the tiredness of their burden. The love- laden heart of the lady sitting behind the veil finds true expression of its beats in the song and springy movement of the palanquin bearers. The melody of their song pervades the atmosphere.

Lightly, O lightly, we bear her along,
She sways like a flower in the wind of our song;
She skims like a bird on the foam of a stream,
She floats like a laugh from the lips of a dream,
Gaily, O gaily we glide and we sing,
We bear her along like a pearl on a string.

(p. 3)

The poem is rich in kinesthetic images expressed through words conveying 'felt motion' - "sway", "skim", "float", "glide", "hang", "spring", and "fall". The poem has a rhythm of comparative swift movement corresponding with the swaying movement of the palanquin. The rise and fall of palanquin, expressed through the stressed and the unstressed sounds,
synchronizes with the rise and fall of the footsteps of the palki - bearers. There is a complete rapport between the tone of the palanquin bearer's song and the heart-beats of the lady inside.

The folk song, "Wandering Singers", breathes an air of buoyancy, carefreeness, abandon and freedom. The wandering singers are neither attached to time - present and future - and space nor bound by any worldly ties of home, family, love and comfort. They believe in universal brotherhood and consider all men to be their kinsmen. They cherish no hopes, no dreams, no ambitions that would curb their movements. They wander to the call of the wind and go wherever it blows:

Where the voice of the wind calls our wandering feet,  
Through echoing forest and echoing street,  
With lutes in our hands ever-singing we roam,  
All men are our kindred, the world is our home.  
(p. 4)

To make their songs sweetest they sing of saddest things, of the uprooted cities, of beautiful women gone and mighty kings dead, of the battles of the old and simple and sorrowful things of life:
Our lays are of cities whose lustre is shed,  
The laughter and beauty of women long dead;  
The sword of old battles, the crown of old kings,  
And happy and simple and sorrowful things.  

(p. 4)

While the wandering beggars in the poem "Wandering Beggars" spread the message of God, the wandering singers spread the message of brotherhood of men.

The tune of the song has been created by managing prosodic rising rhythm corresponding with the rising tone of song. The eleven syllables in each verse have an iambic foot and three anapests. The predominance of anapests makes for quickness and tallies with the quick movement of the wandering feet.

"Indian weavers" has a symbolic significance. The poem shows weavers in the rural areas weaving cloth on handlooms in different coloured patterns. These patterns are designed to suit three stages of man's life described in three different stanzas of the poem. At the day-break when the dawning sun holds new promise and new hopes, they weave gay and colourful garments for the birth of a child: "Blue as the wing of a halcyon wild we weave the robes of a new-born child". At nightful which the newly married couples eagerly await, they weave radiant cloth with peacock's purple and green plumes for the bright marriage-veil of the queen:
Like the plumes of a peacock, purple and green,
We weave the marriage - veils of a queen.

In the "moonlight chill" symbolizing the last stage of man's journey of life, the weavers weave "a dead man's funeral shroud". The epithet "chill" is associated with cold stillness of death:

White as the feather and white as the cloud,
We weave a dead man's funeral shroud.

(p. 5)

The images of different colours suggested by the blue wings of halcyon bird or purple plumes of peacock or whiteness of feather and cloud bring before us very vividly the different patterns of cloth woven by weavers. The poem has a symbolic significance for it is the fates which are shown weaving the web of human life. The weavers remind us of the three fates or three sisters of Greek mythology, Clotho, Lachesis, and atropos, who weave the threads of the birth, and life and death of man. The poem also conveys the conception of Hindu trinity - of Brahma, the god of Creation; Vishnu, the god of splendour of life; and Shiva, the god of destruction. Prof. C.D. Narasimhaiah remarks significantly about the poem: "Here, in twelve lines, is an elliptical, allusive, and symbolic presentation of life's journey from birth to death."¹

"Coromandel Fishers" captures beautifully the Indian fishermen's sense of identity and belonging with the sea. The poem depicts the happy, carefree but busy life of the fishers who go out with their net to the sea early morning to catch fish. Man and nature work together for human sustenance. There exists a perfect harmony between fishers and their environment which ensures professional success, prosperity and joy. Man-nature relationship gets more intimate as the fishermen call sea their "mother", cloud their "brother" and waves their "comrades":

No longer delay, let us hasten away in the track of the sea-gull's call
The sea is our mother, the cloud is our brother, the waves are our comrades all.
What though we toss at the fall of the sun where the hand of the sea-god drives?
He who holds the storm by the hair, will hide in his breast our lives.

(p. 6)

The man-nature relationship is extended further to man-nature-God relationship. Sea God appears to bless the sons of the sea and grant them prosperity and joy.

The poem, "The Snake Charmer", presents an impressive description of the entreaties the snake charmer makes to his pet to unveil itself and come out in open. He treats his pet as his fiancee and bride to be wooed with love and concern. The poem opens with the romantic atmosphere of
sweet and delicate perfume of "Keora and Jasmine", which attracts a snake:

Whither dost thou hide from the magic of my flute-call?
In what moonlight -- tangled meshes of perfume,
Where the clustering keoras guard the squirrel's slumber,
Where the deep woods glimmer with the jasmine's bloom?

The snake charmer invites snake on milk and honey and tempts and flatters it in various ways. He calls it his bride and wooes it with love:

Whither dost thou loiter, by what murmuring hollows,
Where oleanders scatter their ambrosial fire a threat.
Come, thou subtle bride of my mellifluous wooing,
Come, thou silver-breasted moonbeam of desire!

The poem "Corn-Grinders" brings out the Hindu view of all life being one. The life in the mouse, the deer and the human being is the same. They suffer in the same manner and deserve equal pity. A little mouse cries because its life partner was caught in a baited snare and killed. A little deer laments for the death of its lord who fell a victim to the arrow of the hunter. A little bride suffers from the poignant sorrow because the cruel fate has snatched away her husband from her:

Alas! alas! my lord is dead!
Ah, who will stay these hungry tears,
Or still the want of famished years,
And crown with love my marriage - bed?

(p. 10)

In the poem "Harvest Hymn" (pp. 14-15) and "Hymn to Indira", Lord of Rain" (p. 1160) Indian peasants pray the gods, Surya, Varuna, the goddess Prithvi and the rain god Indira to shower their mercy on their fields and bless them with rich and plentiful harvest. 'cradle Song' is a lullaby sung by a fond mother to send her little child to bed:

Dear eyes, good- night,
In golden light
The stars around you gleam;
On you I press
With soft cares
A little lovely dream.

(p. 17)

The poem "Bells" portrays a typical village scene describing the love of a peasant boy for her village belle, of the shepherd for his cattle and villagers for the religious deity in the temple. The 'bells' symbolize anklet- bells (the token of human love), cattle- bells (the token of animal love), and temple bells (The token of divine love).

The poem, "Bangle- Sellers", presents a typical Indian scene of bangle- sellers selling bangles of variegated radiant colours in the village fair to meet the requirements of women in different stages of life. The "bright Rainbow- tinted circles of light" are meant for
"happy daughters and happy wives". The bangles for brides are of different colours to suit their changing moods:

Some are like fields of sunbit corn,
Meet for a bride on her bridal morn,
Some, like the flame of her marriage fire,
Or rich with the hue of her heart's desire,
Tinkling, luminous, tender and clear,
Like her bridal laughter and bridal tear.  

(p. 108)

The poem is rich in visual images of colours taken from objects of nature.

Sarojini's folk songs are sincere and authentic representation of true folk spirit of India. They beautifully express the abandon and gaiety, verve and carefree ness which characterize the folk life.

**Indian Towns and Monuments:**

Sarojini has captured colourful life of towns in several of her poems. Besides the picturesque scenes of Hyderabad drawn by her in her poems like "Songs of My City" and "Night- fall in the city of Hyderabad", she has also written poems about historical city of Delhi and Bombay. The poem "Street Cries" depicts the typical scene of hawkers selling their articles in most of the Indian towns. The hawkers cry to sell their breads in the morning.
When dawn's first cymbals beat upon the sky. 
Rousing the world to labour's various cry.

Their fruits in the noon:
When the earth falters and waters swoon 
With the implacable radiance of noon.

and their flowers at the night-fall:
When twilight twinkling o'er the gay bazars, 
Unfurls a sudden canopy of stars, 
When lutes are strung and fragrant torches lit 
On white roof-terraces where lovers sit 
Drinking together of life's poignant sweet.

The poem "Imperial Delhi" is a tribute to the 
"Imperial City" which has witnessed changes of many kings 
and kingdoms and yet remained unravished by the spoils of time:

Thy changing kings and kingdoms pass away 
The gorgeous legends of a bygone day, 
But thou dost still immutably remain 
Unbroken symbol of proud histories, 
Unageing priestess of old mysteries 
Before whose shrine the spells of Death are vain.

In the poem, "On Juhu Sands", Sarojini beautifully 
presents the objective picture of the Juhu Beach in Bombay 
and the subjective feelings of the poet remembering her 
pleasant trip to the mountains:
Under the palms on sea-wet sands
Half drowsy I recline,
How comes upon my foam-kissed hands
The scent of mountains pine?

Though the sea-waves pour their melodies in the poet's ears, she can, however, hear only "the murnuring mountain breeze". Even while gathering "gleaming shells" and drifting seaweed plumes" of the beach, she dreams of blooming "wild narcissus" in "hidden dells". Even the beautiful sight of the moon shining on the breast of the sea, is unable to divert the poet from the mountain snows:

On the sea's breast the young moonrise
Falls like a golden rose,
But my heart gazes with your eyes
On the far mountain snows.

(The Feather of the Dawn, p. 23)

Sarojini's poems thus reflect the colourful pageant of Indian life in all its picturesque variety. Amarnath Jha in his tribute to Sarojini rightly remarks: "She is of India, the spirit of India is in her, and although men of all nationalities will find their questions echoed and answered yet it is the Indian that will feel his own feelings reciprocated in every line." Sarojini is often

criticized for avoiding the treatment of harsh and sordid realities of Indian life in her poems. It is forgotten that her gay temperament and happy conditions of her life, have made her a lyricist of joy in life. Those who criticize her for drawing blank over sordid and coarse aspects of Indian life, demand from her what she being a genuine person and poet, could not have given them without sounding unnatural and unauthentic.
Sarojini Naidu had a great passion for poetry but her greatest love was her motherland. She described it once as her "love-affair with India". Emphasizing her passion for poetry she prays to God in the poem "Guerdon", to grant her the rapture of love, the rapture of truth and the rapture of Song:

To priests and to prophets
The joy of their creeds
To kings and their cohorts
The glory of deeds;
And peace to the vanquished
And hope to the strong ...
For me, O my Master,
The rapture of Song!

(pp. 140-41)

She, however, desires to be a poet not for her own personal joy and satisfaction but for the service of her country. While confronting death which in the poem "Death and Life", wishes to relieve her of her pain for ever, she spurns the pity of Death and wishes to live with all her sufferings lest she loses the opportunity to serve her country:
I said, "Thy gentle pity shames mine ear,
O Death, am I so purposeless a thing,
Shall my soul falter or my body fear
Its poignant hour of bitter suffering,
Or fail ere I achieve my destined deed
Of song or service for my country's need?"

Sarojini is keen to use her supreme gift for natural song for the service of her motherland and the good of the mankind. She, like her "Wandering Singers", wants to move around her country singing ceaselessly the eternal song of fundamental unity and universal brotherhood. She considers her own role and function as a poet, from the higher attitudes of universal feelings and commitment. The exhortation of her mentor Gopal Krishna Gokhale who asked her to consecrate her life and her talent, her song and her speech, her thought and her dream to the motherland, continues to echo in her ears: "O poet, see visions from the hilltops and spread abroad the message of hope to the toilers in the valleys." Sarojini made a confession of her view and vision as a poet in her memorable address to the Madras Provincial conference held at Conjeevaram in May 1918:

1. Speeches and Writings of Sarojini Naidu, p. 28.
Often and often have they said to me: "Why have you come out of the ivory tower of dreams to the market place? Why have you deserted the pipes and flute of the poet to be the most strident trumpet of those who stand and call the Nation to battle?" Because the function of a poet is not merely to be isolated in ivory towers of dreams set in a garden of roses, but his place is with the people; in the dust of the highways, in the difficulties of battle is the poet's destiny. The one reason why he is a poet is that in the hour of danger, in the hour of defeat and despair, the poet should say to the dreamer: "If you dream true, all difficulties, all illusions, all despair are but Maya: the one thing that matters is hope. Here I stand before you with your higher dreams, your invisible courage, your indomitable victories."¹

Sarojini thus considers the real mission of her life to be able to serve her country with her song. She loves her country and is passionately interested in the sufferings of her people. Prof. K.R.S. Iyengar rightly observes: "Like Tagore and Aurobindo, Sarojini too was more than a poet, she was one of Mother India's most gifted children, readily sharing her burden of pain, fiercely articulating her agonies and hopes, and gallantly striving to redeem the Mother and redeem the time."²

Sarojini's vision of India was of one united and integrated nation from north to south and east to west notwithstanding differences of religions and regions. She always emphasizes one brotherhood of Indian people as a whole. In her lecture delivered at Public Meeting held under the auspices of the Historical Society, Pachaiyappa's College, Madras in 1903, she exhorted young men to rise above their prejudices of regions and religions and consider themselves to be only Indians:

I say that it is not your pride that you are a Madrasi, that it is not your pride that you are a Brahmin, that it is not your pride you belong to South of India, that it is not your pride you are a Hindu, but that is your pride that you are an Indian. I was born in Bengal. I belong to the Madras Presidency. In a Mahomedan city I was brought up and married, and there I live; still I am neither a Bengalee, nor Madrassee, nor Hyderabadee, but I am an Indian, not a Hindu, not a Brahmin but an Indian to whom my Mahomedan brother is as dear and as precious as my Hindu brother.  

Like Jawaharlal Nehru, Sarojini saw in India two fundamental qualities - continuity in the midst of change, and unity underlying diversity. As is evident from her

1. Speeches and Writings of Sarojini Naidu, pp. 7-8.
poems reflecting Indian ethos, she found India in the orchards of Kashmir, sea beach of Bombay, bazars of Hyderabad, paddy fields of Bengal and the black cotton soil of the Deccan. For her, her motherland comprised ancient temples, medieval mosques and tombs, mango groves, jasmine arbours, lotus pools, thatched huts and royal palaces. It had among its people ferocious Muslim tribes of North West Frontier, Rajput warriors of Rajasthan, majestic rulers and princesses, Coromandel fishers, snake-charmers, beggars, weavers, street hawkers and vendors, musicians and dancers, tameless and free gipsy girl, village belle, pardanashin sitting in her latticed balcony, yearning beloveds and unlucky widows, India was to Sarojini an ever-present reality, an intensely felt presence.

Sarojini's so called "love-affair with India" began in childhood. "The Traveller's Song which she wrote at the age of twelve shows that even when she was in Europe, she carried India with her:

    O'er Italia's sunny plains
    All aglow with rosy flowers
    I wander now 'mid fallen fanes
    And now amid the myrtle bowers.
    But wheresoever I may roam
    I long for thee, my dear dear home.
A year later she expressed her admiration for Sir Edwin Arnold who had portrayed the picture of India in his English poems:

Poet! that dost sweetly sing
Of fair India's land, my home.

As a grown up woman, she expressed her profound love for her country in one of her fiery speeches:

As long as I have life, as long as blood flows through this arm of mine, I shall not leave the cause of freedom. Come my general! come, my soldiers! I am only a woman, only a poet. But as a woman I give to you the weapons of faith and courage and the shield of fortitude. And as a poet, I fling out the banner of song, and sound the bugle-call to battle. How shall I kindle the flame which shall waken you men from slavery?\(^1\)

When she was an old woman approaching the end of her life, she in her stirring oration on August 15, 1947, said as the first Governor of Uttar Pradesh.

Nations of the world! I greet you in the name of India, my mother - my mother whose home has a roof of snow, whose walls are of living seas, whose doors are always open to you. Do you seek shelter or succour, do you seek love and understanding? Love to us, Love to us in

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faith, come to us in hope, come to us believing that all gifts are ours to give. I give for the world the freedom of this India, that has never died in the past, that shall be indestructible in the future, and shall lead the world to ultimate peace.¹

Sarojini's love for her motherland finds an impassioned expression in her poems and songs. In the poem "Lakshmi, The Lotus Born", written to recreate the scene of the worship of the goddess of wealth, Lakshmi, she lifts her hands of prayer, not for her own self alone, but for her entire nation. She invokes the goddess of fortune with eager devotion and prays to her to adorn the threshold of her countrymen and women with her sweet eyelids and caressing fingers and auspicious footfalls, and grant them shower and sheaves of her blessing:

Prosper our cradles and kindred and cattle,  
And cherish our heart-fires and coffers and corn,  
O watch o'er our seasons of peace and battle,  
Hearken, O Lotus-born!

For our dear Land do we offer oblation,  
O keep thou her glory unsullied, unshorn,  
And guard the invincible hope of our nation,  
Hearken, O Lotus-born!

(p. 150)

¹ Quoted by Vishwanath S. Haravana, Sarojini Naidu (New Delhi: Orient Longmans Limited, 1960), p. 75
Sarojini has an unflinching faith in the indomitable soul of India, endowed with "a perennial vitality and an unmeasured power of ultimate self-renewal, able and ready after each dark epoch of political tribulation to fulfil the prophecy of her own Sri Krishṇa, and 'be born again and again for the establishing of the national righteousness'". Occasionally she becomes prophetic in her pronouncements: "The Dawn of her deliverance is at hand. For imperishable are the prophecies of time and eternal the pledges of the Soul.

In her poem "To India", a hymn addressed to her motherland she expresses her yearning for her freedom. Looking at her country through prophetic eyes she calls her ageless and exhorts her to rise and regenerate from her present gloom and despondency:

O young through all thy immemorial years!
Rise, Mother, rise, regenerate from thy gloom,
And, like a bride, high-mated with the spheres,
Regret new glories from thy ageless womb!

She wishes her country to regain her past glory and prestige and emerge as a tremendous power, and show the light of freedom not only to her children but also to the people of

2. Ibid. p. 19.
different nations suffering under similar conditions. She offers them the divine message of peace, love and faith:

The nations that in fettered darkness weep
Crave thee to lead them where great mornings break...
Mother, O Mother, wherefore dost thou sleep?
Arise and answer for thy children's sake!

Sarojini considers the period of slavery through which her country is passing as a period of Mother's long slumber. She is quite hopeful that soon the Mother, who was once a great power, will regain her lost glory and be "crowned" with "crescent honours, splendours and victories":

Thy future calls thee with a manifold sound
To crescent honours, splendours, victories vast;
Waken, O slumbering Mother, and be crowned,
Who once wert empress of the sovereign Past.

(p. 58)

The sonnet, "Eternal India"\(^1\) was dedicated to M.K. Gandhi and contributed to the "Young India". It describes the performance of India, which has outlived Earth's earliest civilizations. While its rivals, the civilizations of primeval dawn, Iran, Egypt, Greece and Babylon, have decayed and lie buried in the abyss of doom, it still survives and witnesses the rise and fall of other kingdom with the confidence of its eternal glory to surpass them all.

\(^1\) It is not included in The Sceptred Flute, but appears in Speeches and Writings of Sarojini Naidu, p. 187.
The sonnet is written in the Petrarchan form with an octave and a sestet. The octave describes how India preserved its primeval glory while other civilizations have decayed under the changes brought about by the powerful time:

Thou whose imaging eyes have gazed upon
The Vision of Time's glory and decay,
Round thee have flower-like centuries rolled away
Into the silence of primeval, dawn,
Thou hast out-lived Earth's empires and outshone
The fabled grace and grandeur of their sway,
The far famed rivals of thine yesterday,
Iran and Egypt, Greece and Babylon.

The sestet shows how amidst rise and fall of kingdoms, India preserves its eternal and ageless glory and surpasses them all:

Sealed in To-morrow's vast abysmal womb
What do thy grave prophetic eyes foresee
Of swift or strange world- destiny and doom?
What sudden kingdoms that shall rise and fall,
While thou dost still survive, surpass them all,
Secure, supreme in ageless ecstasy?

The poem "Remembrance" written to the memory of Violet Clarke who died on March 21, 1909 and whose book of stories, leaves, was published after her death, describes an alien lady's boundless love for India, its shrines, streams and art. It contains poet's own admiration for the glory of her motherland:
With eager knowledge of our ancient love,
And prescient love of all our ancient race,
You came to us, with gentle hands that bore
Bright gifts of genius, youth, and subtle grace.

Our shrines, our sacred streams, our sumptuous art,
Old hills that scale the sky's unaging dome,
Recalled some long lost rapture to your heart,
Some far-off memory of your spirit's home,

Whenever there was any calamity in any part of the country. Sarojini was deeply pained by it as if it were here own personal loss. At the time of the disastrous floods in 1927 in Gujarat, she wrote a moving poem, "Gujarat", to appease angry God:

Stay the relentless anger of thy hand
Thine awful war, 0 Lord, no longer wage
Against our hopeless hearts and heritage,
Nor rend with ravening doom our ancient land.
Cease lest thy maddened creatures turn from thee
And in the midnight of deep wild tavail
Mock thee with mouths of bitter blasphemy.

"The Gift of India" is a noble tribute to the brave sons of India who served the Allies as soldiers of the Indian army in the First World War and sacrificed their lives in the foreign countries. The poem was composed by Sarojini Naidu for the Report of the Hyderabad Ladies' War Relief
Association in December, 1915. It was intended to draw the attention of the world to the contribution made by the brave Indian soldiers to the victory of the Allies in the war.

The poem is in the form of address by the Mother India to the World. The tender and sensitive soul of the Mother is roused to sympathise with her brave sons who displayed their valour on different battle fronts in Europe fighting in favour of the Allies. The poem expresses poignantly the profound grief of Mother India for her heroic sons killed in alien lands:

Is there aught you need that my hands withhold,
Rich gifts of raiment or grain or gold?
Lo! I have flung to the East and West
Priceless treasures torn from my breast,
And yielded the sons of my stricken womb
To the drum-beats of duty, the sabres of doom.

(p. 146)

The sons of India were killed in strange climates and alien lands. Their bodies were buried in "alien graves" without any concern or love or drop of tear. They were:

Gathered like pearls in their alien graves
Silent they sleep by the Persian Waves,
Scattered like shells on Egyptian sands,
They lie with pale brows and brave, broken hands,
They are strewn like blossoms mown down by chance
On the blood-brown meadows of Flanders and France.
It is hard to assuage and measure the grief of the Mother who is compelled to offer her beloved sons in the name of duty, to be killed in war. Her tone gets very pathetic:

Can ye measure the grief of the tears I weep
Or compass the woe of the watch to keep?
Or the pride that thrills thro' my heart's despair
And the hope that comforts the anguish of prayer?
And the far sad glorious vision I see
Of the torn red banners of Victory?

(p. 146)

The poem concludes with a subtle protest against the Imperialists who have not properly valued the great sacrifice made by the "martyred sons" of India:

When the terror and tumult of hate shall cease
And life be refashioned on anvils of peace,
And your love shall offer memorial thanks
To the comrades who fought in your dauntless ranks,
And you honour the deeds of the deathless ones,
Remember the blood of my martyred sons!

(p. 147)

Sarojini was deeply concerned about the poor and distressed people of her country, caught in the grim struggle of life. As shown by her in her prose poem "Nilambuja" written as early as in 1902, she could not shut herself for long in the blissful ivory towers of romance comforts and luxuries, but had to go to the toiling masses needing the succour of hope and faith through her songs. In
the poem "The Faery Isle of Janjira", addressed to Her Highness Nazli Raffia Begum of Janjira, the poet is attracted by the fascinating and blissful atmosphere of the Begum's kingdom and wishes to spend some time there:

Fain would I dwell in your faery kingdom,
O faery queen of a flowering clime,
Where life glides by to a delicate measure,
With the glamour and grace of a far-off time.

Fain would I dwell where your wild doves wander,
Your palm-woods burgeon and sea-winds sing ... 
Lulled by the time of the rhythmic waters,
In your island of Bliss it is always spring

(p. 121)

The urge for beauty is irresistible but the urge for action is no less powerful. She is unable to ignore the call of her country which wishes her to dedicate her sons and life to the service of her people:

Yet must I go where the loud world beckons,
And the urgent drum-beat of destiny calls,
Far from your white dome's luminous slumber,
Far from the dream of your fortress walls,

Into the strife of the throng and the tumult,
The war of sweet Love against folly and wrong;
Where brave hearts carry the sword of battle,
'Tis mine to carry the banner of song.

(p. 121)
She wants to serve her motherland with her songs conveying message of love and faith to the depressed hearts and distressed people:

The solace of faith to the lips that falter,
The succour of hope to the hands that fail,
The tidings of joy when Peace shall triumph,
When truth shall conquer and Love prevail.

(p. 121)

"An Anthem of Love" describes sincere feelings and intense patriotic urge of Indian people to dedicate their lives wholeheartedly for the welfare and betterment of their motherland:

Two hands are we to serve thee, O our Mother,
To strive and succour, cherish and unite;
Two feet are we to cleave the waning darkness,
And gain the pathways of the dawning light.

Two ears are we to catch the nearing echo,
The sounding cheer of Time's prophetic horn;
Two eyes are we to reap the crescent glory,
The radiant promise of renascent moon.

The last stanza shows how all Indians united as one "indivisible soul" are devoted to their motherland and have unflinching faith in the attainment of their goal of country's freedom:
One heart are we to love thee, O our Mother,
One undivided, indivisible soul,
Bound by one hope, one purpose, one devotion
Towards a great, divinely-destined goal.

"At Dawn" is a poem of the national awakening, dealing with India's waking up from the long slumber and gloom of suffering. The painful "long night" is over and the country is fast moving towards a new dawn of splendour and glory. The note of optimism is clearly visible in the opening lines:

Children, my children, the daylight is breaking,
The cymbals of morn sound the hour of your making,
The long night is o'er, and our labour is ended,
Fair blow the fields that we tilled and we tended,
swiftly the harvest grows mellow for reaping,
The harvest we sowed in the time of your sleeping.

The poet then describes the dedicated work done by patriotic leaders in spite of all their failings to usher in the new chapter in the life of their Motherland and bequeath to their children a life rich in hope and faith:

Weak were our hands but our service was tender,
In darkness we dreamed of the dawn of your splendour,
In silence we strove for the joy of the morrow,
And watered your seeds from the wells of our sorrow,
We toiled to enrich the glad hour of your waking,
Our vigil is done, lo! the daylight is breaking.

(p. 129)

The poet leaves it to the judgement of the posterity to condemn or praise her and her colleagues for what they have done for it:

Children, my children, who wake to inherit
The ultimate hope of our travailing spirit,
Say, when young hearts shall take to their keeping
The manifold dreams have sown for your reaping,
Is it praise, is it pain you will grant us for guerdon?
Anoint with your love or arraign with your pardon?

(pp. 129-130)

In the poem "Transience", Sarojini exhorts young men of her country not to be disheartened if the times are full of trouble and darkness for the future promises a bright dawn of glory and sunshine:

Nay, do not pine, tho' life be dark with trouble,
Time will not pause or tarry on his way;
To-day that seems so long, so strange, so bitter,
Will soon be some forgotten yesterday.

(p. 125)

In the poem "The Broken Wing", Sarojini appears to express her reply to her late mentor Gopal Krishna Gokhale who seeing her failing health, has once asked her,"Why should a song-bird like you have a broken wing?" The poem is saturated with patriotic fervour though a mild note of
pathos colours it because of the personal grief suffered by her in the deaths of her beloved father and beloved leader and friend Gokhale. The poem is cast in question-answer form and expresses the poet's deep patriotic passions. The "mournful night is past" and a new dawn breaks with new hopes and promises. Everything in nature returns to the "winds of hope", and gains new vigour and life. This fills the poet's sad, melancholy heart with new hopes and dreams. She musters up her courage and stamina to wake her motherland to new heights of glory. The poet is asked a question as to why being a song-bird she bears a broken wing even at this glorious time of the breaking of dawn:

The great dawn breaks, the mournful night is past,
From her deep age-long sleep she wakes at last!
Sweet and long-slumbering buds of gladness ope
Fresh lips to the returning winds of hope,
Our eager hearts renew their radiant flight
Towards the glory renascent light,
Life and our land await their destined spring...
Song-bird why dost thou bear a broken wing?

The poet whose heart burns with patriotic fervour answers:

Shall spring that wakes mine ancient land again
Call to my wild and suffering heart in vain?
Or Fate's blind arrows still the pulsing note
Of my far-reaching, frail, unconquered throat?
Or a weak bleeding pinion daunt or tire
My flight to the high realms of my desire?
Behold! I rise to meet the destined spring
And scale the stars upon my broken wing!

Sarojini's deep concern for the freedom of her country had convinced her that India could not be free till Hindus and Muslims were united and they put up a joint struggle against the British rulers. Owing to her bringing up in the Muslim state of Hyderabad, she was already friendly with Muslims and had a great love for them. She therefore started championing the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity from the very beginning of her political career. She was so confident about Hindu-Muslim unity that in her ebullience she exclaimed to Gokhale that they would see it in five years. Gokhale who was a great realist and man of foresight tried to dilute her enthusiasm by saying with a note of yearning sadness in his voice: "Child, you are a poet but you hope too much. It will not come in your lifetime or in mine. But keep your faith and wish if you can."\(^1\)

Sarojini's faith and confidence in Hindu-Muslim unity never diminished. She has been fascinated by the diversity of India's religions and has tried to understand each of

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1. Tara Ali Baig, p. 32.
them with sympathy and love. However, it was Islam, more than any other non-Hindu religion which exerted a influence on her. She was therefore dedicated to the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity. She shared this passion both with Gokhale and Gandhiji. In several of her patriotic songs which are in the form of prayers to Mother India, she expresses her belief in all faiths living together, and through their acts of love and sacrifice, building up a new image of united India. Rajyalakshmi has rightly remarked: "Her nationalism is not a confined, restrictive fervour of provincial feeling, but an open, creative and dynamic humanism born of universal feeling."¹

In her poem, "Awake", which she dedicated to her friend M.A. Jinah and recited at the Indian National congress Session of 1915 in Bombay, she shows Indians of all faiths - Hindus, Parsees, Mussulmans and Christians - expressing their unreserved love and devotion to their Motherland India. In the opening stanzas India is described as the divine Mother who loves all her children irrespective of their caste and creed and bestows her blessing on them. In the very beginning people invoke the Mother, to wake up from her long slumber because her sons are impatient to see her "again in the forefront of glory":

¹ Rajyalakshmi, p. 175.
Waken, O Mother! thy children implore thee,
Who kneel in thy presence to serve and adore thee!
The night is aflush with a dream of the morrow,
Why still dost thou sleep in thy bondage of sorrow?
Awaken and sever the woes that enthrall us,
And hallow our hands for the triumphs that call us!

Are we not thine, O Belov'd, to inherit
The manifold pride and power of thy spirit?
N'er shall we fail thee, forsake thee or falter,
Whose hearts are thy home and thy shield and thine altar
Lo! we would thrill the high stars with the story,
And set thee again in the forefront of glory.

(p. 180)

The concluding lines of the poem are in the form of a chorus
in which Hindus, Parsees, Mussulamans and Christians offer
their prayers separately and finally the people of all
creeds and faiths pray collectively pledging their lives for
the freedom and glory of their motherland.

**Hindus:** Mother! The flowers of our worship have
crowned thee!

**Parsees:** Mother! the flame of our hope shall surround
the!

**Mussulmans:** Mother! the song of our faith shall
attend thee-

**All Creeds:** Shall not our dauntless devotion avail
thee?

Hearken! O queen and O goddess,

We hail thee!

(pp. 180-181)
The poem, "The Call to Evening Prayer", reveals Sarojini's faith in the emotional oneness behind all religions. It is a powerful poem on the theme of unity and brotherhood. It describes the devotees of the four different religions of India - Islam, Christianity, Zoroastrianism and Hinduism - chanting their prayers at the evening time. The prayers of these devotees convey the essence of their creed and faith separately but taken collectively they reflect the religious ethos of whole India, where all religions are bound by the bonds of love and devotion to God.

The first stanza captures the Muslim religious spirit at the time of evening prayer, when the resounding calls of "Allahiho Akbar! Allah ho Akbar!", attract the Muslim brethren to the mosque:

Allah ho Akbar! Allah ho Akbar!
From mosque and minar the muezzins are calling;
Pour forth your praises, O Chosen of Islam;
Swiftly the shadows of sunset are falling:
Allah ho Akbar! Allah ho Akbar!

The second stanza shows the Christians offering their prayers to the Blessed Mother, Virgin Mary. The priests sing at the altars devoutly: "Ave Maria! Ave Maria!"
Ave Maria! Ave Maria!
Devoutly the priests at the alters are singing,
O ye who worship the Son of the Virgin,
Kneel soft at your prayers for the vespers are ringing:
Ave Maria! Ave Maria!

In the third stanza we listen to the Parsees singing praises of "Ahura Mazda":

Ahura Mazda! Ahura Mazda!
How the sonorous Avesta is flowing:
Ye, who to Flame and the Light make obeisance,
Bend low where the quenchless blue terches are glowing:
Ahura Mazda! Ahura Mazda!

The last stanza describes the familiar Mantric chants of Hindu devotees. The lines resound with the Vaishnava prayers of "Narayana! Narayana!"

Naray'anya! Naray'uana!
Hark to the ageless, divine invocation!
Lift up your hands, O ye children of Brahma,
Lift up your voice in rapt adoration:
Naray'anya! Naray'anya!

(p. 136)

"An Indian Love Song" shows that deep and sincere love is capable of overcoming all the hurdles of religious and racial prejudices. The poet here tries to deal with the problem of Hindu-Muslim unity by asserting that natural impulses of love do not recognize the man-made differences
of Hindus and Muslims. The poem is in the form of a dialogue between a Muslim lover and a Hindu girl. The passionate lover yearns for the glimpse of his beloved and asks her to unveil her face and come closer to him:

Life up the veil that darken the delicate moon of thy glory and grace,  
Withhold not, O Love, from the night of my longing the joy of thy luminous face,  
Give me a spear of the scented Keora guarding thy pinioned curls,  
Or a silken thread from the fringes that trouble the dream of thy glimmering pearls;  
Faint grows my soul with thy tresses' perfume and the song of thy anklets' caprice,  
Revive me, I pray, with the magical nectar that dwells in the flower of thy kiss.  
(p. 68)

The stanza is rich in sensuous images of sight, smell, hearing and touch as found in "luminous face", "scented keora", "pinioned curls", "glimmering pearls", "tresses' perfume", "anklets' caprice", and "magical nectar". The apt metaphors, "the delicate moon of thy glory and grace", "the night of my longing" and "the flower of thy kiss" add further to the impassioned appeal of the lover.

As different from the passionate entreaties of the lover are the cautious words of the reply of the girl who finds it difficult to overcome the hurdles of opposing creeds and racial feuds to be able to respond to his love:
How shall I yield to the voice of thy pleading, how shall I grant thy prayer,
Or give thee a rose-red silken tassel, a scented leaf from my hair?
Or fling in the flame of thy heart's desire the veils that cover my face,
Profane the law of my father's creed for a foe of my father's race?
Thy kinsmen have broken our sacred altars and slaughtered our sacred kine,
The feud of old faiths and the blood of old battles sever thy people and mine.

(pp. 68-69)

Displelling all the doubts, prejudices and hesitation of the beloved, the lover says to her that love knows no barriers of race, religion and caste; family feuds and bitterness cannot obstruct the path of true love:

What are the sins of my race, Beloved, what are my people to thee?
And what are thy shrine, and kin and kindred, what are thy gods to me?
Love reckons not of feuds and bitter follies of stranger, comrade or kin,
Alike in his ear sound the temple bells and the cry of the muezzin.
For love shall cancel the ancient wrong and conquer the ancient rage,
Redeem with his tears the memoried sorrow that sullied a bygone age.

(p. 69)
Sarojini felt deep concern at the strife and differences among the people of different creeds and communities in her country. In the poem "At Twilight", she wrote:

"Shall hope prevail where enormous hate is rife,  
Shall sweet love prosper or high dreams find place  
Amid the tumult of reverberant strife  
'Twixt ancient creeds, 'twixt race and ancient race,  
That mars the grave, glad purposes of life,  
Leaving no refuge save thy succouring face?"

She was, however, optimistic that these discordant notes will disappear and there will usher in the happy times of love's delight:

Quick with the sense of joys she hath foregone,  
Returned my soul to beckoning joys that wait,  
Laughter of children and the lyric dawn,  
And love's delight, profound and passionate,  
Winged dreams that blow their golden clarion,  
And hope that conquers immemorial hate.

Sarojini was always conscious of the dire need for bridging the gulf between people of different creeds in India so that the country may emerge in all its united strength. When she was elected President of the Indian National Congress in 1925, she said in a message:
I, who have rocked the cradle, I who have sung soft lullabies – I, the emblem of Mother India – am now to kindle the flame of liberty .... Mine, as becomes a woman, is most modest, domestic programme; merely to restore India to her true position as the supreme mistress in her own house, the sole guardian of her own vast resources, and the sole dispenser of her own hospitality. As a loyal daughter of Bharat Mata it will be my task 'set my mother's house in order, to reconcile the tragic quarrels that threaten the integrity of her old joint family life of diverse creeds and communities.\footnote{1}

Besides writing poems dealing with her unbounded love for her motherland and her deep concern for her freedom and rejuvenation, Sarojini also paid tributes in her poems to great national leaders – Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, M.A. Jinnah, Mahatma Gandhi – in whose close contact she came during her active participation in the national struggle for freedom. Her songs exalting these contemporary heroes have strong patriotic fervour. Tara Ali Baig refers to four great men, her father, Gokhale, Jinnah and Gandhi – who really shaped her life and views and exercised a great influence on her. The most powerful of these influences was, however, of Gokhale who remained her political mentor from 1907 to 1915. Earlier in her life he

\footnote{1. Quoted by Pattabhi Sitaramayya in History of the Congress (Allahabad: Congress Working Committee, 1935), pp.490-91.}
advised her, "Consecrate your life, your thought, your song, your charm to the Motherland". Before his death he again told her: "I do not think we shall meet again. If you live, remember your life is dedicated to the service of the country. My work is done". In a letter of homage in Gokhale written on November 28, 1917, she described him "a beacon light, and a symbol of national service." In her "Reminiscences of Gokhale" she wrote: "And of him surely, in another, age, and in another land were the prophetic words uttered 'Greater love bath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends'."

"Gokhale", the second poem of "Memorial Verses" in The Sceptred Flute, was written to mourn the sad demise of Gokhale, on February 19, 1915, i.e. the day Gokhale died. In sending this touching tribute to the memory of the departed leader, Sarojini Naidu wrote to the Editor of the Indian Social Reformer, Bombay: "They are appearing under Gokhale's portrait in Mr. Wacha's forthcoming brouchure on the great man: but I should like them first to appear in the Social Reformer." Later the poem was included in The Sceptred

1. Speeches and Writings of Sarojini Naidu, p.35.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p. 21.
Flute with the author's note: "Gopal Krishna Gokhale was the great saint and soldier of our national righteousness. His life was a sacrament, and his death was a sacrifice in the cause of Indian Unity."¹ The poem expresses Sarojini's belief that the most befitting tribute the mournful millions gathered round Gokhale's funeral pyre can pay to the great man, is to imbibe from him the love for the Motherland and to pledge their lives for the service of its suffering people and building up the sacred edifice of her unity:

Heroic Heart! last hope of all our days!
Need'st thou the homage of our love or praise?
Lo! let the mournful millions round thy pyre
Kindle their souls with consecrated fire
Caught from the brave torch fallen from thy hand,
To succour and to serve our suffering land,
And in a daily worship taught by thee
Upbuild the temple of her unity.

(p. 159)

Another poem, "In Gokhale's Garden", was written in the memory of the great leader twelve years after his death. The poem is in the form of reminiscence and expresses Sarojini's profound emotions of love and gratitude for her political mentor as she chances to walk in the garden of the Servant of India Society's home at Poona. The first stanza

¹. The Sceptred Flute, p. 159.
describes the rejuvenating effect of the rain which has instilled new life in the nature and on the earth all around:

With crystal rods the necromantic rain
Touches dead loveliness to life again,
Revives on withered meads and barren rocks
Pastures and gleaming pools for wandering flocks,
And sows wet fields with red and ivory grain.

(The Feather of the Dawn, p. 1)

In the garden of Gokhale it has wrought magic transformation and made 'silver jasmine', 'golden champak', 'pearl-petalled harsingars', and 'lilac-hued' neem and bakul blossom and scatter their fragrance. The colour imagery lends rare picturesque beauty to the whole scene:

In your sweet garden where I walked with you,
The rain has wrought its wizardly anew
With silver jasmine, golden champak stars,
Small coral-stemmed, pearl-petalled harsingars,
Bakul and flowering neem of lilac hue.

The charming scene reminds the poet of the glorious leader who had earlier walked here and instilled in her heart the dauntless courage for the struggle of the country's freedom:

Steadfast, serene, dauntless, supremely wise,
In earth's renascent bloom with prescient eyes
You sought hope's symbol and you strove to teach
My heart with patient, high prophetic speech
The parable of Beauty's brave comprise.

(The Feather of the Dawn, p.1)
Though dead, he lives in the hearts of his countrymen for ever and inspires them to brave deeds to accomplish the liberty of the country:

The fragile forms of beauty perish, still
Endures her proud, imperishable will
In myriad shapes and songs to be reborn
Age unto age, from morn to splendid morn,
Her destiny, her purpose to fulfil.

Your ashes lie in old Prayag, but we, Heirs of your spirit's immortality,
Find in your vision love's perpetual flame
Of adovation lit in Freedom's name,
Rekindling all our dream of liberty.

(pp. 1-2)

Next to Gokhale, Sarojini was most influenced by Mahatma Gandhi. If Gokhale initiated her to the path of politics, it was Gandhi who gave her the direction. Gandhi in the Young India compared her with Mirabai in terms of her devotion to the cause of freedom and lyricism. She on her turn said, "Gandhi is my Kanhaya; I am his humble lute." Later in her broadcast speech as the Governor of U.P., on the 78th birthday of Mahatma Gandhi on October 2, 1947, Sarojini said:

Let the whole world honour this man ... With Christ he shares the great gospel, that love is the fulfilling of law. With the great Muhammad he shares
the gospel of the brotherhood of man, the equality of man and the oneness of man. With Lord Buddha he shares the great evangal that the duty of life is not self seeking, but to seek the truth, no matter at what sacrifice. With the great poets of the world he shares the ecstasy of vision that the future of man is great, that the future of man can never be destroyed, that all sin will destroy itself, but that love of humanity must endure.¹

In the poem, "The Lotus", written as a tribute to Mahatma Gandhi's greatness, Sarojini symbolized him as a mystic lotus, sacred and sublime, which arouses in us a feeling of regard and reverence. The myriad-petalled grace of the lotus is inviolable and represents the fascinating beauty of the manifold aspects of Mahatma Gandhi's personality. This lotus is deep-rooted in the waters of all time, remaining supreme over transient storms of tragic fate. Expressing her deep admiration for spiritual qualities of Mahatma Gandhi, Sarojini writes:

O Mystic Lotus, sacred and sublime,
In myriad-petalled grace inviolate,
Supreme O'er transient storms of tragic fate,
Deep-rooted in the waters of all time.

(p. 167)

¹ Quoted by Izzat Yar Khan, p. 188.
Symbolizing mythological beauty, purity and sanctity of the lotus, Mahatma Gandhi is a superb soul that remains unruffled by "transient storms of tragic fate". As a lotus he can withstand the pressure of the most uncongenial circumstances:

What legions loosed from many a far off clime
Of wild-bee hordes with lips insatiate,
And hungry winds with wings of hope or hate,
Have thronged and pressed round thy miraculous prime
To devastate the loveliness, to drain
The midmost rapture of thy glorious heart...

(p. 167)

According to Sarojini, Mahatma has attained "an ageless beauty", a spiritual height difficults for any one to attain:

But who could win thy secret, who attain
Thine ageless beauty born of Brahma's breath,
Or pluck thine immortality, who art
Coevol with the Lords of life and Death.

(p. 167)

Very few poems written in different Indian languages to eulogise Mahatma Gandhi can be compared with this artistic poem in revealing beautifully the spiritual aspect of the great leader.

As opposed to Gopal Krishna Gokhale who belonged to the moderate group, Bal Gangadhar Tilak headed the extremist group. He was proud of the ancient glories of India and the achievements of the Indo-Aryans. He was a man of firm determination and stood for militant Hindu revivalism. He utilized the Hindu gods and heroes and started the celebrations of the Ganapati Festival and Shivaji Festival in Maharashtra to instil a new spirit of pride and courage into the Indian masses. Undaunted by the persecution of the
British rulers, he tried to spread the gospel of independence among his people. Writing about him and Gokhale, Mahatma Gandhi remarked:

Sir Phirozshsh had seemed to me
like the Himalaya, the Lokamanya (Tilak)
like the ocean, but Gokhale was the Ganges.
The Himalaya was unscaleable, and one
could not easily launch forth on the sea,
but the Ganges invited one to its bosom.\(^1\)

Though Sarojini was not as close to Tilak as she was to Gokhale yet she was deeply impressed by the former's undaunted patriotism, learning and great qualities of leadership. In the note following her poem, "Lokmanya Tilak", written as a tribute to the great patriot, she said: "Bal Gangadhar Tilak, known as 'Lokmanya' (Reversed by the People), was a scholar, mathematician and saint who, at a time when to utter the word "Freedom" was treason, inspired the whole nation by his clarion call - 'Freedom is my birth right and I will attain it'."\(^2\)

In the onnet, "Lokmanya Tilak", Sarojini describes the "sovereign grandeur" of the "great hero of the nation" who is held in high respect by his people:

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2. The Feather of the Dawn, p. 3.
How shall our mortal love commemorate
Your sovereign grandeur, O victorious heart?
Changeless, austere, your fame is counterpart
Of your own storied hills, inviolate.
Your proud immortal deeds irradiate
The darkness of our land, and star-like dart
The lustre of your wisdom, valour, art,
Tranfiguring sorrow and transcending fate.

After praising his immortal deeds as a great freedom fighter and comparing his "sovereign grandeur" with "storied hills" of Maharashtra, Sarojini hails him for teaching the nation "Freedom's Gayetri":

Hail dauntless soldier, hail intrepid sage
Who taught our nation Freedom's Gayetri!
Immutable from the redeeming flame
Your ashes are our children's heritage,
And all the epic rhythms of the sea
Chant your triumphant and underlying name.

(The Feather of the Dawn, p. 3)

The poem reveals Sarojini's profound love and deep admiration for the great national hero.

Umar Sobhani was a millionaire philanthropist of Bombay. He contributed generally to the welfare funds of different organizations devoted to the cause of amelioration of the lot of the poor and down-trodden. He was one of the first Muslim nationalists to join Mahatma Gandhi when he launched his Civil Disobedience Movement. He
was a close friend of Sarojini Naidu who held him to a very high esteem. She was out of India when Umar died on 6 July, 1926. Later when she went to his mausoleum after a year to pay homage to her friend, she wrote a moving sonnet, "Umar" to mourn his death. The octave of the sonnet describes the great qualities of Umar as a man of generous and kind heart.

You were not of my kindred or my creed,
0 kingly heart, but closer still you stood
In gracious bond of tender brotherhood
Than they who blossomed from my father's seed.
Alas! What bitter destiny decreed
I, who had stilled the fierce, blind fanged broad,
Of pain that mocked your proud, sad solitude,
Should be afar in your dire ultimate need?

The sestet of the poem, describes the poet's grief as she stands by the grave of her friend:

I stand beside your narrow resting place
I call and call, you will not answer me.
Does the earth lie too heavy on your face,
Or is silence of your year-long sleep
Too dear, too incorruptible, too deep
For friendship, pardon, grief or memory?
(The Feather of the Dawn, p. 4)

Sarojini's father, Aghorenath Chattopadhyaya, was not only a great scientist and educationist but also a great nationalist and social reformer. He was an active member of
the Anjuman-e-Akhwan-us-Safa (the Brotherhood Society) along with Mulla Abdul Qayum Sahib, Principal of the Hyderabad College. The society was formed in Hyderabad to tackle the social and political problems of the country. Aghorenath's patriotic fervour and his powerful influence on young men of Hyderabad, made him a suspect in the eyes of the British imperialists. They considered his activities to be revolutionary and got him suspended from the college and deported from Hyderabad in 1883. Though Aghorenath was reinstated later on, his patriotic fervour did not abate. He continued to take interest in the national activities and was among the earliest members of the National Congress from Hyderabad. He was a source of great inspiration for Sarojini. In one of her speeches she remarked about him:

I was brought in a home over which presided one of the greatest men of India and who is an imbodyment of all great loves and an ideal of truth, of love, of justice and patriotism. That great teacher of India had come to us to give immortal inspiration. That is a home of Indians and not of Hindus or Brahmins.¹

On his death Sarojini paid a homage to him in her sonnet, "In Salutation to My Father's Spirit." The octave of the sonnet describes him as a sage, mystic and dreamer:

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¹ Quoted by Izzat Yar Khan, pp. 182-183.
Farewell, farewell, O brave and tender Sage.
O mystic jester, golden-hearted child!
Selfless, serene, untroubled, unbeguiled
By trivial snares of grief and greed or rage;
O splendid dreamer in a dreamless age
Whose deep alchemic vision reconciled
Time's changing message with the undefiled
Calm vision of thy Vedic heritage!

The sestet of the sonnet throws further light on her father's personality and expresses her sorrow at her separation from him:

Farewell great spirit, without, fear or flaw,
Thy life was love and liberty thy law,
And truth thy pure imperishable goal...
All hail to thee in thy transcendent flight
From hope to hope, from height to heav'nlier height,
Lost in the rapture of the Cosmic Soul.

(p. 160)

The poem presents a very authentic and realistic portrait of Aghorenath's grand personality.

Though a great patriot, Sarojini was not a narrow-minded nationalist. She felt concerned not only for her own people but also for humanity at large. Yusuf Meharally pointed out that hers was "a nationalism that readily flows into the broad national current."¹ Pandit Nehru also

emphasized this aspect of her character when while paying a tribute to her on her death, he remarked: "Mrs. Naidu was a great nationalist and mighty internationalist." In his estimation of Sarojini Naidu's personality Prof. Dustoor described her as "a citizen of the world", he remarked:

In her outlook and temper, the old and the new, Hindu and Muslim, East and West, met and mingled without clash or incongruity. She was, too, a patriot whose sympathies did not exclude people, and cultures other than her own. She was a citizen of the world who yielded to none in her attachment to Motherland.

In the poem, "Renunciation", which is perhaps autobiographical, the life companion of the poet hides "the hungers that besiege" his breast and asks her:

Give not to me, but to the world, winged words
Of Vision, Valour, Faith - like carrier birds
Bearing your message o'er all lands and seas,
Scatter the lustre of resplendent deeds
O'er journeying world winds like immortal seeds
Of sheaves enriching freedom's granaries.

(The Feather of the Dawn, p. 31)


Sarojini realizes that her mission in life is to awaken the value of freedom in the hearts of the people of the whole world.

Sarojini had developed cosmopolitan outlook on life from her very childhood owing to the influence of her great father who believed in universal brotherhood. Referring to her father she said in one of her speeches: "It is because that my beloved father said, 'Be 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". Exhorting young students she further added in that speech:

I beg to you my brothers, not to limit your love only to India because it is better to aim at the sky, it is better that your ideals of patriotism should extend for the welfare of the world and not be limited to the prosperity of India and so to achieve that prosperity for your country; because, if the ideals be only for the prosperity of your country, it would end where it began, by being a profit to your own community and very probably to your own self.

Sarojini's profound love for her motherland thus led her to love the whole world as her home. Like her wandering singers, she could also profess:

With lutes in our hands ever-singing we roam,
All men are our kindred, the world is our home.

(p. 4)

1. Speeches and Writings, p. 8.
2. Ibid.
CHAPTER -FOUR

POETRY OF NATURE

Sarojini's Vision of Nature:

Sarojini Naidu is the foremost Indian English poet of Nature. She shares this love for nature with her ancient Vedic sages, poet Kalidas, Rabindranath Tagore and Allana Iqbal and sings of her intense delight in Nature in their unique tradition. She is primitively involved in Nature; its freshness and loveliness infatuate her. Even as a young girl she was deeply impressed by the beautiful scenes of Nature in Italy and wrote to Arthur Symons from Florence:

This Italy is made of gold, the gold of dawn and daylight, the gold of the stars, and now dancing in weird enchanting rhythms through the magic month of May, the gold of fireflies in the perfumed darkness - 'aerial gold'. I long to catch the subtle music of their fairy dances and make a poem with a rhythm like the quick irregular wild flash of their sudden movements. Would it can not be wonderful? One black night I stood in a garden with fireflies in my hair like darting restless stars caught in a mess of darkness. It gave me a strange sensation, as if I were not human at all but an elfin spirit.¹

In another letter to Arthur Symons from Hyderabad she again expressed her ecstasy of delight at the beautiful scenes of Nature:

Come and share my exquisite March morning with: this sumptuous blaze of gold and sapphire sky; these scarlet lilies that adorn the sunshine, the voluptuous scents of neem and champak and sirisha that beat upon the languid air with their implacable sweetness; the thousand little gold and blue and silver breasted birds bursting with the shrill ecstasy of life in nesting time. All is hot and fierce and passionate, ardent and unashamed in its exulting and importunate desire for life and love. And, do you know that the scarlet lilies are woven petal by petal from my heart's blood, these little quivering birds are my soul made incarnate music, these heavy perfumes are my emotions dissolved into aerial essence, this flaming blue and gold sky is the 'very me', that part of me that incessantly and insolently, yes, and a little deliberately, triumphs over that other part- a thing of nerves and tissues that suffers and cries out, and that must die to-morrow perhaps, or twenty years hence.¹

Sarojini loves Nature for its own sake, for its beautiful and charming aspects- changing moods of day and

season; the sun, the moon, stars, clouds, winds, birds, flowers, rivers, lakes and seas. Hers is an aesthetic kind of response to Nature, characterized by Keatsian ecstasy and sensuousness and expressed in Shelleyian lyrical effusions. Nature's variegated colours - opal, gold, yellow, purple, green and scarlet; perfumes of champaa, champak, heena, keora, rose, saffron, cinamon, sandal and clove; its melodies released by the bulbul, koel, oriole, and the papeeha; and the soft touch of its breeze enchant and possess her and make her nerves tingle. Though influenced by the English Romantic poets in her love and treatment of nature, she does not see it as moral teacher like Wordsworth. She only derives delight from its sensuous and aesthetic aspects as Keats does. Describing Sarojini's love for nature Armando Menezes remarks: "Her song is ablaze with gulmohur and cassia, with the champak and jasmine. We wander with her into pomegranate gardens of mellowing dawn or watch a June sunset. Fawns feed on scented grass and the bees on cactus gold. The koels invite us to the summer woods."

Sarojini does not, like Rabindranath Tagore, reveal a philosophical approach to Nature. In her cosmic world-view God (Supreme Self), Man (Self) and Nature (Other Self) - the

three points of the "metaphysical triangle" - are not interpreted in their integral relationship. She, however, believes in Indian point of view as found in Vedic hymns and Hindu mythology, according to which Man and Nature are conceived as essential parts of the Universe having harmonious existence with each other. There is a common stream of life or Life Force animating both Man and Nature. Both enrich and complete each other. Their dependence is mutual.

The inter-communion between nature and man is conveyed by linking nature images with the feelings of human heart in the poem, "Medley", a Kashmeri Song:

The poppy grows on the roof-top,
The iris flowers on the grave;
Hope in the heart of a lover,
And fear in the heart of a slave.

The opal lies in the river,
The pearl in the ocean's breast;
Doubt in a grieving bosom,
And faith in a heart at rest

(p. 138)

'Dancing fireflies' and shaking peach-leaves are similar to dreams and fancies dancing in the mind of a poet. Sweetness in the beehive reminds the poet of sweetness in a maiden's breath and joys in the eyes of children:
Fireflies dance in the moon-light,
Peach-leaves dance in the wind;
Dreams and delicate fancies
Dance thro' a poet's mind.

Sweetness dwells in the beehive,
And lives in a maiden's breath;
Joy in the eyes of children
And peace in the hands of Death.

(p. 135)

The variety of emotions that goad the bird in "The Bird of Time" to burst in spontaneous music are similar to human emotions in different moods:

O Bird of Time on your fruitful bough
What are the songs you sing?...
Songs of the glory and gladness of life,
Of poignant sorrow and passionate strife,
And the lilting joy of the spring;
Of hope that sows for the years unborn,
And faith that dreams of a tarrying morn,
The fragrant peace of the twilight's breath,
And the mystic silence that men call death.

(p. 65)

There is a perfect correspondence between men and Nature in their joys and despair:

O Bird of Time, say where did you learn
The changing measures you sing?...
In blowing forests and breaking tides,
In the happy laughter of new-made brides,
And the nests of the new-born spring;
In the dawn that thrills to a mother's prayer,
And the night that shelters a heart's despair,
In the sigh of pity, the sob of hate,
And the pride of a soul that has conquered fate.

(p. 65)

The poem "Corn Grinders" shows that the affliction suffered by woman who loses her life companion is similar to that of a mouse or a doe in the same circumstances. A little mouse cries because her lord is dead:

Alas! Alas! my lord is dead!
Ah, who will ease my bitter pain?
He went to seek a millet-grain
In the rich farmer's granary shed;
They caught him in a baited snare,
And slew my lover unaware...
Alas! Alas! my lord is dead.

(p. 9)

A doe moans alone for her mate who fell victim to a cruel hunter's arrow:

Alas! alas! my lord is dead!
Ah, who will quiet my lament?
At fall of eventide he went
To drink beside the river-head;
A waiting hunter threw his dart
And struck my lover through the heart.
Alas! alas! my lord is dead...

(p. 9)
The woman suffers the deep pangs of sorrow because her husband is dead:

   Alas! alas! my lord is dead!
   Ah, who will stay these hungry tears,
   Or still the want of famished years,
   And crown with love my marriage-bed?
   That lit my lover's funeral pyre...
   Alas! alas! my lord is dead.

   (p. 10)

The three separate pictures of death are fused together by the sorrow of three survivors. The profound agony of the three beings is similar to the wail of the female Kraunch bird on the death of her mate, which aroused the poetic effusions in the heart of the sage Valmiki who wrote the Ramayana thereafter.

   The poem, "Song of a Dream", describes a strange dream the poet once had. In it she finds herself standing alone in a forest while visions spring around her like poppies. In this poem human ideals are projected upon natural phenomena. The poet participates in the life of these natural objects.

   Once in the dream of a night I stood
   Lone in the light of a magical wood,
   Soul-deep in visions that poppy- like sprang;
   And spirits of Truth were the birds that sang,
   And spirits of Love were the stars that glowed,
   And spirits of Peace were the streams that flowed
   In that magical wood in the land of sleep.
She finds a close correspondence between her life and the human ideals projected upon natural phenomena:

Lone in the light of that magical grove,
I felt the stars of the spirits of Love.
Gather and gleam round my delicate youth,
And I heard the song of the spirits of Truth;
To quench my longing I bent me low
By the streams of the spirits of Peace that flow
In that magical wood in the land of sleep.

The poem, "Mimicry", shows that there is a close correspondence between Spring and the poet. The poet considers Spring to be a mimic who has cleverly copied its glory and colours from the heart of the poet. For 'tulip' and 'poppy', it draws the red colour from the wounds of the poet's heart:

O Spring how you grieve me!
Would you deceive me with praise of your fragile
Miraculous art?
Where did you copy
Your tulip and poppy if not from the red-flowering
Wounds in my heart.

The whole natural phenomena gets transformed under the influence of Spring because the latter decorates it by copying the colours from the dreams of the poet's soul:
Who lent the bright cluster
Of Pleiades their lustre, the hills their soft hue
Like wild lilac in bloom?
Are you beholden
To none for the golden, rich pattern that jewels
The wood pheasant's plume?
O Spring I have caught you!
Who would have thought you a traitor denying
My script and my scroll,
Whereby you moulded
And subtly nfolded your world in the dyes
And the dreams of my soul?
(The Feather of the Dawn, p.22)

Sometimes this correspondence between man and nature is disturbed because while the nature's marvellous rhythm flows on uninterrupted, the man's life is interrupted by his own artificial creation. In the poem, "Transcience", the poet remarks:

Nay, do not grieve tho' life be full of sadness,
Dawn will not veil her splendour for your grief,
Nor spring deny their bright, appointed beauty
To lotus blossom and ashoka leaf.
(p. 125)

Like Wordsworth Sarojini also believes in the healing power of nature. She believes that one who suffers from the conflicts and tensions of life should go to the warm lap of nature for relief and solace of one's grief-stricken soul.
0 I am tired of painted roofs and soft and silken floors,
And long for wind-blown canopies of crimson gulmohors!
0 I am tired of strife and song and festival and fame,
And long to fly where cassia-woods are breaking into flame.

(p. 190)

She invites her lover to join her in the blessed atmosphere of nature:

Love, come with me where koels call from flowering glade and glen,
Far from the toil and weariness, the praise and prayers of men.

0 let us fling all care away, and lie alone and dream
'Neath tangled boughs of tamarind and molsari and neem!

And bind our brows with jasmine sprays and play on carven flutes,
To wake the slumbering serpent-kings among the banyon roots,

And roam at fall of eventide along the river's brink,
And bathe in water-lily pools where golden panthers drink!

(pp. 190-191)
The poet wants that she and her lover like Radhika and Krishna, should enjoy the happiness pervading in nature:

You and I together, love, in the deep blossoming woods,
Engirt with low-voiced silences and gleaming solitudes,
Companions of the lustrous dawn, gay comrades of the night,
Like Krishna and like Radhika, encompassed with delight.

(p. 191)

In the poem, "Solitude" the poet addresses her own heart and suggests a sojourn into the land of twilight, to the glens and glades where rivers of gold are falling 'from the breast of a radiant cloud' - far away from the crowd, from the throng with its tumult. In the land of twilight there is rest, there is escape from strife. There is halcyon night holds in trust the songs of to-morrow and 'the silence is but a rich pause in the music of life'.

Let us rise, O my heart, let us go where the twilight is calling.
Far away from the sound of this lovely and menacing crowd,
To the glens, to the glades, where the magical darkness is falling
In rivers of gold from the breast of a radiant cloud.
Come away, come away from this throng and its tumult of sorrow,
There is rest, there is peace from the pang of its manifold strife.
Where the halcyon night holds in trust the dear songs of the morrow,
And the silence is but a rich pause in the music of life.

(p. 132)

The last two stanzas of the poem have mystical overtones. Like Wordsworth, Sarojini finds nature as a medium for catching the glimpse of the "Lord of the World":

Let us climb where the eagles keep guard on the rocky grey ledges,
Let us lie 'neath the palms where perchance we may listen, and reach,
The delicate dream from the lips of the slumbering sedges,
That catch from the stars some high tone of their mystical speech.

Or perchance, we may glean a far glimpse of the Infinite Bosom
In whose glorious shadow all life is unfolded or furled,
Thro' the luminous hours ere the lotus of dawn shall reblossom,
In petals of splendour to worship the Lord of the world.

(pp. 132-133)
In "The Garden Vigil" also nature does not remain merely a place of consolation from the strife and tensions of life but turns a source of the poet's communion with the Supreme Self:

O glorious light of hope beyond all reach!
O lovely symbol and sweet sign of him
Whose voice I yearn to hear in tender speech
To comfort me or teach,
Before whose gaze thy golden fires grow dim!

I care not what brave splendours bloom or die
So thou dost burn in thine appointed place,
Supreme in the still dawn- uncoloured sky,
And daily grant that I
May in thy flame adore his hidden face.

(pp. 172-173)

An important aspect of Sarojini's nature poetry is that she describes the bright aspects of nature. She presents nature in its benign, soothing and life supporting forms. She does not emphasize the dark side of nature and rarely shows it "red in tooth and claw". The poem, "Gujarat", composed on the disastrous flood of Gujarat in 1927, is the only poem which deals with devastating fury of nature. However, in it also the poet blames God and not nature for letting loose its relentless anger on mankind. In her general poems on nature Sarojini always sees in nature accord rather than discord, beauty and love rather than violence or strife.
Sarojini has dealt almost all aspects of natural phenomena in comprehensive manner. She discerns minutely the changing moods of day, night, seasons, stars, the sun, the moon, winds, rivers, seas and lakes; the colourful beauty of flowers, their sweet fragrance and the melodious chirping of birds, and describes them artistically and delightfully.

**Treatment of the Sun, The Moon, Stars, Winds and Clouds:**

The changing moods of the day with the sun shining or setting in the sky and the moon sparkling and the stars shimmering in the night are a source of great fascination for Sarojini. She does not only use these heavenly bodies - the sun, the moon and stars as objects of her rich imagery, but also loves them for their own sake. In the poem, "Harvest Hymn", farmers are shown expressing their gratitude to the sun for scattering its shining warmth in their fields and ripening their corn:

Lord of the lotus, lord of the harvest,
Bright and magnificent lord of the morn!
Thine is the bounty that prospered our sowing,
Thine is the bounty that nurtured our corn,
We bring thee our songs and our garlands for tribute,
The gold of our fields and the gold of our fruit;
O giver of mellowing radiance, we hail thee,
We praise thee, O Surya, with cymbal and flute.

(p. 14)
In the poem, "The Garden Vigil", she describes how with the rising of the sun, other planets "wither and decline":

Long ere the sun's first far-off beacons shine
Or her prophetic clarions call afar,
The gorgeous planets wither and decline,
Save in its eastern shrine,
Unquenched, unchallenged, the proud morning star.

To the poet the sun appears like "glorious light of hope" or "lovely symbol and sweet sign of him" whose voice she yearns to hear. In its bright flame she gets a glimpse of the Infinite mystery:

And daily grant that I
May in thy flame adore his hidden face.

"At Dawn" describes the breaking of the daylight when children wake up to attend to their work:

Children, my children, the daylight is breaking,
The cymbals of morn sound the hour of your waking,
The long night is o'er, and our labour is ended,
Fair blow the fields that we tilled and we tended,
Swiftly the harvest grows mellow for reaping,
The harvest we sowed in the time of your sleeping.

In this poem, "dawn" assumes the symbolic significance of the dawn of the future career of children to complete the work begun by their elders:
We toiled to enrich the glad hour of your waking,
Our vigil is done, lo! the daylight is breaking.
(p. 129)

In the "Autumn Song", Sarojini gives a pictorial description of the sunset in the autumn season, with clouds hanging, fallen leaves fluttering and wild wind blowing:

Like a joy on the heart of a sorrow,
   The sunset hangs on a cloud;
A golden storm of glittering sheaves,
Of fair and frail and fluttering leaves,
   The wild wind blows in a cloud.
(p. 23)

In the poem, "June Sunset", the poet presents a typical picture of rural life at the time of the sunset:

An ox-cart stumbles upon the rocks,
And a wistful music pursues the breeze
From a shepherd's pipe as the gathers his flocks
Under the pipal-trees.
And a young Banjara driving her cattle
Lifts up her voice as she glitters by
In an ancient ballad of love and battle
Set to the beat of a mystic tune,
And the faint stars gleam in the eastern sky
To herald a rising moon
(pp. 192-193)

The poem, "Leili", which describes a tropical night presents a beautiful image of the moon:
A caste-mark on the azure brow of Heaven
The golden moon burns sacred, solemn, bright,

James Cousins was so much thrilled by this image of the moon that he described it as a "unique achievement of the imagination in English poetry". He further added: "It lifts India to the literary heavens; it threatens the throne of Diana of the classics; it releases Luna from the work of asylum-keeper, and gives her instead the office of remembrancer to Earth that the Divine is imprinted on the open face of nature. How miraculously the artist makes articulate the seer, and reinforces vision by utterance."¹ Stars figure as interesting and beautiful similes in Sarojini's poems as seen in the famous line, "she hangs like a star in the dew of our song."

Sarojini has written some fine poems about the night. Highly artistic and apposite visual images makes the description of a night in the poem "Leili" very appealing:

The serpents are asleep among the poppies,
The fireflies light the soundless panther's way
To tangled paths where shy gazelles are straying,
And parrot plumes outshine the dying day.
O soft! the lotus buds the stream
Are stirring like sweet maidens when they dream.

(p. 31)

¹. James Cousins, The Renaissance in India, p. 265.
The silent solemnness of night is conveyed impressively by religious imagery used in the second stanza of the poem:

A cast-mark on the azure brows of Heaven
The golden moon burns sacred, solemn, bright,
The winds are dancing in the forest temple,
And swooning at the holy feet of Night.
Hush! in the silence mystic voices sing
And make the gods their incense offering.

(p. 31)

Sarojini pictures in this stanza winds as "dancing" in the temple and "swooning" at the "holy feet of the Night". The poem "Autumn Song" shows the wild wind blowing" in a cloud" with fallen leaves fluttering in it. Sarojini often describes the wind in its close association with clouds. In the "Song of Radha", she writes:

I wanted to cry, "Who will buy, who will buy,
These curds that are white as the clouds in the sky
When the breezes of shrawan are blowing?"

(p. 112)

In "A Song in Spring", the poet visualizes the winds as habitual travellers who, during their journeys over earth and sea, accumulate a lot of knowledge:

But the wise winds know, as they pause to slacken
The speed of their subtle, omniscient flight,
Divining the magic of unblown lilies,
Foretelling the stars of the unborn night.

(p. 88)
These soothsayers have "followed the hurrying feet of pilgrims", they have spied on love's secrets, they are familiar with the sorrows of human hearts; and they have spent some time in the awesome company of death herself:

They have followed the hurrying feet of pilgrims
Tracking swift prayers to their utmost goals,
They have spied on Love's old and changeless secret,
And the changing sorrow of human souls.

They have tarried with Death in her parleying places,
And issued the word of her high decree,
Their wings have winnowed the garnered sunlight,
Their lips have tasted the purple sea.

(p. 88)

Unseen and unheard, the wind penetrates all the mysteries of nature's variegated life. This idea is expressed in the opening stanza of "The Garden Vigil":

In the deep silence of the garden-bowers
Only the stealthy zephyr glides and goes,
Refling the secret of sirisha flowers,
And to the new-born hours
Bequeaths the subtle anguish of the rose.

(p. 172)

But even the wind, the busybody who chooses the clouds and pries into otherpeople's affairs, must have the time for rest. In a beautiful line in the first stanza of the poem, "Cromandel Fishers", the poet describes the wind relaxing itself:
The wind lies asleep in the arms of the dawn
Like a child that has cried all night.
(p. 6)

In the poem, "Damayante to Nala In The Hour of Exile", Sarojini makes impressive references to winds, planets, the sun, sunset and night:

The winds thy heralds and thy vassals all
The silver- belted planets and the sun.
Where'er the radiance of thy coming fall,
Shall dawn for thee her saffron foot-cloths spread,
Sunlet her purple canopies and red,
In serried splendour, and the night unfold.
Her velvet darkness wrought with starry gold
For kingly raiment, soft as cygnet-down.
(p. 43)

The poem, "In A Time of Flowers", shows dawn and dusk as full of scent and song and winds drunk with fragrance of flowers and trees:

The dawn and the dusk grow rife
With scent and song and tremulous mirth,
The blind, rich travail of life.
The winds are drunk with the odorous breath
Of henna, sarisha, and neem ...
(p. 92)

"In Praise of Gulmohur Blossoms", clouds are shown lending their colour to the ocean's face:

The limpid clouds of the lustrons dawn
That colour the ocean's mien.
(p. 94)
These sea and mountain figure rarely in Sarojini's poems. "On Juhu Sands", however, presents the picture of both the sea and mountain. Though the poet relaxes in the fascinating atmosphere of the sea beach, she pines for the beautiful scenes of mountains - "the scent of mountain pine", "the murmuring mountain breeze", "wild narcissus" blooming in the hidden mountain dells" - she has earlier experienced during her sojourn to the mountains. Even the beautiful sight of the moon shining on the breast of the sea, is unable to make her forget the beautiful sight of snows covering far mountains:

On the sea's breast the young moonrise
Falls like golden rose,
But my heart gazes with your eyes
On the far mountain snows.

(The Feather of the Dawn, p.23)

The poem, "Coromandel Fishers", tries to capture the atmosphere of the sea and describes the intense feeling which fisherfolk have for the sea. In this song, the fishermen call themselves to be the sons of the sea and enthuse each other to "hasten away in the track of the sea-gull's call" in order to capture the "leaping wealth of the tide." They address the sea as their mother, the cloud as a brother, and the waves as their comrades:
Sweet is the shade of the coconut glade, and the scent of the mango grove,
And sweet are the sands at the full o'the moon with the sound of the voices we love.
But sweeter, O brothers, the kiss of the spray and the dance of the wild foam's glee:
Row, brother, row to the blue of the verge, where the low sky mates with the sea.

(p. 6-7)

In "Bangle-Sellers", Sarojini describes mountain mist as silver and blue. The bangles meant for maiden's wrist are "Silver and blue as the mountain-mist" (p. 108). In "The Faery Isle of Janjira", sea winds are shown as singing to the rhythm of the sea waves:

Fain would I dwell where your wild doves wander,
Your palm-woods burgeon and sea-winds sing...
Lulled by the tune of the rhythmic waters.

(p. 121)

Sarojini describes the earth as the mother, who yields rich harvest to her toiling sons. In "Harvest Hymn", village women offer prayer to the earth for her blessings:

Queen of the gourd flower, queen of the harvest,
Sweet and omnipotent mother, O Earth!
Thine is the plentiful bosom that feeds us,
Thine is the womb where our riches have birth.
We bring thee our love and our garlands for tribute,
With gifts of thy opulent giving we come;
O source of our manifold gladness, we hail thee,
We praise thee, O Prithvi, with cymbal and drum.

(p. 15)
Among the rivers, the Jamuna figures prominently in Sarojini's poems as the background for the love of Radha and Krishna. In "The Song of Radha, the Milkmaid", the concluding line of each stanza is about the flow of the river Jamuna:

- How softly the river was flowing!
- Or,
- How gaily the river was flowing!
- Or,
- How brightly the river was flowing!

In the poem "Village Song", of The Bird of Time, also the poet describes the river Jamuna. The village girl who goes to the river Jamuna to fill her pitcher, lingers on its bank lured by the boatmen's songs:

- My brother will murmur, "Why doth she linger?"
- My mother will wait and weep,
- Saying, "O safe may the great gods bring her,
- The Jamuna's water are deep"
- The Jamuna's waters rush by so quickly,
- The shadows of evening gather so thickly,
- Like black birds in the sky...
In the poem of the same title "Village Song" of the anthology, The Golden Threshold, Sarojini describes the music of forest streams being sweeter than that of the bridal songs and cradle songs:

Far sweeter sound the forest notes where forest-streams are falling.

(p. 12)

The poem "Ecstasy" depicts the flowing movement of the rivers and rills:

Behold the bright rivers and rills in their glancing,
Melodious flight.

(p. 99)

In "Slumber Song for Sunalini", Sarojini refers to "swiftly-flowing streams" (p. 104) and in "Bangle-Sellers" to the "tranquil brow of a woodland stream" (p. 108).

Sarojini has drawn a beautiful picture of the Hussain Sagar lake near Hyderabad in her poem, "The Hussain Sagar":

The young dawn woos thee with his amorous grace,
The journeying clouds of sunset pause and hover,
Drinking the beauty of thy luminous face,
But none thine inmost glory may discover,
For thine evasive silver doth enclose
What secret purple and what subtle rose responsive only to the wind, thy lover.
Only for him thy shining waves unfold
Translucent music answering his control;
Thou dost like me, to one allegiance hold,
O lake, O living image of my soul.
The poem shows that the lake is so completely devoted to her lover, the wind, that she pays no heed to the advances of other lovers.

**Flowers, Trees, Birds and Animals:**

Sarojini's poems are very rich in the treatment of Indian flowers of variegated colours and sweet fragrance. Lotus, the national flower of India, has a special fascination for Sarojini because it suggests purity and sanctity in the Hindu mythology. Though born in a muddy pool, it remains clean and unsoiled. It is associated with Lakshmi, the lotus-born and Sarasvati, who is seated on a lotus. Sarojini named her eldest daughter as "Padmaja" i.e. Lotus-born, which is also one of the names of Lakshmi, the goddess of Fortune. In her poem, "To My children," she describes Padmaja as a "Lotus-maiden":

Lotus-maiden, you who claim  
All the sweetness of your name,  
Lakshmi, fortune's queen, defend you,  
Lotus-born like you, and send you,  
Balmy moons of love to bless you,  
Gentle joy-winds to caress you ...  
Lotus-maiden, you may be  
Fragrant of all ecstasy.

(p. 51)
In the poem "Lakshmi, The Lotus-Born", written on the day of the worship of Lakshmi, the goddess of prosperity is addressed as Lotus-born:

Thou who didst rise like a pearl from the ocean,
Whose beauty surpasseth the splendour of morn!
Lo! we invoke thee with eager devotion,
Harken, O Lotus-born!

Each of the four stanzas of the song ends with the refrain: "Hearken, O Lotus-born!"

In the poem "To My Fairy Fancies", the poet regrets that she cannot hold her fairy fancies "in the tangle" of her "tresses like lotus-leaves".

Nay, no longer I may hold you,
In my spirit's soft caresses,
Nor like lotus-leaves enfold you
In the tangles of my tresses.

The gentle swaying of lotus buds is beautifully drawn in the poem "Leili".

O soft! The lotus-buds upon the stream
Are stirring like sweet maidens when they dream.

The lotus figures prominently in the Buddhiot tradition. Lotuses are painted or carved on the palms and toes of the Buddha as he is shown meditating upon a lotus-throne in
Buddhist painting and sculpture. Sarojini also shows Lord Buddha in meditation seated on his "Lotus-throne" in the poem "To a Buddha Seated on a Lotus Throne" (pp. 61-62). In the poem "The Lotus", Mahatma Gandhi is symbolized as "Mystic Lotus":

O mystic Lotus, sacred and sublime,  
In myriad-petalled grace inviolate,  
Supreme o'er transient storms of tragic fate,  
Deep-rooted in the waters of all time.

(p. 167)

Among other flowers treated by Sarojini in her poems, prominent ones are "gulmohur", "cassia", "nausteriens", "champak", "champa", "rose", "sirisha", "jasmine", "keora", "lily", "poppy", "hyacinth", and "tulip". In the poem, "In praise of Gulmohur Blossoms", the poet finds gulmohur blossoms as "gorgeous born of the spring". They are so lovely that nothing can rival them in their rich colour - neither "the glimmering red of a bridal robe", nor "the rich red of a wild bird's wing":

What can rival your lovely hue  
O gorgeous boon of the spring?  
The glimmering red of a bridal robe,  
Rich red of a wild bird's robe,  
Rich red of a wild bird's wing?  
Or the mystic blaze of the gem that burns  
On the brow of a serpent-king?

(p. 94)
In the poem "Vasant Panchmi", The Hindu widow prays to **gulmohurs** not to flaunt their shining colour for she cannot take part in the festivities of the spring:

> O quench your flame, ye crimson gulmohurs,
> That falunt your dazzling bloom across my doors.

(p. 90)

In "Golden Cassia", the poet finds that the frail cassia blossoms are much more than mere "woodland flowers", that are strewn on the way. They appear to her as "some new-fallen star" or "golden lamps for a fairy shrine" or as "golden pitchers for fairy wine". She also finds them as "bright anklet bells from the wild spring's feet" or as "gleaming tears that some fair bride" shed:

> O brilliant blossoms that strew my way,
> You are only woodland flowers they say.

But, I sometimes think that perchance you are

Fragments of some new-fallen star;

Or golden lamps for a fairy shrine,
Or golden pitchers for fairy wine.

(p. 96)

In the poem, "Alabaster", cassia flower is described "as frail" as the poet's heart (p. 24).

Writing about nasturtiums, in the poem of the same title, Sarojini remarks:
Poignant and subtle and bitter perfume
Exquisite, luminous, passionate bloom,
Your leaves interwoven of fragrance and fire.
Are Savitri's sorrow and Sita's desire,
Draupadi's longing, Damayanti's fears,
And sweetest Sakuntala's magical tears.

(p. 95)

The reference to the immortal women of the Puranic Age and their intense sorrow endured for their great virtues shows the poet's profound love for her country's glorious past.

In the poem "Champak Blossoms", Sarojini describes the "voluptuous" perfume of champak blossoms:

Amber petals, ivory petals,
Petals of carven jade,
Charming with your ambrosial sweetness
Forest and field and glade,
Foredoomed in your hour of transient glory
To shrivel and shrink and fade!

(p. 97)

The maidens adorn their tresses with sweet-smelling blossoms and minstrels sing songs in their priase:

Only to girdle a girl's dark tresses
Your fragrant hearts are uncurled:
Only to garland the vernal breezes
Your fragile stars are unfurled.
You make no boast in your purposeless beauty
To serve or profit the world.
Yet, 'tis of you thro' the moonlit ages
The maidens and minstrels sing,
And lay your buds on the great god's altar,
O radiant blossoms that fling
Your rich, voluptuous, magical perfume
To ravish the winds of spring.

(p. 98)

The poem "The Dance of Love" describes how the sweet fragrance of champak trees affects the midnight's soul with weariness:

And the midnight's soul grows weary
With the scent of the champak trees.

(p. 73)

The poem, "The Time of Roses", describes the enchanting beauty and intense perfume of lovely roses which can be seen anywhere in abundance:

Love, it is the time of roses!
In bright fields and garden closes
How they burgeon and unfold!
How they sweep o'er tombs and towers
In voluptuous crimson showers,
And untrammelled tides of gold!

How they lure wild bees to capture
All the rich mellifluous rapture
Of their magical perfume,
And to passing winds surrender
All their frail and dazzling splendour
Rivalling your turban-plume!
How they cleave the air adorning
The high rivers of the morning
In a blithe, bejewelled fleet!
How they deck the moonlit masses
Like a fair queen's bridal sheet!

(p. 194)

The crimson roses with their "magical perfume" captivate the poet so intensely that she measures woman's entire life with the season of flowers:

Hid me in a shrine of roses,
Drown me in a wine of roses
Drawn from every fragrant grave!
Bind me on a pyre of roses,
Burn me in a fire of roses,
Crown me with the rose of Love!

( pp. 194-195)

"The Glorissa Lily" is rich in romantic images, and beautiful similes and metaphors. It captures the magic and colour of lily flower impressively:

Even the dawn's arrested gaze
Grows envious to behold
Hid in sequestered, shadowy ways
His crimson and his gold
In such fantastic rays illume
The dim, enchanted forest gloom

Who lit your clustering lanterns, all
In fringed fire to make
Rosered and amber carnival
In woodland bower and brake,
And lure the purple moth to search
Her rich wings at your blossoming torch?
(The Feather of the Dawn, p. 16)

The poem, "The Water Hyacinth", reveals both their magical charm and destructive power:

Magical, mistpurple, pale,
In alluring splendour spread,
Snaring pool and riverhead
In your perilons and frail
Farflung, subtly painted veil.

How you revel in your trade
Wanton water hyacinth!
Like a fatal labyrinth
Is your loveliness displayed,
Death in Beauty's masquerade.
(The Feature of the Dawn, p. 17)

The water hyacinth is presented here as a dangerous creep or which drains and sucks the vitality of water:

Soft, relentless, delicate
Vampire legion ravaging
Wave and every wave-born thing
Like a winged, insidious fate
Exquisite, insatiate.
(The Feather of the Dawn, p. 17)
Among other flowers Sarojini described "sirisha" with its "alluring scent" (p. 119); 'jasmine' with whose bloom "the deep woods glimmer" (p. 8); clustering 'keoras' guarding "the squirrel's slumber" (p. 8), or the "pinioned curls" of a beloved (p. 68), sweet Champa buds with their whitebells, that call "wild bees" to their "ambrosial festival" (p. 90), 'tulip buds' kindled by the spring winds (p. 47), and 'poppy-boles' among which serpents lie asleep (p. 31). She also refers in her poems to famous Indian trees, 'Ashoka' in which a dove hangs its nest (p. 16), 'Kadamba' beneath which Krishna plays his "matchless flute" (p. 161), 'henna' whose leaves are gathered by maidens (p.13), 'fairy neem' through which the wild fire-flies dance (p. 17) or whose adorous breath is drunk by winds (p. 92), 'mango' whose blossoms are rifled by wild bees (p. 88) or whose leaves "jewelled with rein-drops" quiver, (p. 76), 'banyan twigs', whose leaves grow green and 'peepal tree' which glitters with red leaves during the spring (p. 87), "tangled boughs" of 'tamarind' and 'molsari', 'palm woods' burgeoning in the islands (p. 121) and fragrant 'sandalwood' spreading its sweet odour (p. 106). In the time of flowers, we catch glimpses of "the burgeoning leaves on the almond boughs" (p. 92), "the bright pomegranate buds" unfolding themselves (p. 92) and 'the citron branches' being swayed by
wild birds (p. 88), In the streets fruitmen sell 'plum', 'fig' and 'citron' and in the bazars one comes across 'honey' and variety of spices, 'clove' and 'cinnaman'.

Sarojini Naidu's fondness for birds can be judged from the fact that the titles of three out of her four collections of poems have some reference to birds. The Bird of Time, The Broken Wing, and The Feather of the Dawn. Almost all the birds that have attracted the attention of Indian poets, singers, mythmakers and story-tellers figure in Sarojini's poems - koel or kokila, papæaha parrot, maina, eagle, halcyon, crane, swan, dove, peacock, bulbul, kingfisher, fire-flies, nightingale, pigeon, bees, oriole, dhadikula, falcon, hawk, butterflies and dragon flies. Sarojini derives some striking images from peacock plumes, the dove's speckled throat, the halcyon's blue wings, the bright parrots which 'cluster like vermilion flowers', and the blackbirds gathering like evening shadows.

"The Bird Sanctuary" is a beautiful poem which describes many kinds of birds dwelling in the gracious garden of God:

In your quiet garden wakes a magic tumult
Of winged choristers that keep the Festival of dawn,
Blithley rise the carol in richly cadenced rapture,
From lyric throats of amber, of ebony and fawn.
The bulbul and the oriole, the honey-bird and shama
Flit among high boughs that drip with nectar and with dew,
Upon the grass the wondering gull parades its sea-washed silver,
The hoopoe and the kingfisher their branze and sapphire blue.

Besides these there are pigeons and parrots and other birds flying among the three-tops.

Wild gray pigeons dreaming of a home amid the tree-tops,
Fill their beaks with silken down and slender banyan twigs,
But the jade-green gipsy parrots are only way mauroauders,
And pause upon their sum-ward flight to plunder ripe figs.

In your gracious garden there is joy and fostering freedom,
Nesting place and singing space for every feathered thing.
O Master of the Birds, grant sanctuary and shelter
Also to a homing bird that bears a broken wing.

(The Feather of the Dawn, p.19)

In the poem "Farewell", Sarojini describes 'butterflies', 'bees' and 'wild birds' as "sweet comrades" of her lyric spring:
Bright shower of lambent butterflies,
Soft cloud of murmuring bees,
O fragile storm of sighing leaves
Adrift upon the breeze!

Wild birds with eager wings outspread
To seek an alien sky,
Sweet comrades of a lyric spring,
My little songs, good-bye.

(p. 139)

Sarojini has a special fascination for the spring bird koel. "In Praise of Henna", she describes the koel or kokila pouring forth its rapturous melody from "a henna spray" to call maidens to gather henna leaves:

A kokila called from a henna-spray:
Lira! Liree! Lira! Liree!
Hasten, maidens, hasten away
To gather the leaves of the henna-tree.

(p. 13)

The spring season wakes the whole natural phenomena to ecstasy. The koels burst out in melodious songs and peacocks dance with intense delight:

Heart, 0 my heart! lo, the springtime is waking
In meadow and grave.
Lo, the mellifluous koels are making
Their paens of love.
Behold the bright rivers and rills in their glancing
Melodious flight,
Behold how the sumptuous peacock are dancing
In rhythmic delight.

("Ecstasy", p. 99)

In the spring, hills, valleys, gardens and groves
echo with the melodious music of bulbul, maina and dove:

O'er hill-side and valley, through garden and grove,
Such exquisite anthems are ringing
Where rapturous bulbul and maina and dove
Their carols of welcome are singing.

("The Call of Spring", p. 185)

In this season "the dragon-flies glimmer and glide", and
"the plumes of wild peacocks" gleam (p. 185).

The melodious songs of birds, however, arouse grief
rather than joy in the heart of a woman forsaken by her lover:

Tell me no more of thy love, papeeha,
Wouldst thou revive in my heart, papeeha,
Grief for the joy that is gone?
I hear the bright peacock in glimmering woodlands
Cry to its mate in the dawn;
I hear the black koel's slow, tremulous wooing,
And sweet in the gardens the calling and cooing
Of passionate bulbul and dove....
But what is their music to me, papeeha
Songs of their laughter and love, papeeha,
To me forsaken of love?

("A Love Song From the North", pp. 75-76)
In the poem, "Indian Weavers", Sarojini describes blue wings of a halcyon bird and purple and green plumes of a peacock (p. 5), in "Leili", the parrot-plumes" outshining the dying day" (p. 31), and in "Indian Love Song" bright parrots clustering "like vermillion flowers" round boughs of fruits (p. 16). In "My Dead Dream" Sarojini refers to "the white, mested, wild pigeons of joy" (p. 41), in "Nightfall In The City of Hyderabad", to "the speckled sky" burning "like a pigeon's throat" (p. 55), in "The Poet of Death" to "rich echoing boughs where dhadikulas sing" (p. 49), in "The Indian Gipsy", to 'the bold falcon's agile grace" (p. 50); in "A Rajput Love Song" to "the hooded hawk "fluttering on the hand of the Rajput warrior (p. 81), and in "Solitude" to the eagles keeping "guard on the rocky grey ledges" (p. 132). In the poem "Cradle-Song, "Sarojini shows "the wild fire-flies" dancing "through The fairy neem" (p. 17), or in "A Song in Spring" "weaving aerial dances In fragile rhythms of flickering gold" (p. 88).

Like birds, animals of different types also figure prominently in Sarojini Naidu's poems. She describes a magnificent 'stallion' spurred on by a valiant Rajput knight (p. 81); golden 'panthers' drinking at water-lily pools (p. 191), or a black 'panther' emerging from the caves of sleep (p. 50), or the fireflies lighting "the soundless panther's
way" to "tangled paths where shy gazelles are straying" (p.31), "leisurely elephants" moving "through the winding lanes/Swinging their silver bells hung from their silver chains" (p. 55); cows returning to the village at dusk; and the wild fawns feeding on the scented grasses (p. 192). In the poem "The Beils", she refers to "white heifers gathered in for sleep' (p. 170), in "The Indian Gipsy" to "the lithe tiger's sinuous majesty" (p. 50); and in "The Call of Spring" to the hiding of 'fox', 'squirrel' and "timid fawn" (p. 185).

Two of the best animal poems are about serpents - "The Snake-Chamber" and "The Festival of Serpents". In the former Sarojini describes the snake-charmer offering temptations to the cobra to come out and not hide itself:

I'll feed thee, O beloved, on milk and wild red honey,  
I'll bear thee in a basket of rushes, green and white,  
To a palace-bower where golden-vested maidens  
Thread with mellow laughter the petals of delight.  

(p. 8)

In the latter, the worshippers pray to serpents to awake and accept their offerings:

Shining ones awake, we seek your chosen temples  
In caves and sheltering sandhills and sacred banyan roots;
O lift your dreaming heads from their trace of ageless wisdom,
And weave your mystic measures to the melody of flute.

(p. 110)

The Seasons:

Sarojini Naidu took great delight in the renewal and change that the earth and nature around it undergo from season to season. According to her Indian summer is the season of "low-voiced silences and gleaming solitudes". In this season one likes to rest under the shade of trees or walk in the evening along the river bank or cool oneself by bathing in pools. In the poem, "Summer Woods", the poet asks her companion to come to soothing lap of nature and rest:

0 let us fling all care away, and lie alone and dream 'Neath tangled boughs of tamarind and molsari and neem!

And bind our brows with jasmine sprays and play on carven flutes,
To wake the slumbering serpent-kings among the banyan roots,

And roam at fall of eventide along the river's brink,
And bathe in water-lily pools where golden panthe-s drink!

(pp. 190-91)
In rainy season, the "necromantic rain", the poet writes:

Touches dead loveliness to life again,
Revives onwithered meads and barren rocks
Postures and gleaming pools for wandering flocks,
And sows wet fields with red and ivory grain.

(The Feather of the Dawn, p. 1)

During this season the love-lorn maiden pines for her lover as she listens to the cry of papeeha:

I see the soft wings of the clouds on the river,
And jewelled with raindrops the mango-leaves quiver,
And tender boughs flower on the plain ....
But what is their beauty to me, papeeha,
Beauty of blossom and shower, papeeha,
That brings no my lover again?

("A Love Song for the North", p. 75)

Very impressive is Sarojini's pictorial description of the sunset in the autumn season, with clouds hanging, fallen leaves fluttering and wild wind blowing:

Like a joy on the heart of a sorrow;
The sunset hangs on a cloud;
A golden storn of glittering sheaves,
Of fair and frail and fluttering leaves,
The wild wind blows in a cloud.

("Autumn Song", p. 23)
Of all the seasons Sarojini was fascinated most by the spring which with its lovely colours, sounds and perfumes cast a magic spell on her sensitive heart. Dalway Turnbull highlights Sarojini's special love for this of youth, freshness, joy and profusion of colour and beauty, when he remarks: "In her songs of springtime and the flowering year she feels herself one with the vital rhythm of the world, and becomes almost a part of the expanding life of bird and flower." Sarojini has written larger number of poems on spring than on any other season. An entire section of The Bird of Time is entitled "Songs of the Springtime". In The Broken Wing, the section entitled "The Flowering Year" contains six poems about spring and summer. Many of her poems, even when they are not actually on the season, are redolent of the imagery of spring.

The poem, "Spring", presents a lovely picture of the season. The blooming nature all around fascinates the poet a great deal and she, struck with its unlimited treasure of beauty, transports us to the land of colour, beauty and fragrance where:

Young leaves grow green on the banyan twigs,  
And red on the peepal tree,  
The honey-birds pipe to the budding figs,  
And honey blooms call the bee.

Poppies squander their fragile gold  
In the silvery aloe-brake,  
Coral and ivory lilies unfold  
Their delicate lives on the lake.

(p. 87)

The poem emphasizes the colours of spring: green leaves of the banyan tree, red leaves of the peepal, the golden poppies, the silvery aloe-brake, coral and ivory-white lilies, and the luminous blue of the hills. Spring generates new life and vigour into the trees, flowers, birds, and butterflies. It excites and draws human beings also into its vital flood of joy:

Kamala tinkles a lingering foot  
In the grove where temple bells ring,  
And Krishna plays on his bamboo flute  
An idyll of love and spring.

(p. 87)

"A Song in Spring", shows the season in a different aspect, an aspect of movement. It begins with the note of thrill and excitement at the lovely music and sound scattered by the spring:

Wild bees that rifle the mango blossom,  
Set free a while from the love-god's string,
Wild birds that sway in the citron branches,  
Drunk with the rich, red honey of spring.  

There is a note of melancholy about the poem as it shows 
that a human soul with dreams shattered and heart broken 
finds it difficult to respond to the calls of spring enthusiastically:

Fireflies weaving aerial dances  
In fragile rhythms of flickering gold,  
What do you know in your blithe, brief season  
Of dreams deferred and a heart grown old?  

"The Joy of the Spring Time" presents the picture of 
the earth renewing its beauty in the springtime:

Springtime, O Springtime, what is your secret,  
The bliss at the core of your magical mirth,  
That quickens the pulse of the morning to wonder  
And hastens the seeds of all beauty to birth,  
That captures the heavens and conquers to blossom  
The roots of delight in the heart of the earth?  

The poem "Vasant Panchami", describing the festival of 
spring, unfolds the sorrow of the Hindu widow who can 
neither enjoy the beauty of spring nor participate in the 
delights of the festival. The colourful sights and sweet 
fragrance of spring wound the widow's heart with "bitter 
memories". They revive in her the memories of happy days 
when her husband was alive:
Go, dragon-fly, fold up your purple wing,
Why will you bring me tidings of the spring?
O lilting koels, hush your rapturous notes,
O dhadikulas, still your passionate throats,
Or seek some further garden for your nest ....
Your songs are poisoned arrows in my breast.

"In a Time of Flower", a girl reminds her lover that spring has arrived:

O Love! do you know the spring is here
With the lure of her magic flute?...
The old earth breaks into passionate bloom
At the kiss of her fleet, gay foot.

The spring is visualized here as a young girl and the earth as a tree which bursts into blossom at the touch of girl's foot. V.S. Naravane refers to an ancient legend associated with this belief: "Sarojini is alluding to an ancient legend which has figured prominently in sculptures as well as poetry. According to the legend, if a tree-divinity or forest-divinity leans against a tree, and touches the stem with her foot, the tree will put forth fresh flowers." The poem expresses the joy and vitality of spring:

O Love! do you know the spring is here?...
The dawn and the dusk grow rife

1. Naravane, p. 120. In "Ashoka Blossoms" also Sarojini refers to the tree divinity (p. 202).
With scent and song and tremulous mirth,
The blind, rich travail of life.
(p. 92)

In the poem, "Ecstasy", the poet asks her heart to forget its grief and partake in the delights of spring:

Heart, O my heart! lo, the spring time is waking In meadow and grave.
Lo, the mellifluous koels are making their poems of love.
Behold the bright rivers and rills in their glancing,
Melodious flight,
Behold how the sumptuous peacocks are dancing,
In rhythmic delight.
(p. 99)

In the poem, "The Call of Spring", Sarojini asks her daughters, Padmaja and Lilamani, to come out and share in the joys of spring:

Children, my children, the spring wakes anew,
And calls through the dawn and the daytime
For flower-like and fleet-footed maidens like you,
To share in the joy of its playtime.
(p. 185)

The poet herself is unable to resist the temptation of playing with her children in the open fields adorned by the spring:

The earth is ashine like a humming-bird's wing,  
And the sky like a kingfisher's feather,  
O come, let us go and play with the spring  
Like glad-hearted children together,  
(p. 186)
The poems, "The Coming of Spring" and "The Magic of Spring", have a deep melancholy note about them. Like Wordsworth in the "Ode to Immortality", Sarojini describes in these poems her helplessness in the old age to enjoy the beauty and delights of spring as she did in her young age. In "The Coming of Spring" the poet laments:

O Spring! I cannot run to greet
Your coming as I did of old,
Clad in a shining veil of gold,
With champa-buds and blowing wheat
And silver anklets on my feet.

It is not that she is false and a traitor in her love for spring, the trouble is that her heart is so weary now that it has forgotten its old mirth and joy:

O Sweet! I am not false to you -
Only my weary heart of late
Has fallen from its high estate
Of laughter and has lost the clue
To all the vernal joy it knew.

There was a song I used to sing -
But now I seek in vain
For the old lilting glad refrain -
I have forgotten everything-
Forgive me, O my comrade Spring!

(pp. 187-188)
The note of melancholy grows deeper in "The Magic of Spring". Buried under a "secret hill of pain" the heart cannot be cheered even by the coming of spring which has wrought a magical transformation in nature:

The kimshuks burst into dazzling flower,
The seemuls burgeoned in crimson pride,
The palm-groves shone with the oriole's wing,
The koels began to sing,
The soft clouds broke in a twinkling tide...
My heart leapt up in its grave and cried,
"Is it the spring, the spring?"

(p. 189)

Of all the Indian English poets, Sarojini has alone beautifully recaptured the autochthonous response to natural environment. Her treatment of nature is very comprehensive and covers every aspect of its phenomena. She has equally wide range of feelings towards the natural world - the sense of wonder of a child, ecstasy of youth and pensive feelings of old age. Sarojini's response to nature is, however, purely aesthetic. She loves it for its own sake, its fascinating colours, sweet fragrance and enchanting melodies.
CHAPTER -FIVE

Theme of Love, Life and Death

Love is the light and sunshine of life. No wonder, the theme of love figures most prominently in almost all the literary genres of all the languages. In poetry, particularly lyrical poetry, it acquires greater veracity and significance, being the genuine expression of the poet's profound emotions. Though there are many male poets who have written very rich love poetry, the poems of love by women acquire a special significance because as Byron wrote:

Man's love is of man's life a thing apart,
'Tis woman's whole-existence.

(Don Juan I. Cxciv)

The love poetry of Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Emily Dickinson is not only deeply touching but also imbued with Feminine point of view, which makes it specially significant.

Love is the dominant theme of Sarojini Naidu's poetry. There are a sizeable number of poems in The Sceptred Flute and The Feather of the Dawn, dealing with the theme of love in its varying moods and aspects. Prof. Rameshwar Gupta has correctly pointed out:
Sarojini's love poetry traverses Love's almost whole expanse- 'the fifty different sharps and flats of this ecstasy and pain'; except that we may not find the neo-modernist's naked sex and the Freudian subtle anatomization. There may be little of intellectual companionship too. Sensuousness, of course, is there, but not the 'shameless sex'; subtleties of love are there, but not the Freudian mode; and company is there but it involves constant mutual sacrifice; and always it is love from the woman's angle of vision.¹

In the poem, "Immutable", Sarojini glorifies all pervading value of love in human life and nature:

Love O'er the rose-white alleys
That flower on pale desert sands,
Love through the rose-red valleys
That burgeon in southern lands,
In cities ashine with pleasure
On the edge of a sea-girt clime,
Or mountains whose dim caves treasure
The temples of moon-crowned time,
On errands of joy or duty,
Wherever the ways you tread,
A carpet of ageless beauty
Is my heart for your feet outspread.

The poet then points out that whatever may be the attitude of people towards love, she will always lay her heart at its feet:

¹. Rameshwar Gupta, p. 64.
Love, whether Life betray you
And the malice of black-winged Fate
Shatter your dream and slay you
With talons of fear and hate,
Or whether yours the story
Of triumph and loveliest fame,
And the stars inscribe your glory
In lyric and legend of flame,
On errands of joy or duty,
Wherever the ways you tread,
A carpet of ageless beauty
Is my heart for your feet outspread.

(The Feather of the Dawn, p. 34)

In the poem "The Festival of Memory", love does not remain a mere abstract idea worthy of worship, but appears as a reality to be experienced with its "bliss and agony":

What know the world's triune
Of gifts so strange as this
Twin-nurtured boon of Love,
Deep agony and bliss,
Fulfilment and farewell
Concentrated in a kiss?
No worship dost thou need,
O miracle divine!
Silence and song and tears
Delight and dreams are thine,
Who mak'st my burning soul
The sacrament and shrine.

(pp. 206-207)
Though Sarojini Naidu was a great feminist and indefatigable champion of the woman's emancipation, and equal privileges with men, yet when it came to love she stood for the traditional Oriented point of view of woman's complete self-abnegation and self-surrender before her beloved. The sense of complete merger with the personality of beloved is the highest ideal of love for her. She shares this conception of love deeply felt and realized in life with Indian classical and medieval poets as well as Persian poets. The emotions expressed by the lover "A Persian Love Song":

O Love! I know not why, when you are glad,
Gaily my glad heart leaps.
O Love! I know not why, when you are sad,
Wildly my sad heart weeps.

Hourly this subtle mystery flowers anew,
O Love, I know not why ...
Unless it be, perchance, that I am you,
Dear love, that you are I!

(p. 82)

are similar to those that Radha feels during her quest for Kanhya. Kanhya teases her and says:

Then didst thou mock me with thy tender malice,
Like nectar bubbling from my own heart's chalice.
Thou saidst- O faithless, one, self-slain with doubt,
Why seekest thou my loveliness without,
And askest wind or wave or flowering dell
The secret that within thyself doth dwell?

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

(The Feather of the Dawn, pp. 42-43)

In "Song of Radha, The Milkmaid", Radha identifies herself with her beloved Krishna or Govinda to such an extent that she forgets everything except the name of her beloved. Even when she goes to the Mathura shrine to participate in the worship of the divine deity in it, she chants the name of Govinda to the anger of other worshippers:

But my heart was so lost in your worship, Beloved,
They were wroth when I cried without knowing
Govinda! Govinda!
Govinda! Govinda!

How brightly the river was the flowing!

(p. 113)

The poem, "The Flute-Player of Brindaban", describes how the lover Radha is unable to resist the call of the flute played by her beloved Krishna. She wanders helplessly following the "poignant melody" of her beloved's matchless flute:
Why dist thou play thy matchless flute
   Neath the Kadamba tree,
And wound my idly dreaming heart
   with poignant melody,
So where thou goest I must go,
   My flute-player, with thee
   
(p. 161)

Unheading the dangers in her way, she yearns to drain the nectar of her beloved's flute:

   No peril of the deep or height
       Shall daunt my winged foot;
   No fear of time-unconquered space,
       Or light untravelled route,
   Impede my heart that pants to drain
       The nectar of thy flute!

(p. 162)

In "Unity", the soul of the lover attains such union with the soul of her beloved that all her thoughts, joys and sufferings are identical with those of her beloved. Even death cannot separate them:

   You permeate
   With such supreme, profound and intimate
   Knowledge, possession, power, my life's domain!
       O are you not
   The very text and title of my thought,
   The very pattern of my joy and pain?
       Shall even Death set free
   My soul from such intricate unity?

(The Feather of the Dawn, p. 29)
Sarojini's love poetry embodies different moods and attitudes: ecstasy, eagerness, concern, expectation, hope despair, pretended anger and irony. Sometimes the love shared by lovers is ecstatic, sometimes full of pain and joy, sometimes depressed, sometimes romantic or spiritual. The poet also presents it in different situations - the situation of conjugal felicity, or of separation, temporary or permanent, or of suspicion and jealousy. It is, however, always love in a state of eagerness, and intense desire of union.

"Indian Love-Song" is in the form of duet in which the beloved and the lover express their feelings of ecstasy and intense joy in their blissful union. The poem introduces an idyllic world of romance and dalliance, where the night-wind, like a lover, leans above his jasmine gardens and sirisha boughs; where on ripe branches of many-coloured fruits bright parrots cluster like vermillion flowers. The lover full of deep feelings of love, tells her beloved:

Like a serpent to the calling voices of flutes,
Glides my heart into thy fingers, O my Love!
Where the night-wind, like a lover, leans above
His jasmine-gardens and sirisha-bowers;
And on ripe boughs of many-coloured fruits bright parrots cluster like vermillion flowers.

As the love lies in the arms of her beloved, he says to her:
Like the perfume in the petals of a rose,
Hides thy heart within my bosom, O my love!
Like a garland, like a jewel, like a dove
That hangs its nest in the asoka-tree
Lie still, O Love, until the morning sows
Her tents of gold on fields of ivory.

(p. 16)

Prof. A.A. Ansari praises this poem for its imagery and the sentiments of love expressed in it:

In "Indian Love-Song", the imagery in which the emotion of love shared by both the man and the woman is steeped has an Indian colour. Moreover, she (Sarojini) seems to be fully aware of the nice distinction in the shades of feeling as experienced by both owing to the fact of their having a separate psychophysical constitution. The similes used by the woman reflect abandon, concentration and continuity, while those employed by the man imply freedom, expansiveness and transience.

"An Indian Love Song", written to an Indian tune, is also in the form of a duet. It describes the passionate longing of a Muslim lover for her Hindu beloved. The lover yearns to see the "luminous face" of his beloved and implores her to come closer to him so that he may revive his soul by "the magical nectar" of kiss:

Faint grows my soul with thy tresses' perfume and the
song of thy anklets' caprice,
Revive me, I pray, with the magical nectar that dwells
in the flower of thy kiss.

(p. 68)

The beloved though eager to respond to his love finds
herself helpless by the taboos of her society and religion
and the memory of the cruel deeds of her lover's kinsmen
against people of her own faith:

The kissmen have broken our sacred altars and
slaughtered our sacred kine,
The feud of old faiths and the blood of old battles
sever thy people and mine

(p. 69)

In the third stanza the lover tries to remove the
hesitations of the beloved by telling her that love does not
know the differences of religion or care about the feuds and
follies of "comrade or kin". It has the power to "cancel the
ancient wrong" and bind people in the ties of brotherhood:

For Love shall cancel the ancient wrong and conquer
the ancient rage,
Redeem with his tears the memoried sorrow that
sullied a bygone age.

(p. 69)

"A Rajput Love Song" is in the form of two monologues
of the beloved and the lover, who are unable to endure
separation from each other even for a brief time. The
beloved, Parvati sitting at her lattice yearns for the return of her warrior lover with whom she has spent her night.

Come, O tender night, with your sweet, consoling darkness,
And bring me my Beloved to the shelter of my breast!

(p. 81)

The Rajput warrior lover, Amar Singh, is equally eager to return to his beloved after his day's adventure.

Haste, O wild-deer hours, to the meadows of the sunset!
Fly, wild stallion day, to the pastures of the west!

(p. 81)

He spurs on his stallion to hurry up and bear him to the fragrance of his "beloved's breast"

"Humayun to Zobeida" is another love poem written from the point of view of man. In it Humayun, the lover, entreats his beloved Zobeida with anxious eagerness to unveil her face and grant him "one tender moment's grace". He is unable to understand why she separates herself from him when they are one in heart and soul:

What war is this of Thee and Me? Give O'er the wanton strife,
You are the heart within my heart, the life within my life.

(p. 22)
Sarojini Naidu has written large number of love poems from the point of view of a woman expressing her impassioned and selfless love for her beloved. Some of these embody her own authentic emotions of love. The four poems "Suttee", "A Love Song from North", "Vasant Panchami" and "Longing" - describe the sorrow and misery of women who have been separated from their beloveds by the vagaries of destiny or cruel hand of death. A Hindu woman who prepares herself to end her life along with her dead husband, expresses her deep affliction as she finds herself lonely and bereft of all happiness:

Tree of my life, Death's cruel foot
Hath crushed thee down to thy hidden root;
Nought shall restore thy glory fled ...
Shall the blossom live when the tree is dead.

(p. 18)

"A Love Song from the North" reveals the misery of a lover who has been forsaken by her beloved. She is now no more able to respond to the sweet music of birds or take part in the joys of the spring:

Tell me no more of thy love, papeeha,
Would'st thou recall to my heart, papeeha,
Dreams of delight that are gone,
When swift to my side came the feet of my lover
With stars of the dusk and the dawn?

(p. 75)
"Vasant Panchami" depicts the lament of the Hindu widow Lilavati who is barred from participating in the joyful festivities of the feast of spring festival:

For my sad life is doomed to be, alas,  
Ruined and sere like sorrow-tradden grass,  
My heart hath grown, plucked by the wind to grief,  
Akin to fallen flower and faded leaf,  
akin to every love and withered thing  
That hath forgone the kisses of the spring.  
(p. 91)

The poem, "Longing", also deals with the poignant sorrow of a widow who yearns for her lost husband and hopes to meet him after her death.

Love, beyond these lonely years  
Lies there still a shrine of tears,  
A dim sanctuary of sorrow  
Where my grieving heart may rest,  
And on some deep tide of slumber  
Reach the comfort of your breast?  
(p. 204)

In the poem, "Blind", the beloved who has been separated from her lover by the cruel hand of destiny, finds herself incapable of enjoying the beauty of nature and life around her. She feels as if she has lost the light of her eyes and become blind to all the joys of life:
I pray you keep my eyes
Till I return one day to Paradise.
Bereaved of you, Beloved, I am blind.
A broken petal drifting on the wind,
A slightless Shama with a broken wing,
Forlornly wandering.

The darkness of agony which has enveloped her life, cannot
be dispelled by any light till her lover redeems her eyes
by his presence:

No lambent rays retrieve
The brooding dark in which I grope and grieve
Exiled, remote from the miraculous grace,
The wise compassionate glory of your face.
When will you call me back to Paradise
Love, to redeem my eyes.

(The Feather of the Dawn, p. 27)

The poems, "Ecstasy", "Poet's Love Song", "Alone",
"To Love", "In a Latticed Balcony", "Caprice", "Destiny",
and "Ashoka Blossom", describe the different moods and
emotions of the lover seeking union with her beloved. In
"Ecstasy" the lover longs for the ecstasy of being
completely submerged in the kisses and embraces of her
beloved.

Cover mine eyes, O my Love!
Mine eyes that are weary of bliss
As of light that is poignant and strong,
0 silence my lips with a kiss,
My lips that are weary of song!
Shelter my soul, O my Love!

My soul is bent low with the pain
And the burden of love like the grace
Of a flower that is smitten with rain:
O shelter my soul from thy face!

(p. 25)

In "The Poet's Love-Song", the lover describes her impatience and need for the company of her beloved in "the desolate hour of midnight", though "in noon-tide hours" she can afford to remain away from him because she has then her mad dreams to bind the world to her desire:

But in desolate hour of midnight, when
An ecstasy of starry silence sleeps
On the still mountains and the soundless deeps,
And my soul hungered for thy voice, O then,
Love, like the magic of wild melodies,
Let thy soul answer mine across the seas.

(p. 36)

"Alone" deals with the loneliness of the lover who is unable to get tidings about the whereabouts of her beloved. She remains lost in day dreams or swings in the feelings of delight and pain or desire and hope as she waits for the arrival of her beloved:

But no compassionate wind or comforting star
Brings me sweet word of thine abiding place...
In what predestined hour of joy or tears
Shall I attain the sanctuary of thy face?

(p. 7)
The lines are also redolent of mystic yearning of human soul for the divine soul.

The poem "To Love" describes the lover's complete surrender before her beloved. Whatever treasure she owns and prizes highly, she gifts to her beloved:

O Love! of all the treasures that I own,  
What gift have I withheld before they throne?

(p. 83)

Another poem "The Gift" in The Feather of the Dawn, echoes similar feelings of the lover who sacrifices her all to please her beloved:

Have I not poured my life in proud libation  
Like pure vermilion wine,  
And swung the censers of my adoration  
Sleepless before your shrine,  
And of my days made a mellifluous paean  
To you who dwell apart  
In the untrod, enchanted empyrean  
Of my surrendered heart?

(The Feather of the Dawn, p. 24)

In the first poem of Songs of My City, "In a Latticed Balcony", The lover desires to feed her beloved "On goldenred honey and fruit" and please him "With the voice of the cymbal and lute". On his arrival she will garland his tresses "With pearls from the jessamine close" and perfume his fingers "With th' soul of the Keora and rose". She will adorn him with the hues of peacock and lute and woo him with her silent love:
How shall I deck thee, O Dearest?
In hues of the peacock and dove.

How shall I woo thee, O Dearest?
With the delicate silence of love.

"In A Persian Lute Song" also the lover is shown to have made preparations with garlands and music to welcome her beloved. She, however, waits for the display of her preparations till the "golden hour" of the arrival of her beloved" for whom the lutes are strung/For whom the feast is set."

Who holds my trembling heart in thrall
Whose name I may not name,
His voice is like a battle-call,
His eyes a beacon flame.
His vital hands command and keep
The issues of my fate,
With power tenderer than sleep.

(The Feather of the Dawn, p. 11)

While "Caprice" shows the hard-heartedness of the lover towards the beloved, "Destiny" deals with his selfishness and betrayal. The indifferent lover in the former poem pays no heed to the softer sentiments of his beloved:
You held a wild flower in your finger-tips,
Idly you pressed it to indifferent lips,
Idly you tore its crimson leaves apart ...
Alas! it was my heart.
You held a wine-cup in your finger-tips,
Lightly you raised it to indifferent lips,
Lightly you drank and flung away the bowl ...
Alas! it was my soul.

(p. 200)

The selfish lover in "Destiny", feels no qualms of conscience in betraying and deserting his beloved:

Love came, with his ivory flute,
His pleading eye, and his winged foot:
"I am weary", he murmured;" O let me rest
In the sheltering joy of your fragrant breast."
At dawn he fled and he left no token ...
Who cares if a woman's heart be broken?

(p. 201)

In "Ashoka Blossom", The lover longs for the magic touch of the beloved's foot in her breast to revive joyous fancies in her heart. In the first stanza the poet alludes to an ancient belief that if a lovely maiden's foot treads on the Ashoka root, its branches blossom into gleaming flowers. A similar magical revival will be possible in the case of the lover also if the beloved touches her breast with his foot:
If your glowing foot be prest
O'er the secrets of my breast,
Love, my dreaming heart would wake,
And its joyous fancies break
Into lyric bloom
To enchant the passing world
With melodious leaves unfurled
And their wild perfume.

(p. 202)

There are some very touching love lyrics in The Feather of the Dawn. The most prominent among these are: "The Amulet", "Blind", "Devotion", "Unity", "Entreaty", and "Conquest". In "The Amulet" The lover desires to gift her eyes to act as her beloved's amulet to save him from dangers and guide him:

Beloved take my eyes with you
Jewel-wise, and set
Their beauty on your heart to be
A living amulet.

They shall be your torch to slay
The dark with steadfast beams,
They shall be your stars to keep
Soft vigil O' er your dreams.

My eyes shall burn like beacon fires
To guard your battle camps,
And light your secret sanctuaries
With quenchless altar lamps.

(pp. 25-26)
The poem "Devotion" expresses the lover's spirit of complete abnegation and self-sacrifice for the service of her beloved. She does not expect anything of her love from the beloved. She is content to serve and fulfil his will:

I ask thee no reward,  
Content am I, O Love, Anointed Lord,  
Unknown to thee to serve, confirm, fulfil,  
Thy daily word and will.

My dreams unknown to thee  
Are thy spread carpet and thy canopy,  
To shield from life's inclement cold or heat  
Thy forehead and thy feet.

(p. 28)

In "Entreaty" the lover implores her beloved not to revive in her once again, the flaming passions of love which she has overcome with great difficulty. She does not want her beloved to come near her again lest her weak will gives way and her "hungering heart" succumbs to his desire:

O Love, I tremble lest my will grow weak,  
If your deep honey-breath caress my cheek.  
How shall my sacrifical strength compete  
Against a foe so deadly and so sweet?

Save me from the keen rapture of your touch,  
My courage, Love cannot endure e'en such
Light pressure as the zephyrs' kiss that stirs
The dream of slumbrous moon-kissed nenuphars.
(p. 30)

She humbly begs of him to leave her alone:

Leave me, O Love, in God's compassionate name,
Ere once again the old, blind, revening flame
Smite me and slay in a consuming sea
Of dread desire and bitter ecstasy.
(p. 30)

The poem "Conquest" depicts love as harbinger of
pain and distress in a person's life. God who grows
jealous of the poet because of her joy, laughter, dreams
and fame, breaks her pride and conquers her by making her
a victim of love:

Life gave me joy and song for dower,
Laughter and grace and shining fame
Hope like a forest tree in flower,
dreams with reverberant wings of flame.
God troubled in His high demain,
Sent you, O Love, from starry spheres
With quick and ardent gifts of pain,
To teach me tears, to teach me tears.

You took my chalice'd joy and spilt
Its honey in the sands of drouth,
stole from my song its silver lilt,
Smote lyric laughter on the mouth.
You took fame's beacon torch that threw
Worldwide the lustre of its beams,
Plucked bare the bouglis of hope and slew
My winged dreams, my mingled dreams

(p. 32)
"The Temple: A Pilgrimage of Love", the last section of Sarojini Naidu's anthology of poems, The Broken Wing, is a series of twenty-four love poems. It is a trilogy whose three parts are entitled "The Gate of Delight", "The Path of Tears" and "The Sanctuary"; each part has eight poems. Thus there are twenty-four poems in all, which comprise twenty-four arches of the temple. Three parts of the poem - "The Gate of Delight", "The Path of Tears" and "The Sanctuary" - allude to the three parts of the temple according to classical Hindu architecture: the torana (entrance-way), the pradakshina-patha (circumambulatory passage-way) and the garbha- griha (inner sanctuary).

The sub-title "A Pilgrimage of Love" suggests the pilgrimage towards the temple of love. Love is the gate through which one can enter the temple - God's sanctuary. The poet is the pilgrim lover passing through the different gates of the temple or the stages of love, and ultimately reaching the sanctuary, the Divine. The epigraph of the poem:

My passion shall burn as the flame of Salvation.
The flower of my love shall become the ripe fruit of Devotion.
is from Rabindranath Tagore. Its idea is based on Vaishnavism which denies salvation through renunciation and lays stress on its attainment through love.

The poems of "The Temple" have aroused conflicting critical opinions. An Indian critic, Mr. R.G. Rajwade sees in the trilogy "more rhetoric than poetry ... more violence than strength." Mr. Gawsworth, on the other hand, declares that the Temple is Sarojini Naidu's "greatest regulated success.... Apart from Mrs. Browning's Sonnets from the Portuguese, I know of no poetical sequence in English of such sustained passion addressed by a woman to a man." One is, however, at a loss to say with certainty, if these poems are an authentic expression of the poet's personal emotions of love or her mystic vision of the Supreme Self. K.R.S. Iyengar has rightly pointed out: "What are we to make of this group of 24 lyrics? Is it the description of an imaginary situation, or is it - in some measure of least - the lacerating recordation of a personal experience?"

1. Iyengar, p. 218.
2. Ibid., p. 219.
3. Ibid., p. 220.
Ram Ratan Bhatnagar discerns foreignness in the sentiments of love as expressed in the trilogy. He remarks:

The imagery in most of these poems is foreign to both English and Indian spirit of love. It is borrowed from Persian and Urdu poetry of which Sarojini knows a lot. There the beloved is stone-hearted. He is the slayer. The Urdu poet is reminded of the blood of the lover by the henna-coloured hands of the beloved. Sarojini puts the same thing in another image to give it a Hindu atmosphere but she is led away from the spirit of Hindu poetry where blood-thirst is not a characteristic of the beloved.¹

He refers to the poem, "Love Transcendent" of the section, "The Sanctuary", and asserts that it is based on the semitic conception of the Day of Judgement²:

When Time shall cease and the world be ended
And fate unravel the judgement scroll,
And God shall hear - by His Host attended -
The secret legend of every soul,

And each shall pass to its place appointed
And yours to His immost paradise,
To sit encrowned 'midst the pearl-mounted,
O my saint with the sinless eyes!

². Ibid., p. 21.
It appears that Sarojini Naidu being the poet of the cosmopolitan outlook freely gleaned her sheaves from distant lands and thus added a new colour to the already rich harvest of lovelore in India. Dr. D. Prasad has rightly observed:

It ("The Temple") shows a pleasant confluence of different cultures and conventions—Hindu, Buddhist, Sufi and Christian.... Though the Hindu atmosphere dominates, the ultimate vision of love is the outcome of the pleasant synthesis of different religions. Sarojini's achievement as a love poet does not lie in exhausting the resources of the Hindu tradition, but in invigorating them by thoughts and insights from other traditions with which she was quite familiar. The Temple thus stands as a true symbol of this union of faiths in her worship.¹

"The Gate of Delight", The first part of the trilogy The Temple, has eight poems—"The Offering", The Feast", "Ecstasy", "The Lute Song", "If you Call Me", "The Sins of Love", "The Desire of Love", and "The Vision of Love". Each poem has its own particular rhythm, stanza form and rhyme scheme, and its own particular mood. The general theme is love which is treated as the gate that leads to delight. All the poems are in the form of an address by the woman lover to her beloved, man. Her love

¹ Dr. Prasad, p. 92.
is such as asks for no return. It is total self-surrender, a state of complete abandon. Her ego melts completely and she moves with her "heart's deathless passion" to win the heart of her beloved. She is content to wait in proved and lowly fashion to kiss the shadow of "Love's passing feet" as shown in the poem "The Offering".

But I have naught save my heart's deathless passion
That craves no recompense divinely, sweet,
Content to wait in proud and lowly fashion,
And kiss the shadow of Love's passing feet.

(p. 211)

The image of 'camphor' and 'curds' being poured and proffered before "Love's bright and sacrificial flame", creates the devotional atmosphere of the 'offering' in the temple.

In "The Feast", the lover asks her beloved to bring no fragrant sandal to decorate her forehead with, or a scented lotus wreath to put round her neck, nor any pearl to wear on her breast. Dust touched by her beloved's feet, she would apply to her eyelids and head; on her breast she would bear his foot-prints alone; and in her heart she would carry but his sorrows and secrets. Such would be her feast of worship. She desires nothing more:
Bring no fragrant sandal-paste,
Let me gather, Love, instead
The entranced and flowering dust
You have honoured with your tread
For mine eyelids and mine head.

Bring no scented lotus-wreath
Moon-awakened, dew-caressed;
Love, thro' memory's age-long dream
Sweeter shall my wild heart rest
With your foot-prints on my breast.

(pp. 211-212)

In "Ecstasy", The lover pays no head to the beauty, fragrance and melodious music scattered by spring all around her because she has been roused to ecstasy by the nectar of her beloved's breath and the sweet music of her beloved's touch:

Let spring unbind upon the breeze tresses of rich perfume
To lure the purple honey-bees to their enchanted death
But sweeter madness drives my soul to swift and sweeter doom
For I have drunk the deep, delicious nectar of your breath!

(pp. 212-213)
"In The Lute Song", The lover tells his beloved that he should not need any burnished mirror to reflect the glory and grace of his face, her eyes would do it; her own song, rather than ivory lutes, would sing of his valour; and her heart will serve as pavilion, pillow and foot-cloth for his feet to rest on:

Why need you pavilions and pillows of silk,
Soft foot-cloths of azure, O Sweet?
My heart be your tent and your pillow of rest,
My heart be your tend and your pillow of rest,
And a place of repose for your feet!

(pp. 213-214)

In "If you Call Me", The proud lover simply waits for the call from his beloved to reach him at the swiftest speed without caring for any hazards on the way:

If you call me, I will come
Swifter than desire,
Swifter than the lighting's feet
Shod with plumes of fire,
Life's dark tides may roll between
Or Death's deep chasms divide-
If you call me I will come
Fearless what betide.

(p. 214)
In the poem, "The Sins of Love", The woman lover begs the pardon of her beloved though her only sin is that her eyes tried to gaze on his face, her hands tried to clasp him, her mouth tried to ravish his lips and her heart tried to lure his love:

Forgive me the sin of my hands...
Perchance they were bold overmuch
In their tremulous longing to touch
Your beautiful flesh, to caress,
To clasp you, O Love, and to bless
With gifts as uncounted as sands-
O pardon the sin of my hands!

(p. 215)

In "The Desire of Love", The lover shows her preparedness to make any kind of sacrifice to provide her beloved strength, freedom, immortality and Godhood. "The Vision of Love" shows how being overpowered by her profound love for her beloved, the lover loses all knowledge except of her beloved:

O Love! my foolish heart and eyes
Have lost all knowledge save of you,
And everywhere- in blowing skies
And flowering earth- I find anew
The changing glory of your face
The myriad symbols of your grace

(pp. 216-217)
She finds in her beloved the cause of all her joys and wores:

O poignant sword! O priceless crown,
O temple of my woe and bliss!
All pain is compassed by your frown.
All joy is centred in your kiss.
You are the substance of my breath
And you the mystic pang of death.

(p. 217)

The second section of the trilogy, "The Path of Tears", describes the progress of love from the gates of delight to the path of tears. The dominant note of all the eight poems of this section is of grief and suffering. The poems are entitled "The Sorrow of Love", "The Silence of Love", "The Menace of Love", "Love's Guerdon", "If You Were Dead", "Supplication", "The Slayer", and "The Secret". The lover is deeply afflicted by the estrangement from the beloved who in his pride turns indifferent to the heart-broken maiden. "The Sorrow of Love" shows that even when they come across each other by chance, the beloved to the great grief of the lover, turns his face away:

Why did you turn your face away?
Was it for grief or fear
Your strength would fail or your pride grow weak,
If you touched my hand, if you heard me speak,
After, a life-long year?

(p. 218)
The lover doubts if in spite of this indifference even death can set their suffering spirits free:

From the passionate bondage of Memory
   Or the thrall of the old desire?

(p. 218)

In "The Silence of Love", though the lover is in miserable condition and languishes because of the beloved's enforced withdrawal from her, yet she does not want to beset his heart by the remembrance of their earlier love when she betowed upon him the whole joy of her flesh and treasure of her soul:

Give what you will... if aught be yours to give!
But tho' you are the breath by which I live
And all my days are a consuming pyre
Of unaccomplished longing and desire,
How shall my love beseech you or be set
Yours heart with sad remembrance and regret?

(p. 219)

In "The Menace of Love" the suffocating anguish of the lover bursts into a vindictive fury:

When youth and spring and passion shall betray you
And much your proud rebellion with defeat,
God knows, O Love, If I shall save or slay you
As you lie spent and broken at my feet!

(p. 220)
The "Love's Guerdon", The lover prefers the sufferings inflicted on her by the beloved to the praises showered on her by others:

You plucked my heart and broke it, O my love,
And bleeding, flung it down!...
Sweeter to die thus trodden of your feet,
Than reign apart upon an ivory seat
Crowned in a lonely rapture of renown.
(p. 221)

In the poem, "If You Were Dead", The lover tells his beloved that she will not weep if he dies because Death will give them an opportunity to unite again:

If you were dead I should not weep -
How sweetly would our hearts unite
In a dim, undivided sleep,
Locked in Death's deep and narrow might,
All anger fled, all sorrow past,
O Love, at last!
(p. 221)

In "Supplication", the afflicted lover does not supplicate her beloved to restore to her ecstasy, hopes, and dreams. She only supplicates him to:

Grant in the brief compassion of an hour
A gift of tears to save my stricken soul!
(p. 222)

In "The Slayer", the lover asks her beloved to confess before others that his garments are not wet with morning dew but:
"These be the death-drops from sad eyes I slew
With the quick torch of pain".

(p. 223)

In "The Secret", the lady-lover tells her beloved that those who bring their garlands and gifts to her, do not know that she had been dead to all such praises long ago:

How can they know I have been dead, Beloved,
These many mournful days.

(p. 223)

The irony is that he alone knows the tragic secret that she is dead:

For none save you may know the tragic secret
O Love, that I am dead!

(p. 224)

The third section, "The Sanctuary", attempts to restore love's joy after a long spell of suffering, sacrifice and atonement. The poems of this section - "The Fear of Love", "The Illusion of Love", "The Worship of Love", "Love Triumphant", "Love Omnipotent", "Love Transcendent", "Invocation", and "Devotion" - burn with the fire of devotion. The lover grows emotionally mature to feel that love can transcend the present woes and suffering, hence the resentment is meaningless. Thus this section describes the culmination of the tragic drama of love. After traversing the path of tears the pilgrim reaches the "Sanctuary" of love.
In "The Fear of Love", the lover feels a secret fear lest her love be corrupted by desire, envy, praise or even prayer. As a Hindu devotee, she expresses the religious fear of pollution and in order to save her love from Time and Fate, builds up:

A secret, sealed, invulnerable shrine
To hide, you happy and inviolate,
From covetous Time and Fate.

(p. 225)

In "The Illusion of Love" Sarojini describes how love may spiritualise the soul which communes with Truth or divinity directly in consequence:

Beloved, you may be as all men say
Only a transient spark
Of flickering flame set in a lamp of clay -
I care not .... since you kindle all my dark
With immortal lustres of the day.
And as all men deem, dearest, you may be
Only a common shell
Chance-winnowed by the sea winds from the sea
I care not .... since you make most audible
The subtle murmurs of eternity.
And tho' you are, like men of mortal race,
Only a hapless thing
That death may mar and destiny afface-
I care not .... since unto my heart you bring
The very vision of God's dwelling place.

(p. 226)
In "The Worship of Love", the lover wishes to be one with her beloved even if she has to sacrifice herself.

Crush me, O Love, betwixt thy radiant fingers,
Like a frail lemon leaf or basil bloom,
Till aught of me that lives for thee or lingers
Be but the wraith of memory's perfume,
And every sunset wind that wandereth
Grow sweeter for my death.

In "Love Triumphant", the lover desires to yield her beloved solace and succour, and to hush his anguish on her breast. She is confident that her steadfast love will shield her beloved from all dangers:

Should not my deep unchanging love atone
And shield you ....

(p. 227)

"Love Omnipotent" describes love as a powerfully inspiring force. It is the fundamental principle of human life by which all progress is achieved. Its understanding implies to the lover the understanding of the secret of the living universe around her. In "Love Transcendent", the lover feels happy that though on the Day of Judgement when divine justice is dispensed, she will be doomed for her passionate sin, yet her beloved will be safe in God's mystic garden. She will, however, crave no pardon for committing the sin of passionately loving her "saint with the saintless eyes".
In the poem "Invocation", the lover feels convinced that love will raise her struggling spirit clean from the dust. Through unmurmuring endurance of the beloved's wrath and scorn her love will grow holy. Through sorrow her love will find deliverance from mortal pride. And so her soul will be redeemed and reborn and attain its deserved place by the side of the beloved:

So shall my yearning love at last
Grow sanctified,
Thro' sorrow find deliverance
From mortal pride,
So shall my soul, redeemed, re-born,
Attain thy side.

"Devotion" describes the beloved's complete merger with the beloved:

Why should my true lover falter or fear or rebel?
Love, I am your to lie in your beast like a flower....

The lover pilgrim at last reaches the sanctuary and the shrine and attains divine love by merging completely with the Cosmic Soul. The earthly relationship between the two lovers is raised to the level of God and man, and thus becomes an object of mystic contemplation. Love, in Sarojini's poetry, starts as a passionate urge which culminates in mystic union, after undergoing a series of trials.
Poems of Life and Death:

Though Sarojini Naidu was well-versed in the philosophy and spiritual wisdom of India, she did not treat in her poetry the problems of life and death from the point of view of a philosopher or metaphysician. The ultimate questions of life and death and immortality and soul and God do not work out in her poetry with the same metaphysical and symbolic tension as they do in Sri Aurobindo's or in Tagore's poetry. Her attitude to life and death is similar to that of a realistic who faces the change of life and death with courage and fortitude and love's life in spite of all its pains, sufferings, despair, and disillusionment. She sums up her attitude to life and death in her poem, "The Soul's Prayer". The poem describes how the poet in her innocent pride asks God, the creator of human life, to reveal to her His "inmost laws of life and death":

In childhood's pride I said to Thee:
"O Thou, who mad'st me of Thy brea,
Speak, Master, and reveal to me
Thine inmost laws of life and death.

"Give me to drink each joy and pain
Which thine eternal hand can mete,
For my insatiate soul would drain
Earth's utmost bitter, utmost sweet."
"Spare me no bliss, no pang of strife,
Withhold no gift or grief I crave,
The intricate lore of love and life
And mystic knowledge of the grave."

(pp. 123)

God grants her prayer and tells her:

"Thou shalt drink deep of joy and fame,
And love shall burn thee like a fire,
And pain shall cleanse thee like a flame,
To purge the dross from thy desire.

"So shall thy chastened spirit yearn
To seek from its blind prayer release,
And spent and pardoned, sue to learn
The simple secret of My peace.

"I, bending from my sevenfold heit
Will teach thee of My quickening grace,
Life is a prism of My light,
And Death the shadow of My face".

(pp. 123-124)

Sarojini Naidu is very much attached to life and very much involved in it, eager ever to taste it through all her senses. She wants to face all its joys and sufferings as they come in her life. Though a poet she does not want to escape to the ivory tower of dreams but to involve herself in the struggle of life with all its perils and fears. In the poem "In the Forest", she asks her heart to bid farewell to its treasured dreams and come out to face the strife of life with courage.
But soon we must rise, O my heart, we must wander again
Into the war of the world and the strife of the throng:
Let us rise, O my heart, let us gather the dreams that remain,
We will conquer the sorrow of life with the sorrow of song.

(pp. 32-33)

In the poem, "Life", Sarojini expresses her deep concern about children. She forewarns them saying that life is not merely a stalactite of dreams or a carnival of joys; it is also full of burning passions and sufferings and strifes:

Children, ye have not lived, to you it seems
Life is a lovely stalactite of dreams,
Or carmival of careless joys that leap
About your hearts like billows on the deep
In flames of amber and of amethyst.

Till ye have battled with great grief and fears,
And borne the conflict of dream-shattering years,
Wounded with fierce desire and worn with strife,
Children, ye have not lived: for this is life.

(p. 35)

In the poem "To the God of Pain", the poet describes how she has undergone great suffering and strife in her worship of the "God of Pain":

Unwilling priestess in thy cruel fame,
Long hast thou held me, pitiless god of Pain
Bound to thy worship by reluctant vows,
My tired breast girt with suffering, and my brows
Anointed with perpetual weariness.
Long have I borne thy service, through the stress
Of rigorous years, sad days and slumberless nights,
Performing thine inexorable rites.

(p. 37)

In "Three Sorrows", the poet describes sorrows of life as both terrible and dear:

And thou, sweet sorrow, terrible and dear,
Most bitter and divine?
O I will carve thee with deep agony
Into a deathless shrine!

(p. 176)

In "To A Buddha Seated On A Lotus", the poet contrasts the serenity and mystic rapture on the face of Buddha seated on a lotus with the miseries and despair of human life:

The mind of change for ever blows
Across the tumult of our way,
To-morrow's unborn griefs depose
The sorrows of our yesterday.
Dream yields to dreams, strife follows strife,
And Deth unweaves the webs of life.

For us the travail and the heat,
The broken secrets of our pride,
The strenuous lessons of defeat,
The flower deferred, the fruit denied;
But not the peace, supremely won,
Lord Buddha, of thy lotus-throne.

The poems, "Farewell" and "The Challenge", describe the poet's feelings of despair in life. In "Farewell" she expresses her helplessness that she is unable to enthuse youths by her songs because her heart is full of despair:

O Golden lamps of hope how shall I bring you
Life's kindling flame from a forsaken fire?
O glowing hearts of youth, how shall I sing you
Life's glorious message from a broken lyre?

In the poem "The Challenge", the poet tells the sea, the earth and the sky that they in spite of their precious gifts cannot bring solace to her pain and despair:

Sweet Earth, though in thy lustrous bowl doth shine
The limpid flame of hope's perennial wine,
Thou art too narrow and too frail to bear
The harsh, wild vintage of my heart's despair.

In the symbolic poem, "The Pearl", Sarojini emphasizes that a man who remains confined to his sorrow, private and selfish interests and refuses to identify himself with wider and richer world of human brotherhood, is like a pearl which hides its brilliance till it comes out of its shell:
Or wilt thou self-denied
    Forgo such sweet and sacramental ties
As weld Love's delicate bonds of ecstasy,
And in a barren pride
    Of cold, unfruitful freedom that belies
The inmost secret of fine liberty
Return unblest into the primal sea?

(p. 175)

In "Silver Tears", The poet considers tears of sorrow to be the best gift life has given to her:

Many tributes Life hath brought me,
Delicate and touched with splendour...
Of all gracious gifts and tender
She hath given no gift diviner
Than your silver tears of Sorrow
For my wild heart's suffering.

(p. 199)

The poems, "Transcience", "A Challenge to Fate", "In Salutation to the Eternal Peace", and "Invincible", Sarojini Naidu expresses her love for life in spite of all its pain and despair. The poems are full of robust optimism. In "Transcience", The poet points out that one should not grieve though "Life be full of sorrow" for sufferings and grieves are transitory and pass away with time:
Nay, do not pine, tho' life be dark with trouble,
Time will not pause or tarry on his way;
To-day that seems so long, so strange, so bitter,
Will woon be some forgotten yesterday.

"A Challenge to Fate", reveals the poet's indomitable courage to face all the blows delivered by fate in her life. She declares emphatically that all attempts made by fate to wreck her life, will prove futile:

Why will you vex me with your futile conflict,
Why will you strive with me, O foolish Fate?
You cannot break me with your poignant envy,
You cannot slay me with your subtle hate:
For all the cruel folly you pursue
I will not cry with suppliant hands to you.

Fate may deprive her of her power to see or hear, or snatch away her speech and "power of articulate words", and inflict physical afflictions on her, she will not lose her courage. Her triumphant mind will not submit before Fate's cruel buffets. She will forget her personal sorrow by identifying herself with universal joy:

Tho' you deny the hope of all my being,
Betray my love, my sweetest dream destroy,
Yet will I slake my individual sorrow
At the deep source of universal joy....
O Fate, in vain you hanker to control
My frail, serene, indomitable soul.

(p. 135)

The poem "In Salutation to the Eternal Peace" is rich in mystic thought. Being drunk with the "inmost wine of living ecstasy" and "intimate essence of eternity", the poet pays no heed to the fears and pains of life:

Men say the world is full of fear and hate,
And all life's ripening harvest-fields await
The restless sickle of relentless fate.

But, I, sweet Soul, rejoice that I was born,
When from the climbing terraces of corn
I watch the golden orioles of Thy worn.

What care I for the world's desire and pride,
Who know the silver wings that gleam and glide,
The homing pigeons of Thine eventide?

What care I for the world's loud weariness,
Who dream in twilight granaries Thou dost bless?
With delicate sheaves of mellow silences.

(p. 137)

"Invincible" reveals the poet's faith in changing all the blows of fate in her life to her advantage through her hope and love. Notwithstanding all the tortures inflicted by fate in her life, she will remain invincible:
O Fate, betwixt the grinding-stones of Pain,
Tho' you have crushed my life like broken grain,
Lo! I will leaven it with my tears and knead
The bread of Hope to comfort and to feed
The myriad hearts for whom no harvests blow
Save bitter herbs of woe.

Tho' in the flame of Sorrow you have thrust
My flowering soul and trod it into dust,
Behold, it doth reblossom like a grove
To shelter under quickening boughs of Love
The myriad souls for whom no garden bloom
Save bitter buds of doom.

(p. 174)

Since Sarojini Naidu believes that both life and death weave our pattern of existence, she is not afraid of death. It is the oneness of life and death that gives her strength to look straight in the eyes of death. Death holds no terror for her because she looks for "peace in the hands of Death".

Sweetness dwells in the beehive,
And live in a maiden's breath;
Joy in the eyes of children
And peace in the hands of Death.

("Medley", p. 138)

In the poem, "To the God of Pain", she welcomes death because she has attained fulfilment in her life and gifted all her treasure to the god of Pain:
I have no more to give, all that was mine
Is laid, a unrested tribute, at thy shrine;
Let me depart, for my whole soul is wrung,
And all my cheerless orisons are sung;
Let me depart, with faint limbs let me creep
To some dim shade and sink me down to sleep.

(p. 37)

The poem "Welcome" also expresses the poet's desire for death because after it she will get "Vision of Love Immortal".

Welcome, O tranquil Death!
Thou hast no ills to grieve me,
Who com'st with freedom's breath
From sorrow to retrieve me.

(p. 205)

Being a realist Sarojini knows that death is inevitable. All her efforts to save her beloved from pain and death by the power of her profound love, have proved futile. In her dream she feels that she has "conquered Death by Love, like Savitri", but when she wakes she finds her love was vain:

When I awake, alas, my love was vain
E'en to annual one throe of destined pain,
Or by one heart-beat to prolong thy breath;
O Love, alas, that love could not assuage
The burden of thy human heritage,
Or save thee from the swift decrees of Death.

("Love and Death", p. 72)
In the poems, "The Poet to Death" and "Death and life", Sarojini though aware of Death's all-conquering power, wants it to wait till she has completed her mission in life. In "The Poet to Death", she remarks:

Tarry a while, O Death, I cannot die
While yet my sweet life burgeons with its spring,
Fair is my youth, and rich the echoing boughs
Where dhadikulas sing.

Tarry a while, O Death, I cannot die
With all my blossoming hopes unharvested,
My joys ungarnered, all my songs unsung,
And all my tears unshed.

(p. 49)

She is not prepared to die till all her "human hungers are fulfilled":

Tarry a while, till I am satisfied
Of Love and grief, of earth and altering sky;
Till all my human hungers are fulfilled,
O Death, I cannot die!

(p. 49)

In the poem, "Death and Life", Sarojini describes how seeing her afflicted with unbearable pain, Death whispers tenderly in her ears:

"Poor child, shall I redeem thee from thy pain,
Renew thy joy and issue thee again
Inclosed in some renascent ecstasy..."
She, however, spurns the offer of Death and tells:

I said, "Thy gentle pity shames mine ear,
O Death, am I so purposeless a thing,
Shall my soul falter or my body fear
Its poignant hour of bitter suffering,
Or fail ere I achieve my destined deed
Of song or service for my country's need?"

(p. 119)

Sarojini is not awed by death but wishes to embrace it willingly only when her mission of life is fulfilled. Her poetry reveals a great enthusiasm and healthy desire to enjoy the very process of life. She is sensitively alive to life, its colour and beauty, its joys and sorrows. She turns to life with almost the same enthusiasm and excitement as she turns to the beautiful world of nature. Life unfolds for her diverse miracles to be celebrated and sung, enjoyed and experienced.
CHAPTER - SIX

Imagery and Art

Imagery:

Poetic imagery is the artistic and effective use of language to help the reader get something of the feel and vision of the poet-artist at work. It helps to recreate the experience of the poet in the reader for a better appreciation of the poet's way of looking at a thing and presenting it. It may be defined as the attempt of the poet to compress into words — dynamic, vivid and suggestive — the emotional state through which he passes while viewing an object, contemplating a scene or presenting and analysing a situation. It is the use of appropriate words or figures of speech that would express effectively just what the poet sees and feels at a particular moment of inspiration.

Most of the critics have defined imagery as the representation, through language of sense experience. Fred B. Millet remarks: "Students of literature are indebted to modern psychology for its investigation of imagery, the element that produces the effect of vividness. Imagery is the result of the evocation, with varying degrees of
clarity, of mental reproductions, representations, or imitations of sense perceptions."¹ According to R.H. Fogle:

To the psychologists and many critics imagery in poetry is the expression of sense experience, channelled through sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste, though these channels are impressed upon the mind and set forth in verse in such a fashion as to recall as vividly and faithfully as possible the original sensation. In these terms a poetic image is the record of a single sensation.² Imagery is present when two things are put together in order that their relationships may be seen, provided that in these relationships the element of similarity is present. "A simple image, then, is a verbal comparison, a figure of speech. A complex image may be a fusion of simple images, a poem, a scene from a play or even the play itself."³ Summing up the essence of imagery, Fogle further states:

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3. Fogle, p. 22.
Imagery is the living principle of language, ... our speech advances and is constantly revivified by the discovery and expression of fresh analogies which increase our knowledge of ourselves and of the world ... Good imagery is richly evocative, various in the implication of its meaning.¹

The word 'image' most often suggests a mental picture, something seen in the mind's eye. It is a word picture that portrays a scene, describes a feeling, expresses a thought or rather a picture. According to C.Day Leavis: "In its simplest terms it is a picture made out of words", ² "a word picture charged with emotion or passion",³ and "more or less sensuous picture in words, to same degree metaphorical, with an undertone of some human emotion in its context, but also charged with and releasing into the reader a special poetic emotion or passion."⁴ Caroline Spurgeon views the poetic image as the "description of an idea, which by comparison or analogy, stated or understood with something else, transmits to us through the emotions and associations it arouses, something of the wholeness, the depth and richness of the

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3. Ibid., p. 20.
4. Ibid., p. 22.
way the writer views, conceives or has felt what he is telling us."¹

A poetic image, while aiming at a reflection of reality, does not merely reproduce or capture reality, it presents things from a certain perspective, a certain angle of vision and experience. It does not give us the mere fact of the thing, but an aspect of the fact, not so much the fact as the sense of fact, not so much a picture as a feeling about the picture. It need not present the full picture, but only the parts that catch the eye and the imagination of the poet. The poet may exaggerate a certain aspect for effect or may prune it for the same purpose. The poet being a man of heightened sensibility and feeling, can make much of a scene or a situation, can give it a colouring and a meaning, an atmosphere and a purpose that is beyond the capability of his more prosaic viewers.

Much of the aesthetic pleasure a poem provides is because of its imagery. The importance of imagery, however, consists not only in investing words with symbolic meanings and ideas, but through them evoking the

atmosphere and the background against which an idea is to be viewed and understood. Emphasizing the importance of imagery, W.E. Williams remarks:

Poetry, whose concern is to make pictures no less than to embody thought, needs imagery as fundamentally as it needs sound and rhythm. And its need for imagery is a more urgent one than that of prose, in the exact proportion by which poetry is a more compact and economical and transcendent form of expression than prose. Poetry must use pictures to save words.¹

As an important ingredient of poetry, imagery helps in the representation of feelings and the working of the mind through pictures that possess the power of evoking sensations and acting immediately upon the emotions. Elizabeth Drew is right when she remarks: "Indeed poetry without images would be an inert mass, for figurative language is an essential part of its imagery".² Robert Frost considers imagery and metaphor as the most important constituents of poetry: "There are many other things I have found myself saying about poetry, but the chiefest of these is that it is metaphor, saying one thing in terms of another."³

3. Ibid., p. 51.
Imagery is important in that it reveals the mind and heart of the poet, the place where images are conceived. Through imagery the whole personality of the poet is laid bare before us. Through it we know the way he looks at things, the way his mind functions as it grasps objects and ideas. Imagery is, thus, a valuable aid to the understanding of the poet. Caroline Spurgeon refers to this view when she remarks:

Like the man who under stress of emotions will show no sign of it in eye or face, but reveal it in same muscular tension, the poet unwillingly lays bare his own innermost likes and dislikes, observations and interests, associations of thought, attitudes of mind and beliefs, in and through images, the verbal pictures to illuminate something quite different in the speech and thought of his characters.  

The importance of imagery lies in perceptive experience or even imaginative experience. Dark areas in our minds are suddenly illumined as by a flash of lightning when the significance of a comparison dawns on us, specially when the comparison is uncommon and yet startlingly appropriate. A poet conceives his images from different aspects of life and experiences. According to

1. Spurgeon, p. 4.
P. Guerry: "So imagery is all important, and the true poet has at his disposal imagery belonging to many diverse fields of experience, and the greater the poet is, possibly the more fields in the affairs of life will be at his immediate disposal from which to draw his imagery. ¹

Since imagery is the result of the evocations of mental, reproductions, representations, or imitations of sense perceptions, there are as many kinds of images as there are senses. In fact, there are more kinds than the ordinarily considered senses of sight, smell, taste, touch, and sound. For psychologists have demonstrated a sixth sense which they have named kinesthetic, a term which they apply to the sensations of tension or relaxation. Such images are evoked by words as "dive", "scrunch", "rest", or "dally". More broadly, a kinesthetic image may be that of any sensation arising from the tensed or relaxed muscles, joints, and tendons of the body. Thus sensuous imagery includes visual (sight), auditory (sound), tactile (Touch), olfactory (smell), gustatory (taste), and kinesthetic (sensations of movement) qualities.

Visual images are more common than images pertaining to other senses. This is why earlier imagery was considered to be visual only. Though most images have faint visual associations adhering to them, there are images that are connected with other sense organs as well. If we analyse sight-images closely we can distinguish a number of sight-images, namely, colour, size, shape, position and movement, illustrated by such words as 'blue', 'mountain', 'cat', 'near' and 'dive'. The word 'dive' makes it clear that certain words may evoke not merely sight images but also distinct kinds of other images. From the word 'dive', for example, certain readers will get a visual image, while others a kinesthetic image. Sometimes an image is not confined to a single sense. It may be a mixture of several kinds of sensations. When Edith sitwell wrote: "The light is braying like an ass", or Swinburne said: "The voice is an odour that fades in a flame", they were bringing in one kind of sense perception to express one of another kind. This mixing up of different sensations for better expression of thought and feeling is called "synasthesiā".
Although every image partakes of a sensuous characteristic, it does not mean that any sensuous statement would automatically become an image. It must also have the qualities of emotion and passion. C.Day Leavis remarks: "Every image recreates not merely an object but an object in the context of that experience and thus an object is a part of relationship."¹

There is a difference in the images evoked by a word and the images involved in the associations aroused by that word. According to psychologists 'association' is the ability to bring up from experience and memory circumstances that are relevant to some word that refers to a person, place, object of experience. "Free association" suggests the unrestrained evocation of relevant or irrelevant remembered circumstances. In the analysis of imagery one has to distinguish between the images immediately evoked by the words and the images involved in the personal associations those words have for the reader. To allow excessive weight to one's 'private' associations with the poet's words is to run the risk of creating a poem quite distinct from the one the poet intends us to experience.

¹ C.D. Leavis, p. 17.
One has also to distinguish between the image suggested by a word when it stands alone and the image suggested by the word in a particular context. For instance, the image aroused by the word "red", when it is alone, will not be the same image as that which is aroused by the word when it is associated with the word "sunset". We are concerned primarily with the images that arise from a word in a particular context.

There is a definite pattern in the selection and use of images by a great poet. At any one moment of time many impressions and connections clog the mind of a poet. He, however, screens the mass of images that accumulate in his mind and chooses one that conveys most his shade of meaning, the one most appropriate for the task in hand. He sees that it works into the texture of the poem, so that there is a concord between image and theme, the image lighting the way for the theme and helping to reveal it to the writer and more to the reader.

It is essential that an image is not allowed to become too independent of the poem. Since an image is only a means to an end, it should not be allowed to take on more significance than can be given it in the context in which it is placed. It must not be permitted to pull away
the mind of the reader from the main theme or argument. It is to be seen that a definite pattern of the images is evolved and that the various images do not clash with one another. There should be maintained congruity and consistency of impression in them not only for the benefit of the reader but also for the purpose of the poet. A surfeit of imagery is as harmful as the lack of it makes a poem or even a prose composition dull and insipid reading.

An important point to bear in mind in regard to the creation of an image is that while a poet can create an image from any given object provided his imaginative response to it is strong enough, the image so created must be intelligible to the large body of readers. It should not be too exclusive, too esoteric for its meaning and relevance to be totally hid from the reader otherwise instead of illuminating, the image would do the work of making the meaning obscure, as is so often the case with the metaphysical poets.

The primary function of the image is to establish a kind of emotional bond between the poet and his reader. The image creates a kind of order out of emotional and intellectual confusion, since the world around us is a riot of objects and the world of thought not a little less
so. Some sort of selection and arrangement of parts, of drawing connections and parallels, if even for purposes of illustration, is necessary. The image, in a way, does the work of the esemplastic imagination of Coleridge, accepting, rejecting, moulding thoughts and feelings into keeping with each other in a lucidly conceived design. It establishes an emotional link between the poet and the external world, the varied world of nature and the world of sensation, letting the poet give play to fancy, letting him draw infinite comparisons and equations.

**Imagery in Sarojini's Poetry:**

Sarojini Naidu is the most enchanting of Indian English poets. She was not only endowed with a lively imagination but also nourished on the romantic and aesthetic traditions in English poetry. She therefore delighted in sensuous and aesthetic perceptions rather than thought and developed into one of the greatest of lyricists and image-makers in the Indian English poetry. Her Poetry reveals the mature note of conscious artistry and a close parallel between modes of poetry, music and painting. It unrolls before our eyes innumerable dazzling visions and a rich tapestry and gorgeous and ornate images. Not only her sense perceptions are quick and alert, she has also a rare gift of communicating these
perceptions by vivid, picturesque, impressionistic and sensuous imagery. Her imagery is derived from the rich, colourful and varied scenes of nature around her as well as Indian myths, folklore and luxuriant images. Oriental sources. Commenting on the Indian Character of her V.S. Naravane remarks:

However, the strongest feature of Sarojini's poetry is her vivid imagery. Her most memorable lines are those in which she has presented beautiful and graphic pictures by fusing together several visual impressions. It should be stressed, once again, that these images can be appreciated only by those, who have retained their sensitivity to the subtle stimuli which come from the Indian environment, and who still have a feeling for aspects of Indian life now rarely experienced in our modern cities.¹

Sarojini's poetry presents a delightful feast of metaphors and similes. Metaphor most commonly plays a pivotal role in the creation of an image. It is the medium through which the poetic world is related to the real world. Through metaphor, the specialized view of things is revealed by the poet and relationships established, relationships that might never have been noticed by others since they are peculiarly a particular poet's. It is a particular experience. Since it is the business of the

¹. Naravane, p. 139.
poet to perceive such relationships, to show that there is
a unity underlying and relating all phenomena, the image
comes in handy for the purpose. The image faculty of a
poet makes him discover or rediscover or even renovate old
connections between objects and feelings. This seeing of
relationships and similarities in things at first sight
dissimilar is the essence of the poetic image, its basic
nature so to say. The image is built up as a result of all
past and present experience of the possessor of the image.
According to T.S. Eliot "Only a part of an author's
imagery comes from his reading. It comes from the whole of
his sensitive life since early childhood."\footnote{1}

A distinctive feature of the poem "A Rajput Love
Song" is a string of varied metaphors used in it. The
beloved Parvati images her lover to be "a basil wreath",
"a jewelled clasp of shining gold", "keora's soul", "a
bright, vermillion tassel", "the scented fan", "a sandal
lute", and "a silver lamp":

O love! were you a basil-wreath to twine among my
tresses,
A jewelled clasp of shining gold to bind around my
sleeve,

O Love! were you the "keora's soul that haunts my silhen raiment,
A bright, vermilion tassel in the girdles that I weave;

(p. 80)

Amar Singh wishes, his beloved Parvati to be "the hooded hawk", "turban spray" or "floating heron-feather", and "an amulet of jade".

O Love! were you the hooded hawk upon my hand that flutters,
Its collar-band of gleaming bells atinkle as I ride
O Love! were you a turban-spray of floating heron-feather,
The radiant, swift, unconquered sword that swingeth at my side,
O Love! were you a shield against the arrows of my foemen,
An amulet of jade against the perils of the way.

(p. 81)

The "day" in this poem is described as a "wild stallion", 
"subtle bride of my mellifluous wooing", and "The silver-breasted moonbeam of desire".

Come, thou subtle bride of my mellifluous wooing,
Come, thou silver-breasted moonbeam of desire.

(p. 8)
In "Bangle Sellers", bangles are imagined to be "shining loads", "rainbow-tinted circles of light", and "lustrous tokens of radiant lives":

Bangle-sellers are we who bear
Our shining loads to the temple fair....
Who will buy these delicate, bright
Rainbow-tinted circles of light?
Lustrous token of radiant lives,
For happy daughters and happy wives.

(p. 108)

The poems "In Praise of Gulmohur Blossoms " and "Golden Cassia" contains a series of metaphors. "In Praise of Gulmohar Blossoms", the lovely hue of gulmohur blossoms is linked to "the glimmering red of a bridal role" or "rich red of a wild bird's wing"; and gulmohur blossoms are called "gorgeous boon of the spring":

What can rival your lovely hue
O Gorgeous boon of the spring?
The glimmering red of a bridal robe,
Rich red of a wild bird's wing?
Or the mystic blaze of the gem that burns
On the brow of a serpent king?

(p. 94)

In the second stanza, "The valiant joy" of the gulmohur blossoms' "dazzling, fugitive sheen" is similar to:
The limpid clouds of the lustrous dawn
That colour the ocean's mien?
Or the blood that poured from a thousand breasts
To succour a Rajput queen?

"The radiant pride" of gulmohur blossoms" "victorious fire" is:

The flame of hope or the flame of hate,
Quick flame of my heart's desire?
Or the rapturous light leaps to heaven
From a true wife's funeral pyre?

In "Golden Cassia", the golden cassias are
"fragments of some fallen stars", or "golden pitchers of fairy wine", or "glimmering tears that some fair bride shed remembering her lost maidenhood", or "glimmering ghosts of a bygone dream":

But I sometimes think that perchance you are
Fragments of some new-fallen star;
Or golden lamps for a fairy shrine,
Or golden pitchers for fairy wine.

Perchance you are, O frail and sweet!
Bright anklet-bells from the wild spring's feet,

Or the gleaming tears that some fair bride shed
Remembering her lost maidenhood.
But now, in the memoried dusk you seem
The glimmering ghosts of a bygone dream.

(p. 96)

The poem "Farewell" is a string of metaphors for the poet's songs:

Bright shower of lambent butterflies,
Soft cloud of murmuring bees,
O fragile storm of sighing leaves
A drift upon the breeze!

Wild birds with eager wings outspread
To seek an alien sky,
Sweet comrades of a lyric spring
My little songs, good-bye!

(p. 139)

In the poet "Past and Future", the past is a "mountain cell":

Where love, apart, old hermit-memories dwell
In consecrated calm, forgotten yet
Of the keen heart that hastens to forget
Old longings in fulfilling new desires.

(p. 34)

Most of Sarojini Naidu's verses are embellished with varied types of beautiful similes which present scintillating images and make her poetry revealing. A simile is an expanded metaphor. It makes comparison between two dissimilar objects more explicit by the use of
such words as "as", "like", to show that comparison is being made. Like a metaphor simile is also used to focus on unfamiliar qualities or to give familiar qualities unusual vividness and stress. The important point is not that the two things being compared resemble each other closely in certain qualities for which they are compared, but that the feeling that is normally associated with one can be transferred to the other.

In the poem "Past and Future", The Soul is likened to a bridegroom and his future like a "fated bride", hidden behind the veil:

And now the Soul stands in a vague, intense Expectancy and anguish of suspense,
On the dim chamber-threshold... lo! he sees Like a strange, fated bride as yet unknown, His future shrinking there alone, Beneath her marriage-veil of mysteries.

The poem "Alabastor" is an extended simile comparing the poet's heart with "alabastor box":

Like this alabastor box whose art Is frail as a cassia-flower, is my heart, Carven with delicate dreams and wrought with many a subtle and exquisite thought.

Therein I treasure the spice and scent Of rich and passionate memories blent
Like odours of cinnamn, sandal and clove,
Of song and sorrow and life and love.

(p. 24)

In "The Palanquin-Bearers", the maiden in the palnquin "sways like a flower"; "skins like a bird"; "floats like a laugh"; "hangs like a star"; "springs like a beam on the brow of the tide"; "falls like a tear from the eyes of a bride". The Palanquin-bearers bear her along in their palanquin" "like a pearl on a string" (p.3). In the poem "Indian Weavers", the robes of a new-born child are "blue as the wing of a halcyon bird", the marriage-veils of a queen" like the plumes of a peacock" and a dead man's funeral shroud "white as a feather and white as a cloud" (p. 5). In "Coromandel Fishers, there is an apt and beautiful simile describing the wind lying asleep in the arms of the dawn "like a child that has cried all night":

Rise brothers, rise, the wakening shies pray to the morning light,
The wind lies asleep in the arms of the dawn like a child that has cried all night.

(p. 6)

"Indian Love-song" contains a string of similes. In the first stanza, the lady-love describes her deep feelings of love for her lover:
Like a serpent to the calling voice of flutes, 
Glides my heart into thy fingers, O my love! 
Where the might-wind, like a lover, leans above 
His jasmine-gardens and sirisha-bowers; 
And on ripe boughs of many-coloured fruits 
Bright parrots cluster like vermillion flowers.

The second stanza deals with the feelings of the lover for his beloved:

Like the perfume in the petals of a rose,  
Hides thy heart within my bosom, O my Love!  
Like a garland, like a jewel, like a dove  
That hangs its nest in the Ashoka-tree.  
Lie still, O love, until the morning sows  
Her tents of gold on fields of ivory.  

(p. 16)

In "Humayun to Zubeida", the beloved haunts the lover's waking "like a dream", his slumber "like a moon, pervades him" like a musky scent and possesses him "like a tune" (p. 22). The poem "Autumn Song" has a beautiful simile describing the sunset:

Like a joy on the heart of a sorrow,  
The sunset hangs on a cloud:  

(p. 23)

and another describing the dreams of the poet's weary heart:

My heart is weary and sad and alone,  
For its dreams like the fluttering leaves have gone.  

(p. 23)
In "The Song of Princess Zub-un-Nisan. In praise of Her Own Beauty", the roses turn pale with envy on seeing the beauty of the princess's face,

And from their pierced hearts rich with pain
Send forth their fragrance like a wail.

(p. 38)

In "Indian Dancers", the wild and entrancing strain of keen music cleave the stars "like a wail of desire", and the glittering garments of purple of Indian dancers burn "like tremulous dawn in the quivering air" (p. 39). In "The Dance of Love the strains of music are described with the help of a series of appropriate similes:

. The music sighs and slumbers,
   It stirs and sleeps again...
Hush, it wakes and weeps and murmurs.
Like a woman's heart in pain;
Now it laughs and calls and coaxes,
Like a lover in the might.

(p. 73)

The dancers sway and shine "Like bright and windbloom lilies" (p. 73).

In "The Queen's Rival" the seven new queens shine round Queen Gulnar:

Like seven soft gems on a silken thread,
Like seven fair lamps in a royal tower,
Like seven bright petals of Beauty's flower.

(pp. 46-47)
The poem "The Pardah Nashin" describes the life of a pardah nashin through following appropriate similes:

Her life is a revolving dream
Of languid and sequestered ease;
Her girdles and her fillets gleam
Like changing fires an sunset seas;
Her raiment is like morning mist,
Shot opal, gold and amethyst.

From thieving light of eyes impure,
From coveting sun or wind's caress,
Her days are guarded and secure
Behind her carven lattices,
Like jewels in a turbaned crest,
Like secrets in a lover's breast.

(p. 53)

There is such a surfeit of similes and metaphors in Sarojini's poetry as annoys some of the critics. Lotika Basu comments severely on the excessive use of similes and metaphors in her verses:

One gets rather tired of the brilliant metaphors and similes. They introduce an element of artificiality in her poems. It makes them as exotics that wither and die when compared to the natural simplicity and bare beauty of the work of the greatest artists. A few of her poems seem to be written only for the sake of her metaphors and similes.¹

¹. Quoted by D. Prashad, p. 166.
The rich use of similes and metaphors, however, reveals the great potentiality of Sarojini's handling them as pictorial blocks of imagistic perception and using them for organizing her poetic emotions.

Sarojini Naidu has also made a very impressive use of imagery pertaining to different sense perceptions. There is a rich tapestry of visual and kinetic images combined together. In the poem "Nightfall in the city of Hyderabad", we get the visual images of bright colours:

See how the speckled sky burns like a pigeon's throat,
Jewelled with embers of opal and peridote.

See the white river that flashes and scintillates,
Curved like a tusk from the mouth of the city-gates.

(p. 55)

Equally impressive is the image of night descending over the city bridge:

Over the city bridge Night comes majestical
Borne like a queen to a sumptuous festival.

(p. 56)

In "Curved" and "borne", we have kinetic images.

In "The Indian Gipsy" Sarojini conveys the fall of night through animal imagery:
Ere the quick night upon her flock descends
Like a black panther from the caves of sleep.

("On Juhu Sands" presents an image of moon shining
on the waters of sea:
On the sea's breast the young moonrise
Falls like a golden rose.

(The Feather of the Dawn, p. 23)

In "Palanquin-Bearers", Sarojini makes use of visual and
kinetic images to describe the scene of a maiden being
borne in a Palanquin:

Softly, 0 softly we bear her along,
She hangs like a star in the dww of our song;
She springs like a beam on the brow of the tide,
She falls like a tear from the eyes of a bride.

(p. 3)

The words "hangs", "springs", and "falls" have the
association of kinetic images.

"Coromandel Fishers" describes the scene of the
fishers rowing their boats on the blue waters of the sea:

But sweeter, 0 brothers, the kiss of the spray and
the dance of the wild foam's glee:
Row, brothers, row to the blue of the verge, where
the low sky mates with the sea.

(p. 7)
There are beautiful visual images derived from the "bridal robe", "wild bird's wing", "ocean's mien" and "funeral pyre" of a true wife in the poem "In Praise of Gulmohur Blossoms":

The glimmering red of a bridal robe,  
Rich red of a wild bird's wing?

Or,

The limpid clouds of the lustrous dawn  
That colour the ocean's mien?

Or,

Or the rapturous light leaps to heaven  
From a true wife's funeral pyre?

"Indian Love Song" has a vivid colour imagery in the description of the scene of morning:

Lie still, O love, until the morning sows  
Her tents of gold on fields of ivory.

There is a kinetic image in "sows". "Cradle-Song" describes how

The wild fire-flies  
Dance through the fairy neem;

In "A Song in Spring" fireflies are shown weaving aerial dances:
Fireflies weaving aerial dances
In fragile rhythms of flickering gold.

(p. 88)

These lines have both visual and kinetic images. In "The Joy of the Springtime" we see "The dance of the dew on the wings of a moonbeam". (p.89)

In "Leili" (a Persian word for the night), Sarojini presents an impressive visual imagery drawn from the religious source. Night is personified and enshrined in the forest temple. The entire forest makes a temple where winds are seen dancing and swooning at the holy feet of night. The atmosphere created lends a sublime holiness to the night. The highly praised image of the moon shining as "a caste-mark" on the brow of heaven is a rare achievement in itself:

A caste-mark on the azure brows of Heaven,
The golden moon burns a sacred, solemn, bright,
The winds are dancing in the forest-temple,
And swooning at the holy feet of Night,
Hush! in the silence mystic voices sing
And make the gods their license-offering.

(p. 31)

There is an auditory image in the line "Hush in the silence mystic voices sing".

Equally impressive is the image of India as "a bride high-mated with the spheres":

And, like a bride high-mated with the spheres,
Beget, new glories from thine ageless womb.

(p. 58)

Besides these visual images we get a rich feast of auditory, olfactory, gustatory and tactile images in Sarojini's verses. There are auditory images in the lines of "Coromandel Fishers":

Rise, brothers, rise, the wakening skies pray to the morning light.

(p. 6)

Or, of "The Snake-Charmer":

Whither dost thou hide from the magic of my flute-call?

Or,

Whither dost thou loiter, by what murmuring hollows.

(p. 8)

Or or "Village Song":

Far sweeter sound the forest-notes where forest-streams are falling.

(p. 12)

Or or "Indian Love Song":

Like a serpent to the calling voices of flutes",
Glides my heart into thy fingers, O my love!

(p. 16)
Or "Indian Dancers":

O wild and entrancing the strain of keen music that
cleaveth the stars like a wail of desire.

Or

And exquisite, subtle and slow are the tinkle and

tread of their rhythmical, slumber-soft feet.

(p. 39)

Or of "The Dance of Love":

The music sighs and slumbers,

It stirs and sleeps again ...

Hush, it wakes and weeps and murmurs

Like a woman's heart in pain;

Now it laughs and calls and coaxes,

Like a lover in the night,

Now it pants with sudden longing,

Now it sobs with spent delight.

(p. 73)

Or of "June Sunset":

An Ox-cart stumbles upon the rocks,

And a wistful music pursues the breeze

From a shepherd's pipe as he gathers his flocks

Under the pipal-trees.

And a young Banjara driving her cattle

Lifts up her voice as she glitters by

In an ancient ballad of love and battle

Set to the beat of a mystic tune,

And the faint stars gleam in the eastern sky

To herald a rising moon.

(pp. 192-193)
Or of "A Persian Lute Song":

I pray you singing girls refrain
From music and be mute,
0 laughing flute-player restrain
The rapture of your flute,
And watch with me, not yet hath rung
The golden hour, not yet
Comes he for whom the lutes are strung
For whom the feast is set.

(The Feather of the Dawn, p. 11)

The poem "Street Cries" has impressive auditory images in "when dawn's first cymbals beat upon the sky", or "And in dim shelters koels hush their notes", and "When lutes are strung and fragrant torches lit" (p. 57).

The olfactory images are found in "the scent of mango grove" ("Coromandel Fishers", p. 6); "Like the perfume in the petals of a rose" ("Indian Love-Song", p. 16); "In what moonlight-tangled meshes of perfume" ("The Snake-Charmer", p. 8); "Pervade me like a musky scent" ("Humayun to Zubeida", p. 22); "Like odours of cinnamon, sandal and clove" ("Alabaster", p. 24); "The Winds are drunk with the odorous breath/Of henna, sarisha, and neem" ("In a Time of Flowers", p. 92); and:

O radiant blossoms that fling
Your rich, voluptuous, magical perfume
To ravish the winds of spring.

("Champak Blossoms", p. 98)
There are tactile images of the sense of touch in "a basil-wreath to twine among my tresses", or "a jewelled clasp of shining gold to bind around my sleeve", or "the hooded hawk upon my hand that flutters" ("A Rajput Love Song", p. 7); "That hath foregone the kisses of the spring" ("Vasant Panchami", p. 91); "You have crushed my life like broken grain", or "trod into dust" my flowering soul ("Invincible", p. 174); "crushed between my lips the burning petals of rose" ("Ecstasy", p. 212); "Kiss the shadow of love's passing feet" ("The Offering", p. 211); "With your foot-prints, on my breast" ("The Feast", p. 212); "My heart be your tent and your pillow of rest/And a place of repose for your feet" ("The Lute-Song", p. 214); and

Forgive me the sin of my hands...
Perchance they were bold over much
In their tremulous longing to touch
Your beautiful flesh, to caress,
To Clasp you, O Love, and to bless
With gifts as uncounted as sands —
O pardon the sin of my hand!

("The Sins of Love", p. 215)

There are sensuous qustatory images in "Drink deep of the hush of the hyacinth heavens that glimm around them in fountains of light", or "The poppies of lips that are opiate-sweet" ("Indian Dancers", p. 39); "the faint,
thirsting blood in languid throats craves liquid succour
from the cruel heat", or "lovers sit drinking together of
life's poignant sweet ("Street Cries", p. 57); "golden
pitchers for fairywine" ("Golden Cassia", p. 96); "rich
fruit of all Time's harvesting2 ("The Vision of Love", p.
217); and

But sweeter madness drives my soul to swift and
sweeter doom.

For I have drunk the deep, delivious nectar of Your
breath!

("Ecstasy", p. 213)

All these images reveal Sarojini's high poetic sensibility
and imagination and her delight in the objects of beauty.

Symbolism in Sarojini:

Symbolism in Sarojini's poetry is not only the
product of her rare creative imagination but also the
result of the influence of her great admirer Arthur Symons
who was associated with the Symbolist Movement in the
English poetry of the eighteen ninetees and also wrote his
epoch-making critical book.

The Symbolist Movement in Literature: The symbols employed
by her are both traditional and personal. Though most of
her symbols are conventional or stock symbols, she, at
times, uses a set of private symbols to express her personal vision. Her personal symbols are, however, not obscure like those of Blake and Yeats.

Some of Sarojini's poems—"The Lotus", "Pearl", "Indian Weavers", and "The Flute Player of Brindaban"—are completely symbolic. The whole series of poems, entitled "The Temple: A Pilgrimage of Love", is symbolical. Temple stands for a symbol of both human and spiritual love. Its three parts, "The Gate of Delight", "The Path of Tears", and "The Sanctuary", Hindu structure. The Torana (entrance way), prodakshina-patha (Circumambulatory passage way) and the garbha-griha (inner sanctuary). The twenty four poems, eight in each part, symbolize twenty four pillars or arches of a temple. The pilgrim lover reaches the sanctuary or attains the Cosmic Centre by trials and suffering.

In the poem "The Lotus", the lotus stands for a mystic lotus symbolizing Mahatma Gandhi whose name nowhere appears in the body of the poem. The words "To M.K. Gandhi" are there only in a parenthesis added to the title. The symbol runs through the poem and helps the poet to elevate the Mahatma's character to a supreme height. The octave of the sonnet is an objective description of the lotus, but with such symbolic over-tones as we could
find in it a description of Mahatma Gandhi as well. Every epithet helps us to understand the subject - both the lotus and Gandhi -, and appropriately suggests the implied mythology and history: "sacred and sublime" (we know how lotus is associated with the sacred gods, Lord Vishnu, Lakshmi and Brahma); "grace inviolate" (unaffected by worldly temptations and fears); "transient storms" (great difficulties and obstacles faced by Gandhi); "Deep-rooted in the waters of the time" (The mythological implication is the first waters out of which creation sprang up; the historical implication is that Gandhi is deep-rooted in the cultural wisdom and heritage of the country); "a far-off clime" (a foreign country, Britain, which would loose its hordes on the Mahatma). While "The ageless beauty born of Brahma's breath" suggests that the lotus is Brahma's flower, "Coeval with the Lords of Life and Death" conveys the idea of the lotus being born and coexistent with Brahma and Vishnu and Gandhi with the divine wisdom. Thus the ancient symbol of myriad petalled lotus associated with Brahma, Vishnu, Lakshmi and Buddha, has been very imaginatively employed for highlighting Mahatma Gandhi's purity and spiritual powers.

In "The Pearl", the pearl symbolizes a human being whose real talents shine and scatter their brilliance only
when they were exposed to the wide world. Like a pearl which holds the bright colours of the sun, shines in its full glory only when it comes out of its shell, similarly an individual acquires reputation and recognition only when he rises above his narrow, private, particular self and identifies himself with the wider and richer life of the family, the community, the State and the common brotherhood of humanity. Therefore it is nothing but the barren pride.

Of cold, unfruitful freedom that belies The inmost secret of fine liberty. That makes the pearl Return unblest into the primal sea.

(p. 175)

In "Indian Weavers", its three stanzas describing the three hours of a day in the life of the Indian weaver suggest symbolically the journey of life from birth to death. The gay and colourful robes which the weavers weave at break of day for a new born child symbolise the first stage of man's life which is full of hopes and promises. The weavers here stand for Brahma, the god of birth or creation, weaving the yarn of life: "Blue as the wing of a halcyon wild/We weave the robes of a new born child" (p. 4). "Blue stands for innocence and "halcyon", a bird which breeds on the flowing water, stands as the symbol
of creation. The second stanza suggests symbolically the gaiety and adventure associated with youth. The weavers weaving "marriage veils" at fall of night, stand for Vishnu, the god of magnificence of life. The colourful peacock plumes suggest the colour and joy one experiences in youth. The third stanza represents symbolically the end of life's journey. The weavers who weave in "The moonlight chill" a "dead man's funeral shroud", stand for Shiva, the god of destruction. The "moonlight chill" and "white" colour suggest appropriately death.

"The Flute Player of Brindaban" symbolizes the Infinite that calls every human soul and "turns every human heart away from the mortal cares and attachments" (p. 161). The soul craves for the complete absorption in the Infinite. Radha symbolizing human soul is restless to follow the "magical call" of Lord Krishna's flute:

Foresaking all;
The earthly loves and worldly lures
That held my life in thrall,
And follow, follow, answering
The magic flute-call.

(p. 161)

Several of Sarojini's other poems are replete with symbolic images. In "The Gipsy Girl", the gipsy acquires
a symbolic significance towards the close of the poem, because of her hidden links with times immemorial:

Time's river winds foaming centuries  
In changing, swift, irrevocable course  
To far off and incalculable seas;  
She is twin-born with primal mysteries,  
And drinks of life at Time's forgotten source.  

(p. 50)

The serpents in "The Festival of Serpents", being "the seers and symbols of the ancient silence", fill our hearts with a sense of mystery. They acquire symbolic significance which lends the poem a strange weird beauty:

Swift are ye as streams and soundless as the dewfall,  
Subtle as the lightning and splendid as the sun;  
Seers are ye and symbols of the ancient silence,  
Where life and death and sorrow and ecstasy are one,  

(p. 111)

The broken wing in the poem "The Broken Wing", symbolizes, the failing poetic fervour of the poet. The poem, however, reveals her unfaltering courage and determination in the face of great sufferings.She may lose bodily strength but her spirit is undaunted:

Behold! I rise to meet the destined spring  
And scale the stars upon my broken wing!  

(p. 145)
The winds in Sarojini's nature poems often acquire symbolic significance. In "A Song in Spring", she visualizes the winds as types of the wise, experienced travellers who have accumulated a lot of worldly wisdom. Since they wander everywhere, they know the mystery of love, life and death. The west winds have:

Spied on Love's old and changeless secret,
And the changing sorrow of human souls.
They have tarried with Death in her parleying places,
And issued the word of her high decree,
Their wings have winnowed the garnered sunlight,
Their lips have tasted the purple sea.

(p. 88)

In "Leili", the "mystic voices" signing and "the winds dancing and swooning at the holy feet of Night" have symbolic overtones:

The winds are dancing in the forest-temple,
And swooning at the holy feet of Night,
Hush! in the silence mystic voices sing
And make the gods their incense-offering.

(p. 31)

Cousins who is highly impressed by the symbolism of winds as devotees, remarks: "The symbolism in Mrs. Naidu's poem of the dancing winds as devotees in the temple of nature must surely stand among the fine things of literature".  

Sarojini's images - sensuous and symbolic - reveal that she like a great poet is to a very great extent an explorer in realms of thought and feeling hitherto untrodden. By some sublime power within herself she sees through flashes of imaginative insight "into the life of things", and is able to show their relation to the grand principles which control all thought and being. She extends the bounds of her own experience and then ours through the fusing alembic of our common emotional nature, until we also see into the life of things.

Sarojini's Art, Diction and Versification:

Sarojini is a keenly sensitive poet in the Romantic tradition. For her poetry is purely a "musical thought", the concrete and artistic expression of the human mind in emotional and rhythmic language. She is a lyric poet par excellence among the Indian English poets. All of her verses have rare emotional intensity being "spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling" - of joy, sorrow, despair, fervour and exultation. Like a true lyricist she uses a diction which has a magical and haunting cadence and loveliness. Some of her verses are in the form of songs with rich verbal melody and can easily be set to music. She attains a lyrical perfection
because in giving expression to her deepest feelings, she strikes a chord which sets all our hearts vibrating.

Sarojini has made use of almost all lyric form—sonnet, ode, elegy and folk poems. Her sonnets like, "Love and Death" (p. 72), "Death and Life" (p. 119), "Imperial Delhi" (p. 156), "In Salutation To My Father's Spirit" (p. 160) and "The Lotus" (p. 167), though expression of deep emotions, have a classical control, a sense of balance and some kind of high seriousness that make them worthy sonnets. They are all in Italian form with an octave and sestet; while the rhyme scheme of the octave is invariably: a b b, a a b b a, of the sestet varies and takes different forms as c c d, e e d; c d c, d f f; c c d, e e d; and c d c, e d e. Among her odes we have "Ode to H.H. The Nizam of Hyderabad", To the God of Pain" and "To a Buddha Seated on a Lotus". They are exalted in subject matter, and elevated in tone and style. They are full of deep and sincere emotion but their expression is consciously elaborate, impressive, and diffuse. Sarojini has written moving elegies on the death of the Nizam of Hyderabad, Mir Mahbub Ali Khan, her political mentor Gopal Krishna Gokhale, and Umar Sobhani, a rich philanthropist of Bombay. These are entitled respectively "Ya Mahbub!", "Gokhale" and "Umar"(The
(Feather of the Dawn). These are touching poems of personal loss and are written in simple language. They are confined to their objects of mourning, their death being the inspiration and sole theme. The poet here gives an expression only to his deep and sincere feelings of lamentation without indulging in discursive reflections.

Sarojini has written folk poems without taking recourse to the objective narration or using the ballad measure. Most of these folk songs - "Palanquin - Bearers", "Wandering Singers", "Indian Weavers", "Coromandel Fishers", "The Snake-Charmer", "Corn-Grinders", "Harvest Hymn", "Cradle-Song", "Village Song", "Bangle Sellers", "Spinning Song", etc. - are written to suit the Indian tunes. The rhythms, metres, and stanza forms vary according to the moods of the singers. The metrical inventiveness of Sarojini is best seen in these poems because she uses in them impressive refrains and weaves native words and phrases to convey Indian colour and atmosphere.

One cannot miss in Sarojini's poetry her ease in the English language, her sense of the sounds of English words and her mastery over the metrical system of English poetry. Although her life spans across the late Victorian, Decadent, Edwardian and Georgian and the
emerging Hulme-Eliot-Pound periods of English poetry, she being brought up in romantic tradition and fed solely on the ornate poetry of the East and the West, remains typically romantic in her taste and temperament, sensibility and art. Sarojini does not try poetry after the modern fashion nor does she approve of its lack of passion. Its use of free verse, its terse, dry and lean diction and its emphasis on harsh truth and intellectual content do not suit her imaginative and romantic temperament. Sensuous and aesthetic perceptions are the raw material on which she builds the edifice of her poetry of beauty and romance. She found the echoes of the romantic tradition in the Rhymer club coterie with whom she had close contacts and like them stuck in her poetry to verbal felicity, metrical discipline and musical texture.

Sarojini is a great artist in the use of words. She believes with Mallarme that poetry is written with words and not ideas. She has a miraculous power of communicating her responses to any kind of sense impression in words which are surcharged with feelings. Armando Menezes emphasizes the rich use of evocative and suggestive words in Sarojini's poetry:
She had a woman's love for words. They were not, to her, just convenient instruments of expression, they were things: precious, lovely things, like jewels. She rejoices in pollysyllables that roll and rumble, or rattle like long burnished swords: the phrases like 'lovely stalactile of dream'; or 'in the long dread, incalculable hour'".  

Sarojini's diction is greatly influenced by the romantic vocabulary of the early nineteenth century and is highly strung and sophisticated. It is, however, wrong to criticize it as artificial for it is very communicative and has the compelling utterance of emotion. 

Sarojini has tremendous power of phrase-making. She is artist in the use of words and phrases aglow with fire and meaning. She coins new words with the help of epithet and verb or epithet and noun combinations. We have thus highly evocative words like "laughter-bound", "sorrow-free", "laughter-lighted", "jewel-girl", "sandal-scented", "moonlight-tangled", "rose-scented", "dawn-uncoloured", "thought-worn", "wind-blown", "wind-inwoven", "love-garnered", "flame-carven", "hermit memories", "lotus-throne", and "parrot-plume". Equally suggestive and pictorial are phrases like "the wakening skies", "The leaping wealth of the tide", "The kiss of the spray", "The dance of the wild foam's glee" (p. 7),
"The moonlight tangled meshes of perfume", "Golden-vested maidens", "The petals of delight", "the silver-breasted moonbeam of desire" (p. 8), "koel-haunted river isles", "sandal-scented leisure" (p. 11), "ecstasy of starry silence" (p. 36), "hopes up-leaping like the light of dawn" (p. 37), "a wail of desire", "gem-tangled hair" (p. 39), "silver tears of sorrow2 (p. 199), "lyric bloom", "melodious leaves" (p. 203), "echoing boughs", and "blossoming hopes unharvested" (p. 49). There are many such pictorial phrases scattered all over Sarojini's poems. Some of these phrases are rich in alliterations: "Fair and frail and fluttering leaves", "fairy fancies", "laughted", "tangles of my tresses", "the dear dreams that are dead", "fashion a funeral pyre", "the heavenward hunger", and "glimmering ghosts".

Sarojini often uses vernacular words which though uncommon in poetry, lend native flavour to her verses and add to their rhythmic melody. It is surprising that Lotika Basu is critical of the use of these native words: "The artificiality of Mrs. Naidu's poems is increased by the repetition of vernacular words which have no meaning and association for the English reader and seem only something fantastic - words in fact, which even in their native language have no poetic value, such as 'Ya' Allah!"
'Ya Allah! or 'Ram re Ram'!' These vernacular words are, however, so much compressed with meaning and fit so well in the context of the poem that they never look superfluous or meaningless. They have religious associations to the Indian mind and they capture beautifully the subtle native passion.

Sarojini has composed in various stanza forms and there is hardly any metrical measure accepted in English poetry which she has not successfully practised - iambic, trochaic, anapaestic, dactyle, or their permissible combinations. In "Cradle Song", Sarojini uses iambic measure for melodious effect:

   From graves of spice,
   O'er fields of rice,
   Athwart the lotus stream
   I bring for you
   Aglint with dew
   A little lovely dream.

(p. 17)

In "Song of Radha, the Milkmaid", she combines iambic with anapaestic measure:

I carried my gifts to the Mathura shrine...
How brightly the torches were glowing!...
I folded my hands at the altars to pray
"O shining ones guard us by night and by day".
And loudly the conch shells were blowing,
But my heart was so lost in your worship Beloved
They were wroth when I cried without knowing
Govinda! Govinda!
Govinda! Govinda!

(p. 113)

In the poem "To My Children", we get a pure
trochaic measure, a rhyming eight-line stanza in
trimetre:

Golden sun of victory, born
In my life's unclouded morn,
In my lambent sky of love,
May your growing glory prove
Sacred to your consecration,
To my art and to my nation.
Sun of Victory, may you be
Sun of song and liberty.

(p. 51)

In "Wandering Singers", Sarojini uses anapaestic
measure, lines beginning with an iamb, followed by three
anapaests:

Our lays are of cities whose lustre is shed,
The laughter and beauty of women long dead;
The sword of old battles, the crown of old kings,
And happy and simple and sorrowful things,

(p. 4)

Sarojini uses even dactyle measure successfully, though it is rarely used in English poetry:

Full are my pitchers and far to carry,
Lone is the way and long,
Why, O why was tempted to tarry
Lured by the boatmen's song?

("Village Song", p. 103)

In addition to the successful use of these English metrical measure, Sarojini has also experimented skilfully with native folk-tunes, village tunes and bazar tunes in her poems. In "Palanquin Bearers" she reproduces in words the swingy movement and the accompanying music of the palanquin bearers:

Lightly, O lightly, we bear her along,
She sways like a flower in the wind of our song;
She skims like a bird on the foam of a stream,
She floats like a laugh from the lips of a dream,
Gaily, O gaily we glide and we sing,
We bear her along like a pearl on a string.

(p.3)

In "Village Songs" she captures magic of rural atmosphere by dramatic monologue of a village maiden who is delayed in returning to her house. The rhythmic movement of the refrain "Ram re Ram! I shall die" adds to the musical charm of the song:
My brother will murmur, "Why doth she linger"
My mother will wait and weep,
Saying, "O safe may the great gods bring her,
The Jamuna's waters are deep"...

The Jamuna's waters rush by so quickly,
The shadows of evening gather so thickly,
Like black birds in the sky....

O! if the storm breaks, what will betide me?
Safe from the lightning where shall I hide me?
Unless Thou succour my footsteps and guide me,
Ram re Ram! I shall die.

(p. 103)

In the poem, "In The Bazar of Hyderabad", Sarojini
recreates the scene of an Indian bazar by reproducing its
tunes in a dramatic manner:

What do you weigh, 0 ye vendors?
Saffron and lentil and rice.

What do you grind, 0 ye maidens?
Sandalwood, henna and spice?

What do you call, 0 ye pedlars?
Chessmen and ivory dice.

(p. 106)

Equally impressive is Sarojini's use of the Bengali
metre in "Slumber Song for Sunalini":

Sweet, the saints shall bless thee...
Hush, mine arms caress thee,
Hush, my heart doth press thee, sleep,
Till the red dawn dances
Breaking thy soft trances,
Sleep, my Sunalini sleep!

(p. 104)

Commenting on the use of metrical rhythms in Sarojini's verses for musical effects, Prof. Rameshwar Gupta aptly remarks: "It is enough to show that if Sarojini had genius, it was a genius for verbal rhythm. The very tissues, nerves and muscles of her body would sometimes go into motion to get the rhythm that rested in her being, and then it would manifest itself in some melodious articulation. English poets who show such variety of rhythmic patterns and tunes are not many. That is Sarojini's contribution to English poetry."

**Her Achievement:**

Whatever our estimate of Sarojini's contribution to Indian English poetry, it will generally be agreed that she was a born poet, one eminently endowed with the temperament and nature of true artist. Except for Keats there are very few poets who had such an overpowering passion for poetry as she. To her it was poetry that charged her every moment, and to which she directed her best early efforts. This keen poetic sensibility and her

early brilliant promise could not find their mature fulfilment because she had to give up composing verses after four volumes of poems owing to her deep involvement in the national struggle for independence. She could not, therefore, realize her ambition to be a great poet. The rapture of song, however, always remained with her.

Sarojini was conscious of her limitations and was perhaps a better critic of her own poetry than anyone else. She remarked very frankly "My poor casual little poems seem to be less than beautiful - I mean - that final enduring beauty that I desire."\(^1\)

She also confessed with disarming humility:

> I am not a poet really. I have the vision and desire but not the voice. If I could write just one poem full of beauty and spirit of greatness, I should be exultantly silent for ever; but I sing just as the birds do, and my songs are as ephemeral.\(^2\)

In a letter to Romesh Chandra Dutt in March, 1906, which she wrote on receiving a copy of his *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* in English verse, she again expressed her own sense of inadequacy:

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I realise what much finer, more lasting, more fruitful achievement it is to have made accessible to the world, in this splendid and noble version, the proudest epics of the centuries, than the tinkling little verses such as I had the audacity it seems to me so now - to send you.¹

Though Sarojini could not scale great heights and touch the summit in her poetry, yet one would not miss in whatever she wrote her inner consistency of vision as well as an extraordinary grasp of the reality of human emotion and aspiration. Having been brought up in romantic tradition of poetry she remained through and through a lyricist who gave vent to her intense and authentic emotional experiences in melodious verses. The spontaneous outpouring of feeling rather than an intellectual exercise continued to be her mode, and sensuous and aesthetic perceptions rather than thought, the contents of her poetry. Nissim Ezekiel notes with great dissatisfaction: "It was Sarojini's ill-luck that she wrote at a time when English poetry had touched the rock bottom of sentimentality and technical poverty. By the time it recovered its health, she had entered politics, abandoning the possibility of poetic

development and maturity. It is, however, doubtful that even if she had continued to write without taking to politics, she would have ever developed into the Hulme-Pound-Eliot tradition of poetry. Her love for beauty and romance would have never led her to write in new poetic idiom with its emphasis on intellectual content and irony.

In its final assessment Sarojini's poetry with its transparent sincerity of love for the people and landscape of India, its lyrical spontaneity and melody, its beautiful images and metaphors embodying the rich cadence and rhythm of Indian life, still remains unrivalled in the Indian English poetry in its own mode. Sri Aurobindo, the profound judge of life and literature, has correctly remarked that Sarojini had, "qualities which make her best work exquisite, unique and unchallenged in its own kind."^2

2. Ibid.
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